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MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE

Frank Wilkinson

Interviewed by Dale E. Treleven

VOLUME IV

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Photograph: Wilkinson, Paul L. Hoffman, American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California legal director, and Loeb and Loeb pro bono counsel Douglas E. Mirell in October 1987 with a portion of the 132,000-page file of information assembled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on Wilkinson from 1942-80 and extracted under the Freedom of Information Act and over the course of Wilkinson v FBI. Photograph, courtesy of Frank Wilkinson, by Robert Gabriel of the Los Angeles Times.

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TAPE NUMBER: XXVI, SIDE ONE

FEBRUARY 8, 1986

TRELEVEN: We're back on, so I think I'll just ask you to pick it up.

WILKINSON: Beginning the latter part of '53 and each year from then on in Los Angeles through '62, we organized a total fight-back. When the committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] went beyond that, we carried on the same practice in San Francisco where a San Francisco independent branch of the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms [CCPAF] was established following the repeated hearings up there in the late fifties, and then finally when I went back to New York to work for the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee [ECLC], we made a commitment that every time HUAC issued a subpoena anywhere in the nation, one of us would go to that community immediately and help to organize a fight-back and resistance.

It's very interesting how it developed because there was no blueprint, there was no outline. The first couple of times it didn't work as well as it did later. But generally speaking, people would get a subpoena from HUAC, usually delivered at homes,

sometimes at seven o'clock in the morning. As soon as they would get that subpoena, they would call a friend, maybe in the same trade union or in the same school, "Did you get a subpoena?" And about every ten minutes or half-an-hour from then until nine o'clock, people were getting their subpoenas and were calling each other. In some cases, the person they would call would literally say, "Wait, there's somebody at my front door right now," and they would get a subpoena. In some cases, the people who were called were friends or acquaintances who never got a subpoena, but they would call an attorney friend, and through our liaison with the National Lawyers Guild all lawyers began to refer people to me and the CCPAF. That really became the system.

You'd get your subpoena and there was an unwritten action plan. You called the citizens committee, or called Frank Wilkinson at his home, and I would usually get the first call at seven o'clock. We learned after the first or second time that the instantaneous fight-back was critical. So when I get that first call at seven o'clock at my home, I would say to that person, "Very good. There will be a meeting tonight at my office. Be there. If you have a lawyer, bring your lawyer with you. If you hear of other people who've

gotten subpoenas, be there. Let people know that you have been subpoenaed and try to locate the names of everybody who got a subpoena today, and bring them to that meeting at seven o'clock tonight. I'll have there some lawyers and I'll have the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] there, and we'll see what we can do to establish a fight-back."

It was just amazing. I learned to make these calls very quickly. I'd say, "Well, that's it. Be there at seven o'clock tonight. We've got to get off the line. I'm sure somebody else is going to call me." Every few minutes until nine or ten o'clock that morning, I got these calls. By [laughter] seven o'clock that night, we would take that little office down on Beverly Boulevard and we would jam it. All these real-estate people weren't there, and we'd sit on their chairs and on top of their desks. There was another room next door that George [M.] Cowell had vacant. We opened that up. We'd get some folding chairs in there.

The average hearing would bring in somewhere between twenty and fifty people. It was just an amazing fact that we could produce-- Sometimes every person subpoenaed would be at that office that night. We'd gather there and psychologically it was just

tremendous. The people had been frightened all day long. "What the hell is going on? I wonder who named me? What'll I do about it?" And my saying, "Well, let's go to the meeting tonight and talk about it." They would get there and would find everybody else in the "same class." In fact, we began referring to these as the "class of '53," or the "class of November '54," or the "class of spring of '54." That's the way they were referred to. When they got there, they met people who were in the same boat they were. Here was the respectability--which is terribly important--that I would manage. *[To overcome the paralyzing fear that came with the receipt of a subpoena, we invited a few prestigious community leaders to help plan the fight-back.]

Eason Monroe said the ACLU board couldn't do it, but he'd get Al [Abraham Lincoln] Wirin to come there, and he would begin talking. Part of our program was, "What You Can Do About Retaining a Lawyer." When the legal part was set up, then we began talking about, "Well, how can we fight back? This hearing is a week from now, or eight days from now. We ought to do

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

something. What can we do? Let's have a meeting. Let's have something in the community to fight back and let's get it going immediately."

We found out that if we had those meetings within the first twelve hours, we didn't lose one subpoenaed person. If ever we didn't get word of it the first day--if we got it the second day--you'd lose 50 percent. On the third day, you'd probably lose two-thirds. What happened is that people would get subpoenaed and in their fear they would begin talking among friends, and they would begin thinking, "I'll bet so-and-so is a HUAC informer." They'd become paranoiac. Somebody would say, "Why don't you call so-and-so? Her brother knows somebody who's in Congress and why don't we see if it isn't a mistake and we can't get your hearing quashed somehow?" They'd go to the friend of an uncle, to an aunt, to a brother, anyone, trying to find some way to save their own necks. No cooperative thing.

By moving so fast, they all were there. Nobody went out trying to get independent coverage. We committed ourselves to fight back as a group. A group that had never been a group became a group that night through the fastest organizing you can imagine. We had a program that worked out. First of all, we discussed

what your legal rights were. We were very careful to indicate that any legal response that did not name other people was legitimate. There were always some people who said, "Everybody's got to use the Fifth Amendment," or something of that kind, sort of an uptight position. Our effective argument was that as long as you do not injure another person, you have a right to do whatever you want to do.

For example, if you want to answer the committee's questions and say, "I'm not a communist," or if you want to answer the question and say, "I used to be a communist," that's your business. The lawyers will talk to you about what that means. For example, if you do answer the question about yourself, then you've waved your rights to privacy and you are then compelled to answer. "Well, thank you. We're glad to know you were a communist. Now, who else was in the [Communist] Party with you?" You cannot at that point say, "I refuse to answer," because you've waived your right. If you want to protect others and do not want to become an informant or a stool pigeon, you have to refuse to answer on the first question: that's whether you were or were not a communist--and many of the people called were not communists.

Bob [Robert W.] Kenny, I think I mentioned once

before, came up with some very creative ideas where people, we'll say, had been a communist in the thirties and then dropped out, or had been a communist in the early-forties and dropped out. We're now in the mid-fifties. So you'd be asked the question, "Are you a communist?" The person would say, "No." "Were you a communist?"

"When do you mean?"

"Well, were you a communist last year?"

"No."

"What about the year before?"

"No."

They would finally come down to a date--[laughter] a month and a day and a time in 1938--where you would say, "I refuse to answer that question." That was called the "diminished Fifth." That was one of the creative ways that Bob Kenny and others came up with. But that was just the legal work.

Also, at that point, was the ACLU's position, which began in '53, searching for somebody who would refuse to answer the questions on the grounds of the First Amendment. The Hollywood Ten had done that and had gone to jail, and the ACLU legal minds felt that with the [Earl] Warren [United States Supreme] Court decisions coming down better and better all the time,

that the court might be willing to reverse what the Hollywood Ten decision was and uphold the First Amendment as a protection. Once that happened, of course, HUAC would be gone because if they don't have the power of compulsory process to demand an answer, they are not able to hurt you. You don't even have to go to their hearings; you just send them a letter and say, "I'm not coming," and that would be it.

*[So at each subpoena "class" meeting we'd ask if anyone wanted to risk a First Amendment challenge, indicating that the American Civil Liberties Union was prepared to represent that person.] But after that, then we'd talk: Well, what about the fight-back and a meeting? Then the idea that we'd come up with a speaker, and then newspaper ads, and committees were set up. We'd bombard our minds, say between seven and nine-thirty, on that first night. We always had a plan for a meeting, a fight-back, sometimes at a public hall, sometimes at the Embassy Auditorium.

When the musicians were called, it was an amazing night because as they kept walking into that office there on Beverly Boulevard, by about eight o'clock

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

somebody said, "Hey, we've got a whole orchestra here; all we're missing is a piccolo player," in terms of the way the committee had picked up drums, strings, brass harp, the works. Then somebody said, "You know, we ought to have a concert." "Great, let's have a concert." So one of the best fight-backs we ever had was on the night before the HUAC hearing. We rented the Embassy Auditorium and got 1,200 people in there for a formal symphony concert, a fight-back. We brought in one non-subpoenaed person--a distinguished cellist--for a concerto. So it was a concert, like going to the L.A. Philharmonic [Orchestra]. These musicians who were subpoenaed were tops in their field. There were four members of the L.A. Philharmonic that were there, and then from other orchestras. Then there were some people subpoenaed who were not symphony people. They were jazz people. So, as they would say, we will do a jazz set. So at the end of a wonderful concerto for cello, the next thing would be a jazz set where the subpoenaed people who were just a jazz trombonist, a guitarist, or something, would play.

So we decided a concert or we decided a meeting. Then, how do we publicize it? Everybody should get the word out to all their friends immediately to get them there. We've got to get a leaflet out on the thing.

All right, a committee was set up to write a leaflet for the thing. We're going to need money. Well, everybody go out to your friends and see if you can't raise a \$100 and we'll meet again tomorrow night and see what we can do. The next night we would meet and the same people would be back and suddenly we'd have \$2-3,000 ready to go, so we'd buy full-page ads in the [Los Angeles] Times, or all the newspapers. We'd have a leaflet. We'd have another crew doing a mailing. We developed mailing lists, which is always the thing that most interested the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. They stole them repeatedly from us, we now know. We [earlier had] thought it was the unAmerican activities committee.

The musicians fight-back I remember particularly because they were so creative. They had a committee on art, or ads, or whatever it was called. They came up with the idea of a picture of an English horn on a main full-page ad in the L.A. Times, and all around the various valves and pipes of a complicated English horn would stand a little Sherlock Holmes--a series of them with Sherlock Holmes outfits on--London Fog raincoats with a spy glass and the hat, looking for subversives. The title of the ad was, "Force and Violins." Then below is, "Come to the Concert, Embassy Auditorium,"

[on] such-and-such a night. The place was jammed and people were just cheering and rocking, and the standing ovation for a whole symphony orchestra, every one of which had been called tomorrow morning to appear before HUAC to be labelled as subversive.

Now, the end result of all these things, and they happened repeatedly-- I got my first subpoena when we got [Alexander] Meiklejohn down. That was one time. Every time we did something creative, somebody found people who would come out. Henry Steele Commager came out once. We had a variety of people who were willing; we were locating these voices around the country and were bringing them out to get involved.

The word went out nationally that in L.A. they were fighting back. In most other communities, it was just deadly. They handled it individually. A few people would contact each other. They would hire private lawyers. Each would come in with a private lawyer. You'd have twenty people and twenty lawyers, and no lawyer could do it for less than a \$100 or \$200 to give up a day, so they'd collectively have to raise \$2,000. Early on, we got the idea of trying to get, within the ethics of the [American] Bar [Association], a group of lawyers that would take three or four cases and do them for the price of one so the money would be

channeled into public relations, ads, and the fight-back.

I'll close this by indicating that it worked. It worked amazingly well. Time after time we saved jobs. All the time this was set up, we set up special committees of members of the citizens committee to visit employers, to sit down with employers, saying, "Don't fire this social worker; don't fire this musician; don't fire this teacher. Watch whether this is an unconstitutional attack." We'd send distinguished citizens to visit a school principal, or a trade union, or whatever it was. Among the musicians, there were four members of the L.A. Philharmonic who were subpoenaed. They were top musicians. Well, our fight-back was so good that rather than have the L.A. Philharmonic fire them, Mrs. Norman [Dorothy Buffum] Chandler--what's her name?

TRELEVEN: Buffy.

WILKINSON: Yeah, but what is the name of the Chandler Pavilion?

TRELEVEN: Oh, Dorothy.

WILKINSON: Dorothy Chandler was the mainstay of the L.A. Philharmonic, and all she could think of is that this violist, this violinist, this flautist, was so good--she knew them to be so good in their music--that

she stepped in and she personally declared that no member of the L.A. Philharmonic is going to be removed simply because they were called before HUAC.

But that's because of a fight-back that was set in motion and the morale that was built. It worked. It worked. The word went out. Then, as I said, we carried it to San Francisco and then, finally, the newly-founded Emergency Civil Liberties Committee that had been set up in New York in '51 brought me back to launch a campaign to abolish HUAC, nationally--not just defend victims, but a campaign to abolish. That decision was made in 1957, and that's when I came back. It was an abortive effort, but we came back. We put in a full year trying to start a fight-back.

We had our first mass meeting in Carnegie Hall, with Dalton Trumbo as a speaker. *[Jean and I drove across the country, arriving in New York on August 7th. Despite the summer weather and vacation schedules, we were able to secure the support of available board and staff of the ECLC to rent Carnegie Hall for September 15th to launch what we hoped would be the start of a national campaign to abolish HUAC.

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

Before leaving Los Angeles, I was able to get Dalton Trumbo to come back as a speaker. Dalton would be sort of old hat in Los Angeles. He was a big draw in New York because he'd just received the Oscar award [Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences] for his screenplay (The Brave One), where he'd used the pseudonym of Robert Rich.]

It was at that time, also, that we wanted an academician because we were trying to defend the [Earl] Warren court, under attack because of its several favorable civil liberties decisions in the mid-1950s. When I couldn't find any law professors to do it, I located Hubie [Hugh H.] Wilson, professor of politics at Princeton [University] on vacation in Connecticut, and he agreed and spoke at that fight-back in New York. *[He advocated not only calling for the abolition of HUAC, but initiating a national campaign to curb the powers of J. Edgar Hoover. Carnegie Hall drew 2,000 people and, despite Hungarian "Freedom Fighters" and an auditorium-emptying stink bomb halfway into the meeting, it was an overwhelming success.]

Then at our Bill of Rights meeting in December of

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

'57 in New York, we raised money on a commitment that any HUAC hearing that is held anywhere in the country, that we will dispatch somebody from the staff--which usually was me--to go to that community to organize a fight-back. So the L.A. experience was carried elsewhere. We came to Philadelphia, we came to Newark, we came to primarily what I think of as the most dramatic one, Gary, Indiana. Then came Atlanta in August of '58, where I got my second subpoena from HUAC where the national ACLU stepped in to become counsel and represent me. I departed from ECLC for a number of reasons that I think I would like to discuss in this record at a later point.

TRELEVEN: Okay. According to your FOIA [Freedom of Information Act]-obtained materials, the little flurry of correspondence between New York and Los Angeles FBI agents verify that you had moved to New York. I guess they finally verified it on August 15 of '57. That's a very interesting record to read, how people waste time. Did the [Communist] Party support the fight-back?

WILKINSON: It's interesting that I pause in answering it. I would say very definitely yes. But what this record needs to make it clear is that the Party, as a party, had nothing to do with the fight-back. I get a call at seven o'clock in the morning saying, "I've got

a subpoena. I didn't call Dorothy [Ray] Healey, or Ben Dobbs, or someone else, and say, "What shall we do?" There was no [Party] control whatsoever of the Citizens Committee [to Preserve American Freedoms]. I mean, there was a friendly relationship; I have indicated earlier that people like Frank Carlson would come by from the Party and say, "How is it going?" "Here's some ideas you might think about."

But the people were brought together in the fight-back--instantly, without any knowledge of whether they were or were not communists--I later could observe and learn from just being the confidant and the organizer that many of the people called were not communists. Many of them were. But when we sat around that question wasn't brought up. It was not allowed to come to the surface because it's divisive. And so--

TRELEVEN: Well, I guess I'm asking as a matter of course did the Party agree with the strategy of the organization launching the fight-back?

WILKINSON: I have to say that I'm sure they did, but there was never a strategy meeting within the Communist Party. Never did we sit down and, as communists, talk about the strategy. The people who did this thing were non-Party liberals who brought the committee together, some of the people which I either guessed were in the

Party or were in the Party, but at no time was there a liaison between the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms and the Communist Party.

In fact, on one of these average hearings where the people get called, after about nine or ten o'clock I probably, myself, would call a Communist Party functionary and say, "By the way, there are subpoenas out, and if you hear of anybody that has a subpoena"--they all seem to be teachers, they all seem to be musicians, they all seem to be social workers or trade unionists--"if you hear of anybody, please urge them to be at my office tonight at seven o'clock." That was done simply because my assumption that a rank-and-file communist called before the committee would automatically go to the Party for ideas and leadership. I think what we had here were people calling the citizens committee before they were calling the Communist Party, because the citizens committee was known for its fight-back and its skills, and the way we turned the thing around.

I can give you examples where the Communist Party was involved. A very interesting one, the Gary, Indiana, thing if that would be relevant at this part of the story. That came in '57.

TRELEVEN: Why don't you weave that in as an example of

one of those situations?

WILKINSON: All right. It was in February of '58 and ECLC, Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, at the Bill of Rights dinner--December of '57--had announced that whenever a HUAC hearing was held we would send somebody out to help organize a fight-back. Harvey O'Connor wrote a wonderful pamphlet on the fight-back for ECLC; Harvey, it should be noted, was then the president of the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. The people who originally brought me back, I think, were Corliss Lamont, and Izzy [Isidor F.] Stone, and Carey McWilliams, who were members of the board of ECLC. But Harvey was the chair at this particular time and wrote a wonderful pamphlet, the name of which I don't remember, but it's sort of a five-years-after "Courage Is Contagious;" it's the same kind of thing. Harvey, Carl Braden, and I also did a pamphlet, with Bill Price, "Behind the Bars for the First Amendment," which was another one of these popularized pamphlets to encourage fight-back.

So that was the decision made at the Bill of Rights dinner where I had made the fund-raising pitch

myself in New York in December 15, 1957. *[As I recall the amount raised was \$25,000. There was strong support for the HUAC abolition campaign.] About the first week in February, 1958, I get a phone call from a person who does not give me his name, but he's calling from Gary, Indiana. HUAC had subpoenaed a number of steelworkers in Gary, and wanted to know if the ECLC would allow me to come to help organize a fight-back. I just seized on it. I said, "Of course, I'll come immediately! Where do I come?" This person on the phone said, "Well, come to Chicago and then we'll get you to Gary." (Gary's about thirty-five miles into Indiana from Chicago.)

I remember asking, "Well, who are you?" The person said, "I'd rather not tell you. I know who you are; I'll recognize you. Just take your plane and get here, and I'll meet your plane. There's a plane coming in at such-and-such a time, and I'll take care of it from there on." So with that vague report--no knowledge of anybody in Indiana or Gary or of anybody in Chicago--I'm going to meet a person who's going to meet me when I get off a plane. Based on a phone call,

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

I hop a plane and leave immediately for Chicago. This is our commitment. I get off the plane, I'm looking around for people, and a person comes up and introduces himself to me. This man turned out to be a musician. He was a piano teacher, or a violin teacher, in Chicago who later told me he was the head of the Communist Party of Indiana. He thanked me for coming and noted that I wasn't dressed properly because it was ten degrees below zero and I came in with a California gaberdine coat with no gloves, no hat, and no scarf even. This person drove me that night to South Chicago, where I was taken to a house in a working-class neighborhood, in the industrial area there. This man's name was Joe. (Subsequently, I learned his name, but it doesn't come to me now.) I go into this working-class home. This guy meets me at the airport, drives me to Joe, then he leaves me, and Joe takes over. Joe said, "We're glad you've come. I'll take you now to Gary." So this person gets me into another car and he drives me to the suburbs of Gary, where I'm taken into the home of a woman who is a nurse in some hospital in Gary. (I don't remember her name.) Once I'm in there, this Joe leaves and goes back, so the nurse now takes over. The nurse then drives me to the home of a very successful furniture businessman--the

largest furniture store in Gary--who had a lovely home in Gary where I was to stay. I'm taken in there and I'm put up for the night. The furniture people were not communists nor had any connection with communism. They were liberals like I described the [Aaron Allen] Heist group here in L.A., earlier. I knew the person who met me at the airport was a communist and knew Joe in South Chicago, and the nurse wondered if both were communists.

Along the route getting into Gary to the home, I was given a list of ten people who had been subpoenaed, and their phone numbers, and their addresses. My first question was, "Well, can we get them all together?" The answer was, "We can't get them together. Maybe you can." By this time they had loaned me an old, old, old--believe me, this is 1958--but this is a '40 Ford, or a '30 Ford. I remember it particularly because it had no heater. This was a car that was suddenly created for me so that I could locate these people. The suggestion was that I don't call these people, but go to see them.

Now, what I found--what I've already referred to--is that five days had elapsed from the time they got their subpoenas until I arrived there. By that time, everyone was suspicious of another one, and no one

would talk to each other. They wouldn't even allow their attorneys to talk to other attorneys. Some of them had attorneys and some of them didn't. There was one family of four brothers and a sister. They were divided; they were afraid that maybe one of them was an informer. They were all steelworkers. There were old-time steelworkers who'd been reared--like second, third generation--in the Gary steel mills, and then there were others who were young people with college educations who had come into Gary to try and get a job in the steel mills. The unAmerican [activities] committee had a word for them because what had happened-- I surmised that the Communist Party, in order to increase its influence in heavy industry, and not being able to recruit as effectively as they would among some of the older-time people, had induced young college graduates who were communists to go and conceal their educational backgrounds to go get a job in the steel mill. There was a word for them, a word that HUAC used. I believe undercover steelworkers were called "colonizers," or something like that.

Well, I went around for that week seeing these people individually, trying to get them to meet together to plan a strategy. I was left standing on front porches to talk through screens through half-open

doors. People wanted to know who I was and what I was doing. Usually I got in, and usually I was able to convince them that they should fight back and that we ought to get one lawyer. I think we did get agreement from them on having a common lawyer. The names of those lawyers are important because, while it slips me for the moment, I know that one later became a professor of law at a law school there. Valparaiso.

TRELEVEN: Valparaiso.

WILKINSON: He's today a very prominent professor of law at American University in Washington [Burton Wechsler]. But there were other young lawyers there too that agreed to represent people. All on their own, the people-- See, we at that time were trying to get people to use the First Amendment; we wanted a person to make the challenge.

The steelworkers union [United Steelworkers of America] was very corrupt, and the management of the steel mills in Gary had an understanding that anyone called before the unAmerican activities committee claiming the Fifth Amendment would be fired. So the only way you could hold onto your job was to claim the First Amendment. It was a really a Catch 22: use the First and go to jail; use the Fifth and lose your job. And in the late-fifties, to be unemployed in Gary,

Indiana, was nothing that anyone wanted. So not for just principle reasons, "Will one of you use the First?" (which I'd already done once in '56 and that didn't take, and I was due to take in August of '58; this is now February of '58) as a matter of finding somebody as a matter of conscience that would do it. The decision on using the First was agreed to by all the subpoenaed people partly because they'd lose their jobs if they didn't use the First. The Fifth Amendment was just the same as taking your pink slip and taking a walk. You're out of industry and you're blacklisted not only by the steel mills, but by the United Steelworkers union, who were deeply involved in a coalition--you might say--with the repressive techniques of business, the government, and the witch hunters.

Well, we had the lawyers, they were going to use the First, so then it was a matter of developing a fight-back. The idea of holding a meeting in Gary in that period of time, particularly in that weather-- It was unbelievably cold and I was driving back and forth, occasionally, through Chicago. I remember one night running out of gas on the Outer Drive at ten below [zero] in this old Ford. I think this furniture family gave me a scarf and gloves to wear, but I was still

just freezing in this car in that hour's drive in from Gary, and then running out of gas. It was a good three blocks to walk across to where you could see the lights of the buildings on Michigan Avenue. I was really in desperate shape. I don't quite remember how I did it, but I did get carried, or drive, or left the car, or something, and I got to a place, where I could get gasoline, but it was dangerous.

While I was in Gary I was reading the papers. There were three people who froze to death in the streets of Gary during this time when I was trying to organize. You know, these would be derelicts that would get caught up with, probably, alcohol and then sitting down, and freezing, which would come very quickly in that cold.

So I came back and I'm working with this furniture family. How can we get a fight-back? There's no time for a meeting. The people are afraid. Nobody in Gary is going to come because the word is out that these guys are all "communists." The other thing is that they were always trying to guess, even among themselves, who was the informer? They were sure there was somebody that was an informer. Well, it turned out that the informer was none of them--as you would expect--but it was another steelworker whom they

vaguely knew, who had become friends of them, and become an informer in the period before HUAC and testified against them.

These liberal people in this house I was staying at said, "Well, there used to be an ACLU chapter here in Gary"--it was really located out in Miller, which is a middle-class suburb outside of Gary--and Rabbi so-and-so used to be the head of it. But it's dormant now. The chapter used to be the Calumet chapter of ACLU of Indiana." So I contacted the rabbi and got some of the ACLU people together at somebody's house to talk in terms of a fight-back. We raised \$1,200 and we took a full-page ACLU ad in the Gary Post on the day of the hearings, and we urged everybody to come to the hearings. Out of that we were able to pack the hearing rooms in Gary, not with the friends of the subpoenaed people--who were too isolated and self-destructive to organize it--but using the remnants of a liberal community and an ACLU chapter there that had been dormant for some years.

The fight-back was wonderful. The Gary Post handled the story straight. The ad--small-town paper, a full-page ad. Of course, by that time I had all kinds of information on prominent people who were speaking out against HUAC. We had Jimmy [James]

Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, people like this; Reverend [Francis B.] Sayre, [Jr.]. We had big names we could use, in terms of fight-back, showing that the unAmerican activities committee--as Eleanor Roosevelt referred to it--as an agency of folly.

So the hearings were held. They all took the First Amendment. Their legal representation was excellent. Locally, the lawyers included Burt Wechsler and Arthur Daronasti, and Victor Rabinowitz might have come in from New York--or at least advised them from New York--but the local Gary lawyers handled it. At the end of the hearing, everybody felt wonderful. After the hearing all the subpoenaed people got together with the liberal people who'd placed the ad--the ACLU people--and we had a farewell affair in which everybody was so happy that they'd fought back. Nobody got fired because they'd all used the First Amendment. [laughter] Going to jail is at least a couple years ahead, but at least we've all saved our jobs. The ACLU voted to revive itself, so the old Calumet chapter of ACLU was revived. I'd come in without that connection. ECLC had paid for my flight over there and I didn't have many expenses, except gasoline, driving back and forth occasionally to Chicago. I stayed in the home of this liberal, middle-class family, and the

revived ACLU gave me something like \$100 they had left over from the \$1,200 after paying for an ad and thanked me very much.

That's the end of the story, except this gets back to why I decided to resign from ECLC at the end of my year's commitment. I came back to New York, really thrilled of what had been done under impossible circumstances--really impossible circumstances--but it had worked. The same technique we tried had worked even though we really demonstrated how difficult it is to organize subpoenaed people, even one day after they're subpoenaed; this was five!

There's a special meeting of the ECLC board that night, and I reported to it: "Well, here we are; we did the thing we promised to do at the Bill of Rights dinner."

TRELEVEN: I'm going to have to turn the tape over.

TAPE NUMBER: XXVI, SIDE TWO

FEBRUARY 8, 1986

TRELEVEN: We're back in New York with the ECLC.

WILKINSON: Right. I'm reporting the success of this affair, and I'm telling it with a lot of excitement because it worked. The people fought back. The subpoenaed people got together. They had good legal counsel. They made a First Amendment challenge. Above all, we found a dormant chapter of ACLU and revived it, so we leave the town with an ongoing liberal ACLU to defend the future in Gary, Indiana.

I then described how I was contacted: the unknown voice from Gary and the underground railroad I went through to go from the airport to South Chicago, to the nurse, to the family, describing that all these people, I presume, were communists except the person that I stayed with in Gary. I'm describing this as an example of the fear, and yet the coordination, of the communist Left in Chicago and Indiana.

There was a professor David Haber there; he's done outstanding scholarly work. [Thomas I.] Emerson, Haber, and [Norman] Dorson [Political and Civil Rights in the United States: A Collection of Legal and Related Materials] is the definitive 2,200-page book

on civil rights and civil liberties in the United States. Haber was at Rutgers [University], Thomas I. Emerson--my advisor--from Yale [University], and Norman Dorson was then the president of national ACLU. Haber was very concerned that I had been working with communists in organizing this fight-back, and that I shouldn't have been. He thought it was dangerous for ECLC staff to work directly with communists. I argued with him, "How else are we going to find out? I would never have been able to get there if it hadn't been for the Communist Party--if it was the Communist Party--and I think it was." Then Clark Foreman, who had been doing a lousy job as the director of ECLC and himself was under threats to be removed--(I was brought in to form a Committee to Abolish HUAC because ECLC didn't think that Clark Foreman was doing a very good job. So they weren't going to get rid of him, but they'd at least bring me in to do a real program. That's what Carey, and Izzy Stone, and Corliss Lamont wanted)--Clark said, "Well, why did you form an ACLU chapter? Why didn't you form an ECLC chapter?" We had no chapters of ECLC and he was saying that. I said, "Look, where there is an existing body, it is our job to organize them, not to set up something competitive. The fact that I left behind a viable ACLU chapter was

one of the more important products of the whole hearing." Well, some of the people in ECLC indicated that I lacked loyalty to ECLC. Corliss Lamont had helped to set up the ECLC back in 1951 because the ACLU, from way back at the time of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn forward, was red-baiting, kicking Elizabeth Gurley Flynn off the board of ACLU, Corliss resigning from ACLU, the red-baiting in their legal work, the whole ACLU picture in the 1940s and fifties was bad.

I felt, as an organizer, that my job was to try not only to organize resistance to HUAC, but to try to straighten ACLU out, to try to clean up their act. From the beginning, when I came to New York I began going down to them. I finally got the New York ACLU to provide free lawyers. When my own case came up in July, Rowland Waits, general counsel of ACLU, agreed to take my case free of charge. I thought this was progress. The ECLC is deliberately called Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, and as soon as we can get the country in better shape--and get ACLU to clean up its act--then there'll be no need for a separate group.

But I had been a traitor. I had formed a new group and I'd worked with communists. From that point on I think that-- Well, I had already resigned from ECLC because I'd found there was so much anti-communism

in the outfit. Unprincipled anti-communism--not anti-communism in the sense that I, as a communist, resented--but an unprincipled thing, particularly in a group that was set up to counter ACLU's anti-communism, which was hurting their effectiveness. I already had let Corliss Lamont know that I would stay out my year's contract, but at the end of the year's contract--when Congress adjourned--I wanted to go back to Los Angeles because I did not believe that ECLC with its anti-communism, with a certain touch of anti-Semitism, could ever effectively organize an abolition of the HUAC committee.

Did I mention before the crisis on this with Clark Foreman when Francis [E.] Walter, chair of the unAmerican activities committee, put an article in the Philadelphia Bulletin describing the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee as a communist-front organization? I believe this happened in the fall of 1957. Clark contacted the Philadelphia Inquirer or Bulletin, whatever it was, and got permission to write an answer to Francis Walter. Francis Walter was a Pennsylvania Democrat who had originally voted against HUAC back in the late-forties, and then became a chair of HUAC in the mid-fifties. So Clark had permission to write an answer in the Op-Ed page of the Philadelphia Inquirer

or Bulletin, whatever it was.

He handed it to me to read. In his article Clark had said that Walter was wrong, that the ECLC is not a communist front (so that was the way to approach this thing; you deny that you're this), and he went on to say that there are no communists within ECLC. This is his way. He said, "This will take care of Walter saying we're a communist front." He asked me to read it. He said, "What do you think of it, Frank?" I said, "I think it's terrible!" He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, this is what ACLU does. They deny they're communists. They won't have anything to do with communists. On top of that," I said, "by answering this kind of question, you make it impossible for a person who is a communist to survive because until such time as one can be a member of a proscribed Left party without economic sanctions, we're not going to be able to have our civil liberties here. So those who are not communists should not answer the question, either. You, in effect, are publicly going before HUAC and answering the questions in order to answer Walter's charges that you're a communist front."

Then I went beyond that. I said, "Beyond that, you say there are no communists in the ECLC." (Now, we had a letterhead which had fifty or sixty officers'

names running along the left margin, like you do in any organizational letterhead.) I said, "How do you know there aren't any communists on that letterhead? Have you asked them whether or not they're willing to have you deny that they are communists?" (Because I knew that people all over the place, like Harvey O'Connor, the chair, wouldn't answer the question himself; Izzy Stone wouldn't answer; Carey McWilliams wouldn't answer; a lot of people.) I said, "How do you know there aren't any communists on our board?" He said, "I know there aren't any because I would not allow them to be there." I then said, "Clark, how do you know I'm not a communist?" He laughed and said, "Well, Frank, you couldn't be. You used the First Amendment."

TRELEVEN: Aha.

WILKINSON: So, suddenly it was revealed to me that in their mind anyone who used the First was not a communist. If you used the Fifth, you were a communist. They were buying the very threat to the Fifth Amendment that had been developed over the period of time where if you used the Fifth you weren't the ordinary garden-variety communist, but you were a "Fifth Amendment communist."

That was just destroying the guts. Let's be clear about that historically. The Fifth Amendment comes

down from the same precious First Amendment antecedents as the First Amendment itself does, from the struggle for religious freedom in England where Catholics were beheading Presbyterians--or Presbyterians were beheading Catholics--because they wouldn't announce their religion. The attack on the Quakers, all of these things, and out of that comes the historical development of the Fifth Amendment, that it's not an admission of guilt, but saying, "I will not answer because to answer I might in some way incriminate myself." That's what it really means, not an admission of guilt, and here Clark Foreman is the head of an emergency group set up to fight the ACLU because of their anti-communism, and saying, "We don't have any. I wouldn't allow them. You couldn't be, Frank, because you used the First Amendment in L.A. back in '56."

Let me close this point off about the damage that had been done to the Fifth Amendment by that time, and why it was critically important not only to fight back, but to establish the First Amendment as a legitimate defense without going to jail for it, which is what we were seeking from the Warren court.

I was in the hearings in Los Angeles when Zero Mostel was called. It was a closed hearing at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. I'm talking about Zero

Mostel, the Broadway actor who is now no longer living; in fact, his wife just died. (So many of these wonderful people are gone.) I was invited by the lawyers who were representing Zero. It was a closed hearing in a small dining room at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. Clyde [G.] Doyle, probably Francis Walter, Donald [L.] Jackson, the ice cream peddler from Santa Monica, they were the members of the [unAmerican activities] committee. It was big, big-time headline, which HUAC always wanted. HUAC always wanted headlines when they came to California; you subpoena a prominent actor before you, you get a headline. So, here they had Zero and they were trying to get a headline out of it. Outside the hearing room were scores of radio, television, newspapers, wanting to hear what would happen. As I say, I was privileged to be inside, and it was a hilarious hearing. It began with the committee's counsel almost going right to the throat on the first question. "Mr. Mostel, are you or are you not a communist?" I mean, bang, bang, like that. I remember Zero leaping out of his chair behind the counsel's table, knocking the microphones on the floor, reaching for the throat of HUAC's counsel, while shouting, "That man called me a communist! Get him out of here! He asked me if I'm a communist! Get him out

of here!" [laughter]

Well, the committee was all laughing because Zero Mostel was on stage in a private hearing room. All the way through it, he played and parlayed with them this way. It went on for twenty minutes like this, with Zero responding to their questions by reciting each Amendment to the Bill of Rights. Finally, at the end of about twenty minutes, the HUAC counsel cautiously said, "Mr. Mostel, we know all about those amendments. We know all about all these other things. We simply want to know are you, or are you not, claiming the Fifth Amendment?" Not are you, or are you not, a communist, but are you, or are you not, claiming the Fifth Amendment? What they wanted him to say was yes. At that point, after twenty minutes of sparring, Zero said, "Yes, I'm claiming the Fifth Amendment." The hearings were stopped right then. The PR guy, Wheeler, who was the FBI liaison (we now know; we didn't know then) in his capacity as western director of the unAmerican activities committee, goes to the door, opens the door, and outside is all the press. He doesn't say one word to the press. He opens the door and holds up five fingers. All the press dashes for the telephones there in the Roosevelt Hotel. The headlines the next morning: "Zero Mostel, called before

the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, pleaded the Fifth Amendment." That was the damage they were doing to individuals, and doing to the constitutional protection of freedom in this country as we have in our Fifth Amendment.

Going back again to ECLC and Clark Foreman saying, "Well, you couldn't be a communist, Frank, because you used the First Amendment," that was good reason for getting out of ECLC. The organization still continues and does some good legal work in direct competition with legal work being done by ACLU.

When [Irving] Ferman-- I don't know whether we did or did not-- If we haven't gotten it in the record, the next time we should bring in my connection with the ACLU Washington director, an attorney by the name of Ferman, who was an ACLU person for many years who was the direct liaison with Cartha DeLoach and J. Edgar Hoover. *[Based on information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the national ACLU made it known that the FBI had liaisons with ACLU.] It was brought out that a number of people in the ACLU had these personal relationships with the FBI.

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

Ernest Angel, or somebody like that--an attorney--had these connections. On motion from our Southern California affiliate in the 1970s that the loyalty oaths were wrong, the Elizabeth Gurley Flynn thing was wrong, and the fact that ACLU people--staff and officers--had liaison with the FBI, all of these things were condemned. At that point, ECLC put out a fund-raising appeal nationally in which it said, "We have never been engaged in any liaison with the FBI." (I can't remember the text of it.) I got that letter signed by Edith Tiger, who took over after Clark Foreman's death, and I read that thing a couple of times. The hypocrisy of, twenty years later, for ECLC to come clean: We never got involved in red-baiting, or liaison with the FBI.

It was too much for me and I sent a letter of resignation to Corliss Lamont that day. I stayed with them all these years, nominally, because they were doing civil liberties work. But when that came out, that was too much for me to stomach and I shed them. I've made a point of not attacking ECLC. They're not the enemy; the FBI, or the HUAC, or whatever we're talking about are the enemies here. But it is the hypocrisy of a so-called liberal group attacking other liberal groups and then trying to advance themselves

financially with that kind of a hypocritical statement when I know what the true record was in terms of the anti-communism and the red-baiting and whatnot that was going on inside ECLC when I was there in '57, '58.

TRELEVEN: All right. Why don't we leave it there today?

WILKINSON: I would be delighted to leave it there.
[laughter]

TRELEVEN: Thank you, Frank. We'll get back together again.

WILKINSON: I hope the recorder can record my chuckle. It's been a long interview and I've said a lot of factual material that I'm glad is going into this oral history and I think needs to be down for whoever wants to read it in the next century.

TRELEVEN: I agree.

TAPE NUMBER: XXVII, SIDE ONE

APRIL 11, 1992

TRELEVEN: It's April 11, 1992; the last time we were together, I believe, it was 1986. So, I guess to begin with, there will be future researchers who will be wondering if we had a falling out? What the heck have we been doing these past six years that's prevented us from getting together? Maybe I'll just open up with the question: What has happened since the last time we taped, which was back in early '86? What's been going on in your life?

WILKINSON: Well, in terms of this delay or in terms of what's been going on generally? Let's start out with the delay and just what happened there.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: In 1985, I was in the fifth year of the lawsuit beginning in 1980, Wilkinson v FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], where based upon information I had obtained in the seventies--after I was sixty-five, actually--a lawsuit was filed through the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] of Southern California, but through the pro bono help of the volunteer counsel at Loeb and Loeb, Douglas E. Mirell, the primary lawyer there. We were moving it along

quite well in our move toward discovery in the case. The FBI had been holding back on data constantly. In fact, by '85 they had finally been forced to admit the total they had in terms of documents on me. When they started out and for the first two years they insisted all they had was 4,000 pages; in 1982 they found 40,000 more; in '83 they found 70,000 more; by 1985 the FBI admitted to having 132,000 pages covering a period of thirty-eight years from 1942 to 1980.

As the trial was moving forward, the FBI was providing files indicating they were getting increasingly intrusive in their relations toward us. For example, in 1983 we received a document dated in March of '64 indicating their involvement in an effort to assassinate me in 1964. When Loeb and Loeb made that public, the L.A. Times carried a major story, "FBI Failed to Warn of Death Threat." The FBI then cut off all further submissions of documents to us, and it went like that for five months. Then we went back to the court to complain that they were supposed to give us 5,000 pages. Even at that, at the end of two years you still had only 120,000 pages.

TRELEVEN: Okay, and this is all going on as part of discovery. Is that correct?

WILKINSON: Right, right. So the judge [A. Wallace

Tashima] ordered them again, and then they gave us--I think it was August of '83--on the order of the judge 3,264 exact pages; [I remember] because there was always an invoice at ten cents a page for these things, including totally blank pages. We went to the judge with 3,000 totally blank pages and complained we could have no trial if we're getting blank pages. They were totally blank; every word had been crossed out. There was no date; my name didn't appear, so you didn't know--

TRELEVEN: Okay, and since the outset this was Judge Tashima?

WILKINSON: Tashima, right. A. Wallace Tashima.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: The judge then told us that we should enter into an agreement of protective order whereby they would give us unredacted, unblanked-out pages and we, in turn, agreed that we would not make public, in any way, any name of a non-public person. Public persons, yes, but non-public persons, no. That was a great breakthrough because we left the usual procedures on this kind of a case from the Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] in the civil discovery. So from that time forward we began getting thousands of pages that were wide open, very few things blanked out.

On the assassination thing, for example, where

there had been a blank-out in terms of the person staked out to witness my assassination, we got a new document showing that the person working with the FBI was the commander of the Los Angeles Police Department anti-subversive detail. (Later on we might mention why all this came to play.)

TRELEVEN: Okay, but right now you're dealing with pages that you're getting during the [President James E.] Carter administration. Is this before the [Ronald W.] Reagan tightening up on--

WILKINSON: No. No, this is 1989 when we learned the title of the stakeout. The trial began at the end of the Carter administration, 1980. The rationale for cutting us off in 1983 after-- I claim it was the release of the assassination document. On the documents that they did give us, while all blanked out, there were parenthetical ABCs along the margin telling you why the blank-out. Most of them were blanked out for parenthetical C, which goes to the legend on the letter from the FBI to Loeb and Loeb saying this information had been withheld due to President Reagan's executive order on secrecy, which was in the spring of 1982.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: So we were deeply into the Reagan period by

this point.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: So we began getting these documents and with this we had a class action which had been agreed to probably in '81, whereby there was not only myself as the primary named plaintiff, [but] other members of the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation, NCARL, and some 1,700 persons who during the fifties and sixties and seventies had made contributions to our committee. The judge accepted them as class-action plaintiffs because they had given money for a purpose which was frustrated by the FBI's surveillance and disruption.

TRELEVEN: Okay, let me back up a minute. Now, what are the events that take place that lead up to the decision to file the suit in the first place?

WILKINSON: It goes back to Watergate--and before. In 1969, in August--that would have been during [President Richard M.] Nixon's administration; Nixon came in the election '68.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: He was inaugurated in January of '69. There was a burglary in my office on Western Avenue where five persons carrying guns came in, placed Minna Berlow in an adjacent office into a restroom, told her

to keep the door shut or they'd kill her, and took the man who we thought of as sort of the night protection person--Mr. Greenfield--and made him lie on the floor, covered him with a rug, and told him if he moved he'd be killed. Then they used sledge hammers. (By that time we'd had burglaries in '61 while I was in prison. Two burglaries, two weeks apart, where they'd come in and stolen mailing lists. After the first one we put on major, major locks, and bolts, and hinges on our doors. Two weeks later they came in and using steel cutters or heavy bolt cutters, broke in and took our total mailing list. This all happened while I was in prison in '61. Those burglaries stopped, so far as we knew. Later, we were to learn that burglaries were going on probably steadily from the fifties all the way through at my office, my home, and our offices elsewhere in the country.)

But we had very strong security. I mean, it was a large, large lock and very heavy hinges. Then once you did get in, there were more hinges. So you couldn't just use the passkey. After they had tied these people up, not tied them up--

TRELEVEN: Put one in the restroom and one under the rug.

WILKINSON: --they then, according to what the

volunteers could hear, used sledge hammers. By the appearance, it had to be something like that because the whole center of the door had been smashed through. The lock held and the hinges held, but they went through the middle of the door. They came in and didn't touch things of value like the typewriters, postage stamps, or petty cash. But they went to a file of mine, which was a steel metal four-drawer legal file case marked "Correspondence," and took an entire file drawer out. I [later] came in, and there were three drawers instead of four.

And I don't know whether you want the details on this or not.

TRELEVEN: Well, what--

WILKINSON: It was interesting detail. I've just myself been rereading the FBI data on this for the last three days. Let me just summarize this: I had left on a field trip to the East Coast and was speaking that afternoon in Spanish Fork, Utah, and I got a phone call about one o'clock in the afternoon--Saturday afternoon--from Mr. Greenfield and Minna Berlow; she'd been a long-time volunteer for our offices and also the peace offices.

There'd been this burglary and these men had carried guns, threatened them, and had left.

Greenfield and Berlow found the office in shambles; my papers were spilled all over table tops, and so on, and the file drawer missing.

So I said, "Did you call the police?"

They said they had.

I said, "Are they there yet?"

"No, they're not."

So from Utah I said, "I'll come back immediately. When the police come, have them fingerprint everything. Do everything you can to get all the evidence you can. Cooperate fully with the police."

I drove seventy miles from Spanish Fork to Salt Lake City, managed to get on the next plane--which had to make a stop in Las Vegas--and finally arrived in Los Angeles at six o'clock, four hours later. My daughter [Jo] picked me up at the airport. We drove directly to the office, and came in, and Minna Berlow and Mr. Greenfield were still there, but the police had not arrived.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: Several calls. I got on the phone and went directly to the--I think it was the Hollywood [police] station which covered Western Avenue at that point--and asked to talk to the captain, or somebody in charge, and made a very vehement protest that this major

burglary had taken place early in the afternoon, four hours had gone by, and still nobody there. In little more than ten minutes there were two police cars and a fingerprint expert. The place began to fill up with police. (That's hyperbole; there were four or five police officers there.)

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: Almost immediately the fingerprint guy going over things said, "I cannot get any prints off these because there's too much delay. They're on the sides of manila folders. It's evaporated." They couldn't find any fingerprints. So that's what happened. Now--

TRELEVEN: Now, let me interrupt. What was in that particular file drawer? Why would they take that file drawer instead of, say, the other three?

WILKINSON: I'm not sure that we know. A very careful study of the FBI records at that time would probably show that they got certain information, although they still--to this day--claim that they did not do the burglary. (I'll mention that later because that's where we got the lead that allowed us to file the lawsuit.)

In the 1961 burglaries where correspondence was taken, including an index-card file of the officers and

board members of the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms [CCPAF], that was while I was in prison, maybe June or July of '61. Then in February or March of '62, the unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] held a hearing in Los Angeles in which they subpoenaed before them, among other people, a friend of mine, Chauncey [A.] Alexander, who at that time was the executive director of the L.A. Heart Association. We'd been long-time friends, we were building our board, so many of the people on our board were people who had represented classes of people called before HUAC from '52 forward. They questioned Chauncey. Somehow a private session was held with [California] State Senator Richard Richards as his attorney, trying to find out why he was caught up in this thing because the Heart Association-- Well, he'd had no connections directly with the Citizens Committee. They questioned him, "Are you a member? How long have you been a member of the board of the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms?"

He said, "I have never been."

Well, that made complete evidence to me that HUAC had made that break-in because I'd been encouraging Chauncey to come to our meetings. He never said no.

He said, "Let me know and I'll try sometime." So to be sure he got invited, I had an index card with his name, address, and phone number on it, and put it in there along with the board members of the committee. They stole that; that was missing when they finished, so we assume that and the fact that HUAC had done that indicated that. We never dreamed of anybody beyond HUAC doing it. By '61, we were in the second year of our campaign to abolish HUAC and a great deal of controversy was developed, and so on.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, which we'll get back to--especially in the context of your prison years and your immediate release--at a later session. So again, we're looking here at '69 and you've got this one file drawer that's missing.

WILKINSON: Missing. But because of that and because of what had happened twice in '61, we presumed that the unAmerican activities committee had done it again.

Pictures were taken and news stories were-- We made those statements at that time. Then, in 1972 or '73--after Watergate--there was an arrest of a group called the "plumbers", the Nixon administration plumbers was the name given to them--

TRELEVEN: Yes, right.

WILKINSON: --and a man by the name of G. Gordon Liddy

was among those arrested. He was working with a group of Cubans, primarily, in some of these break-ins that happened in Washington. They had evidence that he had broken into the psychiatrist's office in Beverly Hills where Dr. [Lewis J.] Fielding--the psychiatrist for Daniel Ellsberg--and the break-in was to try to get data out of the psychiatric files that would discredit Ellsberg.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Ellsberg, at that time, had become a public figure through announcements that he and a man by the name of Tony Russo had taken the "Pentagon Papers" from research that they were doing at a think tank out in this area, wherever it was. Where's the think tank?

TRELEVEN: Santa Barbara?

WILKINSON: No, the one, RAND [Corporation], or whatever it is.

TRELEVEN: Oh.

WILKINSON: That's right. I think they were both working at RAND.

TRELEVEN: RAND, okay. Yes, yes. You're correct.

WILKINSON: They had come across the whole history of the background of the Vietnam War, indicating facts that the public had never heard that questioned the whole--I can't remember the words--thing starting

because the Vietnamese attacked one of our ships off the coast of Vietnam.

TRELEVEN: Right. Right, the [USS] Maddox, as I remember.

WILKINSON: In the Gulf of Tonkin.

TRELEVEN: The destroyer Maddox got fired on.

WILKINSON: So this break-in-- Nixon, of course, was involved in that and the Nixon administration had prosecuted Ellsberg to try to punish him for having released the data to the New York Times, and the Washington Post, the Unitarian Universalist Beacon Press. That was a trial that was going on, ultimately.

TRELEVEN: So that's the context in which Fielding's office is--

WILKINSON: --is burglarized.

TRELEVEN: --burglarized. What's this got to do with NCARL?

WILKINSON: That's right. In reading the transcript, an attorney in Virginia who was an officer of our committee, and who was then president of the Virginia ACLU--Philip [J.] Hirschkop--called me from Virginia and said, "That break-in you had in '69 was not due to the unAmerican activities committee; it was due to Liddy and the group of Nixon plumbers," and he asked was it not true that there was a group of Cubans that

were involved--came in with their handguns--in that burglary in '69.

I said, "Yes."

"What was the date?"

I told him the date and we compared the date of the Ellsberg thing. It appeared to us that Liddy had hit Ellsberg one night and hit me the next night, or the next afternoon, or something like that.

So on the basis of that, I was instructed by my own board to contact the Watergate prosecutor at that time--

TRELEVEN: Archibald Cox?

WILKINSON: --Archibald Cox, a Harvard [University] law professor who was then Watergate prosecutor. (He later was removed.)

So I wrote to Archibald Cox, asked if Liddy had burglarized my office, and sent him all the data. He agreed to investigate. I don't remember the timing, because I think Cox went out in '74. Nixon resigned in the summer of '74 and I think that Cox had refused to do certain things. There was the famous "Saturday Night Massacre."

TRELEVEN: That's right.

WILKINSON: Then another person and another person refused to do it, and then, finally, somebody obeyed

Nixon's orders.

But during the period from whenever [Hirschkop] first called me and the time Cox was forced out in that "Saturday Night Massacre"--as they called it--he was very diligent. There was a good deal of correspondence asking questions. He's searching for it. I, subsequently, actually have the FBI files themselves on their own search to find out if Liddy had done this. Cox was in a position of power. The FBI checked out many, many, many Cubans in the other L.A. area, in Florida, and in prisons in California where they were interrogated: Did they make this break into my office? Cox was telling me, "We're doing it." (He didn't tell me all about this thing; I saw later how thorough his search had been.) It's very much to the credit of professor Cox that with all the really big things going on in Watergate, he took the time to trace down my little burglary in '69--by Liddy, we thought.

Finally, he wrote me--just before his own dismissal--saying that he could find no evidence that Liddy or any of the other Nixon "plumbers" had broken into my office, and said, "I suggest that you talk to the FBI about this. I'm sending in two...."

TRELEVEN: Okay, let me pause for a minute. Mr. Greenfield and Minna Berlow who was held in the

restroom definitely identified the five as Cubans?

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: How did they know?

WILKINSON: Whether it was five or four, I think it was five.

TRELEVEN: How did they know they were Cubans?

WILKINSON: That was a presumption on their part.

TRELEVEN: They were--?

WILKINSON: The language--

TRELEVEN: They spoke Spanish?

WILKINSON: I don't know whether they spoke any English or not, but they definitely were Spanish-speaking.

Because there were many Cubans in the area at that time, they presumed they were Cubans. In part of the investigation of this, either by Cox or by my own efforts, the police showed both Greenfield and Berlow photographs of known Cuban burglars. This is not Watergate; it's '69. Known Cuban burglars; they could not identify specifically any of these people. That had been done. I mean, actually the Times and the police department gave these pictures to both of them, and they could not identify them.

TRELEVEN: The second question I had: Did NCARL have a friend--or friends--at Harvard who were colleagues of Cox's that sort of helped Cox to maintain his interest

in this?

WILKINSON: We certainly did, but whether it was exercised directly, I don't know. One of my three constitutional law advisors at that time was professor Vern Countryman, who was the leading authority on bankruptcy at Harvard Law School and had his office adjacent to Cox's office. So they were associates. Countryman was very familiar with the break-ins and what we were trying to find out, and our communications with Cox, and to what extent-- Well, certainly Cox would have noted--both professor Countryman and professor Thomas I. Emerson, who was another of our constitutional law advisors and considered the leading authority on the First Amendment at Yale law school [School of Law]--would have noted those things. Whether Professor Carole [E.] Goldberg-Ambrose [UCLA law professor] was on our letterhead at that time, I'd have to go back and check the record. She came on possibly--I'm quite sure--later, so he may have just known Emerson and Countryman.

But I have not asked Countryman or Tom whether or not they talked with Cox, or whether Cox talked to them. I would just say that my correspondence with Cox was very professional. It was all on letterhead, usually carboned to Emerson and Countryman, and his

back to me.

Your question just brings up to my own mind now, for the first time, that the reason why Cox gave us such good attention may well have been that he could see that this [NCARL] was a responsible civil liberties association. Countryman was one of the most respected conservative professors on bankruptcy law at Harvard, and Emerson, the scholar, was known nationally.

TRELEVEN: So it's possible, but you don't know for sure.

WILKINSON: It's possible. At any rate, Cox wrote this letter to me and into my office three days later came these two FBI agents. It seems to me it was within three days afterwards.

TRELEVEN: Cox said if you want to pursue this further, you should get hold of the FBI?

WILKINSON: No--I think we have a copy of it in the file--he said, "I find no evidence that Liddy or any of the other 'plumbers' did this. I suggest you talk to the FBI about this. I have asked them to see you."

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: When I read the letter at the time, it struck me as rather ambiguous. He didn't say, "Maybe the FBI did it," but if you read it you could say, "If they didn't do it, why should we talk to the FBI about

it unless they were somehow involved?" But I certainly had no idea that the FBI was involved. I did not have too much respect for the FBI generally at that time, because we knew that the FBI were frequently calling upon people on the Left to question them about their associations. We'd hear these stories that FBI agents would call on people. They never called upon me; I'd never seen one.

But these two fellows came in and I found out who they were and that they had been sent there by Cox. I think if FBI agents had just come in to make an inquiry, my tone probably would have been, "I have nothing to say to you men if you're here on political reasons," just not any connection with HUAC, but that just would have been my attitude.

In fact, in the liberal-progressive-Left community at that time, there were literally flyers out about what to do if the FBI calls. The general thing was answer no questions; tell them if they want to come to you to see your lawyer. Get a lawyer; that was the attitude because anything you say might be damaging to you.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: That would have been my attitude that way: just sort of fine if the FBI wants to come to me but I

would have said, "I have nothing to say to you at all. If you want to talk to me, see Bob [Robert S.] Morris [Jr.], see Bob [Robert W.] Kenny. Talk to my lawyers." They were my lawyers at that time.

But this is my own humor. They were funny looking. I'd never seen them [before], but they struck me like clones. They were look-alikes. They wore the same suits--identical fabrics--the same neckties, hats maybe, same pocket handkerchiefs. My wife [Donna Childers Wilkinson] was joking and said they probably used the same cologne. They had that little ballet step when they'd approach you: The FBI, they'd pull out their badges in their hand and sort of flash them to you. The mixture of humor in seeing them and wondering why they were there--and mostly responding correctly to Professor Cox's initiative--I told them to come on in and sit down, and they did sit down. Out of a spontaneous sense of humor, I, without smiling--and I'd been very firm with them at the door when they came in--just said, "Gentlemen, I have one question to ask you. Did you burglarize my office?" I didn't smile, and I had no idea when I asked that question if they did. There was a long pause, probably it was fifteen seconds but it seemed longer, and the lead agent looked at me and rather hesitantly gave me what I've since called

the shortest two words of my life. I said, "Did you burglarize my office?" The next word said by either of us was the lead agent saying, "What date?" That just struck me as such a nonsequitur. I gave him the date. I am not dumb. I'd been naive to assume that the FBI wouldn't have done these things to me for the last forty years, at that point.

So, I then took steps, back with Hirschkop in Virginia, to file under the Freedom of Information Act to find out if there was a file on NCARL, on the Committee to Abolish HUAC. Now, this is still '70--
TRELEVEN: Okay, so this--

WILKINSON: The unAmerican activities committee was not abolished until '75.

TRELEVEN: Right. I was going to say that the fuller context is the continuing battle to abolish HUAC.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: You filed for FOIA. Was this before the [United States Senator Frank F.] Church committee revelations that you decided that you would file for FOIA?

WILKINSON: I never thought about it. I know the dates. I think I filed in '74, right after the FBI visit.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: It had to be about the same time as Cox was fired that the agents came to me. The Church committee began their studies--by reference, it's the Senate Select Committee on Government Operations; the late-senator Frank Church of Idaho was chair--and it was a truly bipartisan committee. The ranking Republican on this committee was Barry [M.] Goldwater. It's very significant because they were the ones, in '75, to produce this 3,500 page document indicting the FBI for violating the First Amendment over the years. I think it's much more significant to me now than it was then. There was a reference in those 3,500 pages at one point--I've never seen it, but somebody many years later told me--to the fact that the FBI had been investigating--and violating the rights of--people seeking to abolish the unAmerican activities committee. It was in there, I am told.

When the Church committee report came out--Nixon resigned in '74; [Gerald R.] Ford came in immediately as president and the Church committee turned over the report to Ford in '75--Ford retained one of the better attorneys general we've ever had, Edward [H.] Levi, former president of the University of Chicago and dean of the University of Chicago law school. In April of 1976, Levi wrote for the first time in fifty years, by

attorney general order, that the FBI hereafter should carry on its investigations without violating the rights protected under the Constitution.

But the point is, that was public knowledge.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: Yet I never tried to get ahold of the volumes. I never tried to read the press to see much about it. Our target was the unAmerican activities committee.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So you're visited by the FBI agents, you got the strange answer, you're back in touch with Hirschkop. Was it Hirschkop, then, who suggested that you file for FOIA?

WILKINSON: No, we agreed. I guess, yes, he probably suggested that we should file and he would do it.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: He filed but I never saw the documents until some time later when 4,000-plus pages had been accumulated. He got a couple of hundred. Then he'd say, "We're appealing," and there was some more. There was more appealing, and as the documents came in they were kept at Hirschkop's office in Virginia. Finally, then, when we'd exhausted all the appeals--the FBI was trickling them in in small amounts; by the time we lost our last appeal under the Freedom of Information Act,

we could get no more--the documents were then all moved over to our office in Washington, D.C. Our director then was Esther Herst.

TRELEVEN: Esther Herst.

WILKINSON: She would read through them and say-- I don't remember anything very strong about it. I never asked to see them; I just said, "Well, look at them and see if there's anything there. Was there anything here that would justify a lawsuit? In legal language, is there a justiciable case evident from these things?" Then I inquired, "Well, how many pages have we got so far?" And it was up to 4,000 at that point.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let me take a little side track. How does Hirschkop fit into all of this? I mean, who is Hirschkop, what is his background, and how is it that you were connected with him?

WILKINSON: He was a very distinguished lawyer in Virginia--president of the ACLU of Virginia at that time--handling many civil liberties cases and recognized nationally as one of the better lawyers in the field of civil liberties and within ACLU. For all these reasons, in our battle against HUAC he was involved with us in Virginia. In the course of that, we invited him to come on our board and he agreed to.

TRELEVEN: I see. Okay.

WILKINSON: He was a vice-chair of the Committee to Abolish HUAC--

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: --and had been for some time.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so he is filing these [FOIA] requests not in your name, but in the name of NCARL?

WILKINSON: My name.

TRELEVEN: Your name? Okay.

WILKINSON: And NCARL.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So you're up to 4,000 pages and you're not--?

WILKINSON: Right, and I had not read them. Hirschkop didn't want them sitting around in his office, so he transferred them over to our Washington office and they sat there for I don't know how long. By hindsight, we were endangering our statute of limitations factor in the later lawsuit because we did not respond immediately.

But Esther read through them. I don't remember her remarks, but she didn't take them too seriously. By that time the FBI had broken into Plymouth [meeting] in Pennsylvania, and whoever stole the FBI files out of the Plymouth meeting was releasing them. They took the names of people they found in the FBI files and the FBI was desperately trying to find out who had done the

burglary on them and who was releasing it. They never did find out. To this day we don't know. But the public was talking about it. Plymouth meeting files revealed so-and-so. So people are beginning to wonder about these things. Simultaneously, the Church committee [report] would come out and, again, this is a select committee on intelligence.

I just didn't put it together. Esther didn't put it together. She said, "There's a lot of stuff here, but I don't know what you can make of it." So finally, Esther Herst was either moving offices or-- Four thousand pages is not a huge pile; when you compare it with our 132,000 pages, it's exactly one thirty-first of the total that we now have.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, right.

WILKINSON: But Esther wanted to get rid of them [the 4,000 pages], so she shipped them to L.A.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I think we'll pause right there because we have to turn the tape over.

TAPE NUMBER XXVII, SIDE TWO

APRIL 11, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, the papers got shipped to L.A. The question I have is what's the broader context that did not interest you in looking at this material, a lot of which was on you?

WILKINSON: I never saw it until it was shipped to L.A. Then my curiosity was whetted when I saw it. But there's another context in all this that needs to be remembered, explaining my own attitude. (I never thought of this until just now, too.) In 1969, I had an injury when working for the committee, carrying a load of literature, slipping and falling, and slipping a disk in my back. I was in great, great pain, close to losing all nerves in my legs. I had surgery; went to UCLA and the disk was so serious they wouldn't even allow me to walk. I walked into the hospital, but I never walked again because one little injury could cut a nerve in my back. I had surgery in '69. The surgery became complicated. I was in the hospital for seventy-four days, paralyzed. When I did get out I still wasn't strong. That probably carried me up until close to '70. I had to be on my feet in '69, so maybe the surgery came in late--maybe November of--'69, after

this had happened.

My thoughts at that time were saving myself, and we were also in the midst of getting closer and closer to abolishing the unAmerican activities committee. We'd taken on another project in '68 to repeal Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950--the detention centers act--and we finally won that battle in November of '71. So we had a lot of work going on then, working with the Japanese American Citizens League, and Patsy [T.] Mink and Spark [M.] Matsunaga, and Senator [Daniel K.] Inouye. (Very interesting; Senator Inouye is the very person who chaired one of these investigating committees later on.) Anyhow, then I was getting better. In '74--no, it was when the FBI came to my office--I was recovering from this spine surgery.

TRELEVEN: My god, still?

WILKINSON: Yeah. In '74, in the same building, taking a load of mail down the stairs in my arms on the back stairway, thinking I'd come to the bottom of the stairway, stepping out on the sidewalk, I was still two steps up, and I fell, and I slipped a disk the second time. So I had surgery again in '74, was recovering from that for a couple of years, and one reason why I had the time to look at the FBI file. I had been distracted; that's one thing. First of all, I didn't

think the FBI had done it; it didn't occur to me. I hadn't read the Church committee report. Hirschkop and the others didn't say, "We've got something here." We had had another event here--which we might come to later on, at some point--where I had two carloads of what appeared to be Los Angeles police anti-subversive details whom we detected spying on a meeting of a People's World banquet where I was a speaker, and they nearly ran us over at the People's World offices on Pico [Boulevard] and Saint Andrews [Place] when a photographer and I attempted to confront them. So we were thinking about HUAC, L.A. police, but no FBI.

So in '74 I'm recovering from surgery. Maybe even now we're up to '75, '76. My recovery is very, very slow. (I'm still under medical protection; you know, I'm still having these same back problems even though the injuries of '69 and '74 are now seventeen years past.) I was at home recovering and sitting in a chair; I'm not supposed to move. The 4,000 pages arrive at my home, and Hirschkop had said, "Look them over and see what you can find." I remember taking a Saturday and a Sunday to read through these 4,000 pages--not read through them, glance through them--and I could see that there was lots of interest in me all the way through it, but I didn't see anything at all

that looked like they were doing anything like the COINTELPRO [counter-intelligence program], where we later learned that my work was being disrupted. I didn't see that in the picture.

How much dynamite was in those first 4,000 pages comes next because when I finished reading them I said, "I can't figure it out." I asked Dick [Richard] Criley up in Carmel, who by then had left Chicago--

TRELEVEN: Okay, now Dick's Chicago case--I don't want to say resolution to that--but that whole business in Chicago had been worked through by the time Dick came to Carmel? You know what I'm referring to?

WILKINSON: Yes. It wasn't the FBI, it was the Chicago [police department] "red squad" case--

TRELEVEN: That's right.

WILKINSON: --in which they did find that the FBI was involved. How much they were involved we learned after the lawsuit was filed in 1980, where we found [J. Edgar] Hoover ordering burglaries of Dick's office in Chicago in the sixties.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so Dick had been through that whole process by this time.

WILKINSON: His wife had died. He'd retired, had trained the people in Chicago, and moved back to his ancestral home at Carmel.

I asked Dick if he would go through these things and see what he could make out of them. I didn't see [anything] other than just a lot of general surveillance. And I said, "I'll show you. I can't really understand what they're doing except that my name appears a lot. There's a lot of interest in where I'm speaking and a lot of clippings of reports on me." I thought it was something that should be looked at professionally. But I didn't see, after two days of reading; it literally was all day Saturday and Sunday. I remember sitting in my living room with this pack behind me and reading through it. There were so many duplicates, you'd turn a page and you'd get so you'd read them pretty fast.

TRELEVEN: Well, how did you react to the fact that they had spent a lot of time detailing your activities?

WILKINSON: Well, I was totally surprised but not yet shocked because I didn't see anything other than just interest in my work. "Wilkinson spoke at such-and-such a college. The student newspaper said he said so-and-so," and there would be a little clipping from paper. They were following me, but I didn't find-- The COINTELPRO, the disruption which had begun in 1955, '56; the surveillance of me began in 1942--

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: --and they had managed to get me fired in '52, and so on. But in '56 I was put on their ADEX [administrative index] list and was subject to full-scale disruption. I didn't catch any of that in these initial 4,000 pages. So shock, no; surprise, yes--and curiosity of why would they have been interested in following my speaking? That was really the attitude. Interesting reminders of where I'd spoken, I found those in there. I'd spoken at this college and that college. Interesting. Jokingly I said, "You know, if I ever wanted to write an autobiography this would really be helpful because I don't have any of these notes like this."

I asked Dick to take the time to more carefully analyze their meaning. When I am able to work at that time, my job is to wind up the abolition of HUAC, which we won in January of '75. We'd already repealed the Internal Security Act of 1950 [Title II, the detention centers section]. We were working on the repeal of Title I of the Internal Security Act, the Subversive Activities Control Board Act. One of the reasons I was out in Utah--the reason I was out there--was because in '70 whatever it was, at some point after the courts declared Title I of the Internal Security Act, the Subversive Activities Control Board Act, to be

unenforceable, Ramsey Clark was given a year to re-prosecute under a rewrite of the law which [Michael J.] Mansfield, and Everett [M.] Dirksen, and Lyndon [B.] Johnson--Republican and Democrats--had got together on. Indictments had to be called on a certain date, and the prosecution did do an indictment of eight people. They had a problem of finding communists who had never been wire tapped, and the Supreme Court by the time Ramsey Clark was there [as attorney general] was under orders to find a communist they could prosecute under the Subversive Activities Control Board who had never been wire tapped. They had a very hard time finding such a person, and Wayne Holley, a fifth-generation Mormon out in Utah, became one of several persons around the country and the lead defendant.

We were working against that backdrop and winning battles. And, in fact, in '72--somewhere in '72, '73--the Supreme Court under [Warren E.] Burger declared the Dirksen-Johnson-Mansfield rewrite to the law to be unconstitutional, unenforceable. That's where my mind was at the time. Then my injuries.

In '73 the Nixon administration introduced the first version of Senate Bill 1, which is the Nixon-Mitchell criminal code bill, 800-page total rewrite of the criminal laws of the United States--Title 18--and

we were beginning to draw our first analysis of that to decide how we could try to stop that bill. So we were working very hard on that. In '73, Dick Criley prepared a preliminary analysis. In '74, I got Mary Ellen Gale to do a ninety-page analysis from the ACLU office in Washington. We recognized the magnitude of the dangers in the bill. But by '75, '76, our focus was to stop Senate Bill 1 and rebuild this coalition. Our job on slowing Senate Bill 1, which began in '73, ran through '80. That was our primary priority, Senate Bill 1. We did tons of literature, tons of mailings, and built very broad coalitions to oppose it.

This battle is background. Plus my injury. Plus the fact that I read this thing and it's interesting; you can't help but be interested when you read that the FBI was reporting on your speaking dates all over the country.

TRELEVEN: So you send it to Dick and say, "Dick, what do you make of this?"

WILKINSON: "What do you think of it? There's something here, but what do you think of it?" Well, Richard Criley, who was one of the founders of the committee to abolish HUAC in Chicago and a very, very good researcher and writer--a brilliant student, a Phi Beta Kappa from Cal [University of California,

Berkeley], and retired and available, and a home in Carmel where he can sit down and look at this stuff-- spread these 4,000 pages out to study them.

When he called me up he said, "This is absolutely terrible what they've done to you!"

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Well, I've found forty-seven meetings where you were scheduled to speak where the FBI had ordered your meetings disrupted. When you were banned at North Carolina, when you were banned at Ohio State [University], when they tried to ban you at Berkeley, where they...." He was saying all these things were done by the FBI.

I said, "Well, I didn't see that."

He said, "Well, it's in there." He said, "One thing you have to learn to do, I've found, is you have to learn to decipher FBI codes."

In 1962, for example, one page was an FBI-sort of an order--a finding--eight lines high, code 102-a-a-a, a bunch of numbers, and it said, "Here is Wilkinson's speaking schedule." Above there they showed eight cities I was traveling to. "It is your responsibility to disrupt these meetings," [it stated] to the FBI agents in charge. "Since Wilkinson speaks to many college audiences, the utmost discretion must be used

to avoid any possibility that the FBI could appear to be interfering with academic freedom." Now, that appeared in 1962 on a certain date. Thereafter, you have my travel schedule and it would say, "Pursuant to 100-247 [or whatever] proceed." If you didn't catch that thing originally, 2,000 pages earlier, you'd never know what you were doing." But Dick would track these things back. When did he first see 102-447 [or whatever]? He finally found that it first appeared in the FBI reports in '62.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: Dick carried out real detective work, as he reported in the book that he has written about this, The FBI v. The First Amendment. We referred to the research he did on the initial 4,000 as just an amazing deciphering of the FBI data. Just getting your file-- in my own case, about me--two days I'm well enough to sit there and read, and I don't see it.

Dick says, "They broke up forty-three of your meetings." He gives the dates. He has all these pages in chronological order. He names the places. He found nine different newspaper columnists where Hoover had leaked things to the lead columnist of the Chicago Tribune, the San Francisco Examiner, and papers around the country; Fulton Lewis, Jr., the radio columnist.

Then he had reference where they'd interfered with our lobbying on Capitol Hill. He found where the FBI had had words that such and such a congressperson had been seen by me--or by somebody else in NCARL--and they were trying to figure out how to prevent him from taking a stand on HUAC.

Dick found all that stuff. He found how they'd interfered with our contributors, how they'd investigated persons who'd given certain amounts of money. We didn't really learn about that until we got into our lawsuit's civil discovery in the 1980s. There we found the FBI's detailed reports where we opened our bank account in the summer of 1960, and that that meeting with Bob Kenny and the others was wire tapped. We're setting up a bank account at the Melrose-Irving branch of the Bank of America. They go to the Melrose-Irving branch of the Bank of America, talk to the bank manager, and "ask for the usual cooperation," and the bank manager writes back, "I'll be glad to cooperate, but if this ever became public, I would want a subpoena to show I was compelled to do this." From that date forward, every check that we deposited was photographed by the Bank of America and turned over to the FBI. From 1960 forward, the same thing was done in New York banks and Chicago banks. Dick discovered this stuff

and I didn't see it.

Dick wrote a twenty-page summary where he had eight categories of violations of First Amendment rights of me and the organization. He then cited under those eight categories between ten and fifty examples by page number. He had the page numbers so when we got his analysis, we didn't need the 4,000 pages. He sent it down to me and I just was shocked to find out this. Then I was shocked because there was real disruption. (Maybe not. The disruption, I think, came later.) The surveillance was so complete.

I then went with Dick's summary to Hirschkop, and Hirschkop said, "I can't help you on this any more. I have just helped you get started on the FOIA. You'd better talk to people out there [in Los Angeles]. Besides, the files are out there now. I don't have them here anymore."

So I went to ACLU and I talked to Fred Okrand and Ramona Ripston and showed them the 4,000 pages and Dick's analysis. They said, "You really have a justiciable issue here. You really should file a lawsuit against the FBI." It's interesting now for me to hold that thought.

A few years before this, I had a call from Aryeh Neier, the director--

TRELEVEN: Who's that?

WILKINSON: --the then director of the national ACLU, calling me up saying, "Frank, ACLU has now got its FBI files and I've been reading them. You have a judiciable case against ACLU. It's unbelievable what ACLU was doing to you back in the fifties." And he asked, "Could you come to New York right away, because you have a lawsuit here against...." a guy by the name of [Irving] Ferman, a lawyer who was the ACLU national Washington, D.C. director, who was also a conduit for the FBI to Cartha DeLoach and to J. Edgar Hoover. So I went to New York.

TRELEVEN: Okay, this is part of the--

WILKINSON: This is before I got my files.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Right. But this is part of this whole-- The broader context is this whole streak--

WILKINSON: Well, I mean, the Church committee.

TRELEVEN: But in terms of national ACLU, Ferman is this whole streak of their what, anti-communist sentiment that that wing of the national ACLU had back in the fifties?

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: And even before that--

TRELEVEN: Yeah, yes.

WILKINSON: --under Morris Ernst back in the time when Corliss Lamont resigned, Dr. Ward resigned as president, the ACLU expelled Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and the real Cold War within the ACLU started. Ferman had been a very pivotal person here.

So I go to the ACLU national office in New York City to meet with him [Neier], and he shows me this document. It was in 1957 where I. [Isidor] F. Stone, Carey McWilliams, and H. [Hugh] H. Wilson at Princeton [University], had talked to Corliss Lamont that this is the time to abolish the unAmerican activities committee. In the decision in the Watkins case of the HUAC hearing in 1956, Chief Justice Warren made reference to the fact, "Who can define the meaning of unAmerican?" The dicta in the Watkins case by Warren was just right on our side. The holding was very narrow because Watkins was an autoworker and he was called up with a group of pharmacists, so the relevancy was in question. The ECLC [National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee] leadership thought this was the time. They'd heard that I had taken the stand on the First Amendment against HUAC in Los Angeles in 1956, and we were waiting to see if the committee would cite me for contempt because I'd deliberately made the challenge. So, "Let's bring Wilkinson back here. He's been

coordinating the work defending the victims of HUAC all over California, particularly in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Let's bring him back here and start the same thing here."

So I come back. Corliss brings me back. My whole family moves. I move. I take a leave from the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms to go to New York.

TRELEVEN: Okay, this is the New York period.

WILKINSON: This is '57.

TRELEVEN: It gets into the ECLC business, which--

WILKINSON: The Emergency Civil Liberties Committee.

TRELEVEN: --we'll want to pick up with.

WILKINSON: Right, later on. But let me just--

TRELEVEN: But you're sketching this in.

WILKINSON: I'm just giving you this thing about the ACLU.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: I arrived in New York and at a meeting of the board. I. F. Stone, in the Weekly [I. F. Stone's Weekly], was a very distinguished muckraker--

TRELEVEN: You're meeting with the board of--?

WILKINSON: Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, ECLC.

TRELEVEN: ECLC, okay.

WILKINSON: Stone said, "Come on down to Washington.

Meet with [James] Roosevelt. He's interested in this issue."

TRELEVEN: Okay, Jimmy.

WILKINSON: James Roosevelt.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: James Roosevelt happened to be my own congressperson when I was living in L.A. So I hardly got to New York and I went down to Washington. In prior trips I had bumped into this man Ferman. I don't know, I guess the ECLC had invited me back some time in '53, '54 when I was in the area, to sit in with them because my own work was interesting to them. I walked into the Longworth building, Jimmy Roosevelt's congressional office building, and I bump into Ferman on the first floor. He greets me, welcomes me to my new job. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to see Jimmy Roosevelt."

"Good, give him my greetings." I think nothing more of it.

Aryeh Neier, the national director of ACLU--now we're in the seventies, early seventies, '74, '75,--reads as follows from this FBI document: "Ferman reports encountered Wilkinson in Longworth building today on his way to see Roosevelt. Immediately called Roosevelt's office to say Wilkinson was coming

upstairs. Roosevelt's secretary, Juanita Barbee, says, 'Yes, we expect him. He's a friend of mine!'" Ferman then reports placing a call to Cartha DeLoach, saying "Start an investigation of Juanita Barbee, Roosevelt's secretary; she says she's a friend of Frank Wilkinson." And it goes on like this. All right. (When you realize that, in '58, when I get my final subpoena and go to jail on it, the only person I checked with before leaving New York for Atlanta was Alan Reitman, national ACLU associate director, asking, "Who are our lawyers in Georgia? I'm going down there." As I believe Reitman would have reported this conversation to Ferman, I was just telling the FBI I'm on my way down. The end of this ACLU thing is that he [Neier] says, "You have a lawsuit. You have to file it. Let's go over and see Bruce Innes," who was the general counsel.

So we go over to Bruce Innes's office and he says, "Obviously, Frank's got a case here against Ferman. But Ferman was our employee; therefore, he cannot sue Ferman without suing us. Therefore, we cannot represent him because we would be working against our own interest. His lawsuit for damages is against ACLU. Ferman is our guy." So they encouraged me, "You clearly have a lawsuit against us. Go ahead and file, but we can't do it for you."

I had been, at that time, working from '57 till '70 to try to build ACLU, and ACLU had already taken my case all the way to the Supreme Court in '61. I said, "I haven't put in the last twenty-five years trying to strengthen the ACLU, to clean up your act, only to turn around and sue you for damages, so forget it."

I had seen that, but in an ACLU file under the Ferman thing. I didn't put it together with some broader thing. Then I get the Hirschkop materials back. Let's end that.

Back to the ACLU. When I take the Criley report to ACLU of Southern California, that's where I am-- TRELEVEN: Okay, but let me ask one question before that. Were the Southern California chapter leaders of ACLU aware of your opportunity to, in effect, bring suit against the national ACLU? Did you discuss--?

WILKINSON: Yeah, I told them about it.

TRELEVEN: Because the Southern California chapter has always been considered, what, a little more progressive, perhaps, than the national?

WILKINSON: Well, it always was. Yes, Southern California always was. It was about this time-- We abolished HUAC in January of '75. At the Bill of Rights banquet of ACLU in December of 1975, Eason Monroe, who had been the director, had won a court

victory that allowed him to go back to teaching again at San Francisco State [University], where he was a professor of English. He'd been blacklisted in 1952 for failure to take the [Howard K.] Levering oath. Unlike me, who signed every oath they had, he refused to sign, lost his job; I signed them all and then got fired anyway on this eminent domain proceeding.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: It was voted to give me the first annual Eason Monroe Courageous Advocate Award in December, 1975. So then, we're talking about this; Ramona was there and they were talking about this whole thing. You know, ACLU was in a whole series of progressive moves at that time. Our affiliate had already voted to impeach Nixon in '74. Our affiliate got a resolution through that was approved by the national ACLU to reestablish the reputation of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn from having been expelled in 1942. This affiliate was very good. But this affiliate, like all the other ACLU affiliates during the Cold War in the late-forties and fifties, required all new ACLU members to take a loyalty oath on their application: "I am not now a member of any communist, fascist, Nazi organization." So they were hooked on that just like the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored

People] was hooked on that, and ADA [Americans for Democratic Action], and other groups like that.

In the seventies, now, the Southern California ACLU won some battles. So when they looked at the summary of my file prepared by Dick Criley, they said, "This is really something. You've got a case here. But we could never take on the FBI. You're taking on much too much of the power structure. We have only a couple of lawyers here in the office and you're going to have to find a large law firm that is big enough. We'll pay the cost, but you get the law firm and find the lawyers to do this thing with ACLU, and they become volunteer counsel for the ACLU on a lawsuit. Fine."

Then I said, "Well, where am I going to find one?" Dale [L.] Gronemeier, who had worked for the [National] Committee to Abolish the UnAmerican Activities Committee with us in our Los Angeles office, and then ended up at San Francisco and organized our work in Northern California and Oregon, Washington, and Montana, after that gone to law school back in Champaign-Urbana [University of Illinois], and had been approached by the Loeb and Loeb law firm to come and work for them. So he came to L.A. to work for them, and I saw him again because he was then a lawyer with Loeb and Loeb. The law firm of Loeb and Loeb was very

familiar to me because my attorneys with the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles] at the time of my eminent domain thing--and before that--had all been with Loeb and Loeb. I was well known to them, and I knew the lawyers in Loeb and Loeb.

Dale was the immediate contact there, so he took the 4,000 pages and the Criley analysis into his friends at Loeb and Loeb, and his friends at Loeb and Loeb turned out to be Paul [L.] Hoffman and Douglas E. Mirell. Paul Hoffman had been a law-school recruiter for Loeb and Loeb, going around the campuses trying to find the brightest, top-grade law graduates to recruit them, to bring them to the firm of Loeb and Loeb. They looked this thing over and said, "You clearly have a case here," and they got immediate approval of Loeb and Loeb to represent me. They had no idea what they were getting into. They thought this would be a very simple matter. It was very clear that the FBI had violated my rights, and NCARL's organizational rights. They were willing to work under ACLU. I don't think they had done any cases with ACLU up till that time.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Because Loeb and Loeb is a big, mainstream--

WILKINSON: Very prestigious, generally thought of as a large Republican law firm: Two hundred and twenty-five

lawyers, offices in Los Angeles, Century City, Hawaii, New York. Big, big firm. So I come back to ACLU and they say, "That is fine, fine." So Paul Hoffman representing Loeb and Loeb--possibly with Douglas Mirell at that time--files a lawsuit in March, 1980, against the FBI based upon the 4,000 pages and the Criley analysis.

TRELEVEN: Okay, why did it take so long to get the suit filed from the time that Dick analyzed the material till 1980? I think the FBI was interested in that question, too, later on when you got into the suit.

WILKINSON: There was a time factor on the statute of limitations. They argued that the statute had expired, and at some stage of our trial we were faulted on the statute of limitations. But that was an aspect of the trial. The case was not stopped at all; it was just some aspect of the trial that was stopped because of the statute of limitations.

But the reason for the delay here: You have to realize that the lack of reaction on my part, the lack of reaction of Hirschkop, initially-- By the way, Hirschkop's name was always listed on Wilkinson v FBI "Of Counsel." You have all of these Loeb and Loeb lawyers and Hirschkop, Alexandria, Virginia, "Of

Counsel." The fact that he didn't identify this to the point of a lawsuit, that Esther Herst didn't, then I didn't, and Dick Criley-- You know, Dick didn't do this in a week. It took months to do this thing. When we did get it, by then we're getting into the late-seventies. Time just elapsed. Things sat around for a long time. They sat in Washington, D.C., probably, for two years. I don't know.

So the question becomes, when did you first know? The fact that I never saw the documents until a certain time, we didn't really appreciate them at a certain time, it was all part of our ignorance, so we really didn't appreciate this until what was within a three-year period, or whatever was required, to file under the civil proceedings for damages of this kind.

At any rate, the suit was filed in 1980. This interview now is in April of 1992. Loeb and Loeb's work on this thing is just unbelievably remarkable. The victory we won in '87 where we forced the FBI to give us all the documents, remove every document they had in their files on me and on NCARL--it was in fifty-nine offices--and the judge ordered in '87 that they had to remove every page they had. I can't get over the irony. After seven years of battling with Loeb and Loeb and possibly spending a \$100,000 or more a year--

that's conservative; Doug Mirell and two of the other lawyers were working full time on this, I'm sure and they, themselves, may have earned upwards of a hundred thousand a year--the FBI was told to turn them over to us. Judge Tashima ordered that.

At that point, the FBI goes to the judge and indicates, "Tell Wilkinson we are prepared to burn his files if he would like it." I was asked the question about burning the files. I went back to the [Alexander] Meiklejohn position on the HUAC files, that they should be put into a library where anyone could read them. Then there was the question of protecting the identities of living non-government people there. So they were protected, but the order was that they were not to be looked at for a certain number of years, and then they'll be available to the historians to study.

So, going back again, I just indicated that Loeb and Loeb is-- Now, in 1992, we have just apparently lost our final legal action, in March of 1992, where the coram nobis action comes later on to overturn my conviction in 1958 was lost in the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeal in Georgia. A very ugly proceeding where the court of appeals-- All your courts there in Georgia now are dominated Nixon and Reagan appointees.

They just ridiculed. Here we come in with such clear-cut information and they just said, "Oh, come on now!" They didn't even allow discovery in the district court [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division] in Georgia. On the appeal, just to get more information regarding this informant about which the FBI had withheld information from the Supreme Court, they just gave us short shrift at the Court of Appeal down there. Within a week the court issued a statement just saying, "Affirmed," and we were closed out unless we now go on to the Supreme Court, which we're not going to do because I think we've learned a lot about what you can gain by going into the courts as they are under Reagan, and [George H. W.] Bush, and Nixon. It's just a blind alley for this kind of case.

We're trying to get the current Supreme Court to declare the FBI had violated my rights. It's just not forthcoming at this time. Our direction has to be in the political arena rather than the judicial process.

TRELEVEN: Okay. We're to the end of the tape.

TAPE NUMBER: XXVIII, SIDE ONE

APRIL 11, 1992

TRELEVEN: Back on. It's still April 11. The first question I asked this morning had to do with the gap of time in our taping, and we filled in a lot of background and detail leading up to the filing of the suit. I think that all of that background is trying to create a loop that I think will bring us back to why the taping ceased. You began to nibble at that, and then we really went into this important background about the events leading up to the suit. You had begun to say at one point that the suit was filed, one thing led to another, and it led to civil discovery. *[There was discovery from the beginning in 1980, and continuing on the original suit; then there was discovery in regard to Anita Bell Schneider and the coram nobis writ of error suit.] One aspect of the discovery ended up being 132,000 pages. But another aspect had to do with redaction. If I recall correctly, the appeal to the [federal] judge [A. Wallace Tashima]--page after page of totally blacked

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

out information--that something should be done about that. Can you pick it up there? Do you understand the thread I'm trying to get at here?

WILKINSON: Yes, I think I do. I think the thread here that leads to the cutting off of our taping would follow along this line, from what has already been said. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] at first--I think you can tell by the nature of the lawyers they sent to do it--much would be done by local FBI staff, local FBI attorneys. They became more and more alarmed, I think, that this was a serious case and they had to bring in their big guns. So they began sending their staff from Washington [D.C.], a team of three, four, five lawyers out here every time. The documents were written in Washington, and the case was handled in Washington. The local people were just the timekeepers on it.

With that, the FBI with their bigger guns began getting more aggressive in their attack on us, trying to prevent trial, I think, to minimize their losses, and win a case, somehow. This was reflected in many, many ways, such as cutting off all documents from

February to August of 1983 when the assassination document was publicized. Then it involved them suddenly appearing at the Wisconsin state archives [State Historical Society of Wisconsin] in Madison, where the NCARL [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation] and my files, and the files of Anne and Carl Braden of NCARL, and those of other NCARL offices, are maintained. We get word that there's something that the FBI is entitled to, that they were actively in Madison putting in many, many hundreds of person hours going through my files.

In the case of the NCARL files, when I was responsible for placing them there originally, the whole attitude of openness was in my mind. There's nothing to hide. It's all there. Anybody could go in and look at it, so there's no restriction whatsoever. When Carl and Anne Braden's file went in there, they put restrictions on it, saying that no one could look at it without their permission; that person had to meet certain scholarly definitions before they'd allow it.

So we find the FBI in Madison; I think the timing here will show they were in Madison. Can you remember whether they were in Madison before the interruption of our--

TRELEVEN: The FBI was in Madison--

WILKINSON: Their interest in our taping?

TRELEVEN: The FBI was nosing around Madison in '85, '86.

WILKINSON: About the time when we stopped.

TRELEVEN: We taped last in-- I think it was-- What the hell was it? February [April] of--

WILKINSON: Eighty-six?

TRELEVEN: Eighty-six, yeah.

WILKINSON: All right, so sort of simultaneous thing. Now let's for the record let this be clear, that I and NCARL are suing the FBI for damages in the lawsuit. As such, I'm the plaintiff, they're the defendants. Defendants have the right of discovery, which would mean they have the right to depose anyone they want to depose. They announced about that time that they wanted to take a deposition on every person who was listed in the lawsuit as well as all 1,700 or 1,800 people in the class action. We were beginning to battle on that one, because it would mean, literally, opening up a witch hunt where we'd in effect be allowing the FBI to go out and interview anybody. They'd go out to 1,700 people who maybe did nothing more than give five dollars in 1955, yet they are visited by the FBI saying, "Why did you give five dollars to that 'communist' organization back then?"

Were you a communist?" They could do all those things to try to discredit each party to the class action. It would be a real HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] hearing, only it would be done by the FBI formally, legally, and in effect permitted by us in order to pursue a trial. So we backed off from that part of it at about this time.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Braden, now, by dint of being a member of the board of NCARL, is considered a member of the plaintiff class, right?

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: The FBI as defendant, therefore, claims that since she was a member of the plaintiff class, her files should be open for discovery.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: Is that what was going on?

WILKINSON: Two or three things are going on at the same time. Generally, there's one point at which they started to depose me; we actually had our first couple depositions. They had the right to do that. The lawyers for Loeb and Loeb became very concerned that in deposing me they didn't put me into a witch hunt. In other words, asking political questions of me just like HUAC did, to try to discredit my thing, which would be in the deposition, which would influence the court. In

other words, here's a man that wants his files and won't answer simple questions whether or not he was a communist or not at that particular time. We, the public, ought to know that; the court ought to know that. What are we dealing with here? That sort of stuff.

We got through a couple of depositions without this happening, but we could see the trend. They were claiming to do more. Then we said, "No, we're not going to open up the deposition to as far as you want to go." At that time they're in Madison, and they're beginning to look at our file--and in Madison they discovered the Braden file [collection].

TRELEVEN: All right.

WILKINSON: We told them the NCARL file was in Madison. We had to tell them that. The library [archives] in Madison--by the way it's interesting to note, the FBI didn't tell us they were in Madison--the people in the library got word back indirectly to us that the FBI had been in there and somebody had put in 800 person-hours going through your files. "Did you know that?"

"Yes, we knew that would happen sometime."

We didn't know they were there. It's interesting that they didn't tell us about it first. In doing that they find the Braden file. The Bradens--Carl Braden is

now deceased, but Anne Braden still controls the file-- had put restrictions on it. The library said, "You may not look at those." So the FBI then goes to court for the Braden file to be made available to them. The judge ruled--or was ruling--that one has no privacy in a proceeding of this kind. You can store them in an attic or your own cellar. They are entitled to look at anything when you're charging them with the violation of a law. You give up your rights when you sue. Anne Braden announced at that point that she would go to jail. She said, "Well, what happens if I don't let them do it?" The lawyer said, "Well, you could be cited for contempt of court." And Anne Braden said-- correctly, I feel--"I'll go to jail for life rather than let them look at my files. I'll decide who I want to look at those files." So that required a reexamination of our legal strategy.

About this time--before or after, or at the same time--the FBI, as I understand, came without notice to the UCLA Oral History [Program] and apparently knew of-- how they knew we don't know; I don't think we know how; there's nothing in the record that says I was doing an oral history, but apparently their surveillance of me, of NCARL, tapped telephones or whatever they were doing was continuing--that they apparently knew that this

oral history was taking place. Shall I give my version of what happened there, or do you want to give your version?

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Just by interjecting, I think this is true in terms of conversations with people that you were close to, and so on: I don't think you ever hid the fact that we were doing these taping sessions.

WILKINSON: No, no. But not-- I wasn't putting it out.

TRELEVEN: Well, it wasn't announced in NCARL press releases, or anything like that.

WILKINSON: How the FBI learned about it, we don't know. But it was certainly a formal part of our legal strategy. The contract has the lawyers of Loeb and Loeb concerned about the final work product here, which they needed to prepare for trial.

TRELEVEN: That's right.

WILKINSON: So while UCLA has an interest in an oral history, the lawyers had an interest in getting a history of my life so they could prepare themselves properly for trial.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so your lawyers would not have any surprises?

WILKINSON: Right. Right, exactly, exactly. So that was going on. Do you want me to give my memory of what

happened, or do you want to put that into the record yourself now, about them coming to UCLA to ask for my file.

TRELEVEN: No, I want to hear what goes on on your end first.

WILKINSON: All right. Okay.

TRELEVEN: Okay, they want to subpoena the records. What you're talking about is they want to subpoena the records from the office of the Oral History Program.

WILKINSON: They, without knowledge to us, go to the oral history offices at UCLA and ask for the Frank Wilkinson tapes. They want to hear the tapes of the oral history, whatever it is.

TRELEVEN: They want to subpoena the interview--

WILKINSON: They want to subpoena the--

TRELEVEN: --and any records related to the interview.

WILKINSON: Any records, yeah. Not making contact directly at that point, they then go to the office of the [UCLA] administration and ask for the official contractual relationships [legal agreement relating to the interview] between UCLA and the lawyers and myself. Unfortunately, and I'm giving my own personal point of view, that the extent to which UCLA or any bureaucracy could be entrusted to protect something is that they, without consulting me or without consulting my lawyers,

gave them copies of the contract and whatever else they wanted. (I believe that's what I understand.) At least I would think UCLA should have said, "Well, you'll have to discuss with the contractual parties on this thing before we can do that." But they gave it to them, and I think that was a very alarming move on the part of the administration. It's just a step or two beyond that for them to say, "Well, we're under subpoena and while this is contractual data, a federal court subpoena for these documents means that we have to respond. We don't want to fight the government. A subpoena is a subpoena. We don't see any academic freedom in this thing. There's something going on here that the government is entitled by court order to get." That is the potential scenario.

Fortunately, at that time-- Let me stop here.

TRELEVEN: Oh, we're going to pause.

WILKINSON: Let's just drop it.

TRELEVEN: All right. [tape recorder off] Okay.

WILKINSON: I didn't put it on the tape deliberately because I thought we were going into an area that's sensitive.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. We're back on, and going back to the legal agreement that UCLA so happily photocopied at the request of the FBI, which was a decision made by campus

counsel Patty [Patricia M.] Jasper. I had to send my Frank Wilkinson file over to campus counsel. But, as you know, because of the way the legal agreement was set up, the university did not own the interview. It was set up that way deliberately because-- I don't want to sound egotistical or especially logical, because I'm certainly not that given the fact that when we started the interview that Wilkinson v FBI was going on, I really had a sixth sense that something might happen along the line and that's why, in part, the agreement between you and UCLA--which was carefully drawn up with the participation of your lawyers--indicated that UCLA would not own this material until five years after your death. It turned out that, from my standpoint, it was ideal that it was set up that way or--as you're suggesting--there seems to be no question but what UCLA--and UC [University of California] counsel would have been involved by this time as well--would have turned the tapes over had the material belonged to UCLA.

As you know, we've done these interviews-- I happen to be the director of the UCLA Oral History Program. But what I do on my own time--and for whom--is my business. In choosing to work with your attorneys as an "agent," as the legal documentation

shows, there would never be any risk of a claim by the government, by the FBI, or [by] the university that since I had created the material on university time that gave the university some claim to it. So, from my standpoint, that's the background of how it was set up.

You'll recall a copy of that infamous memo.

(Well, maybe we shouldn't get into that.) But anyway, I had to work through a whole procedure at UCLA with the copyright officer to set up the agreement that way and go into detail about the reasons why I felt it should be set up that way. In rereading that memo this morning from some of the legal material, one of the reasons that I gave about why UCLA should want to go along with the agreement--the historical record and all that--was that given the fact that Wilkinson v FBI was in progress, it should be set up this way to protect the material should the FBI get interested in it. By god, they did.

WILKINSON: Rather prescient of you.

TRELEVEN: Well, yeah. It sounds, you know, a bit egotistical.

WILKINSON: Not at all.

TRELEVEN: From my standpoint it was more like a sixth sense. I guess, perhaps, knowing you and perhaps being quite knowledgeable about the ins and outs of

collecting not only oral histories, but materials relating to socially conscious organizations, you really do develop a sixth sense of never trusting the bastards.

Well, in any case, we were taping away--twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six tapes, however many we made--and what happened is that-- Well, what would you call it? I would call it a "chilling effect."

[laughter]

WILKINSON: Definitely. Let me put in my own perspective on this thing. I had an attorney-client relationship where they wanted my background to prepare them for trial, and I am talking to them in all sense of privacy. It's not just the ordinary privacy, but in a legal sense the attorney-client relationship. The university sees this from an historical standpoint of collecting a record. So there's a little difference there. There's a basic difference.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Now, while the contract with the university said not to be seen until five years after my death, except at my discretion, it still didn't mean that the university, under certain legal attacks, might not feel that they're required to turn over these documents for some greater reason than my lawyer-client relationship

or their historical academic freedom interests, and could conceivably violate a basic right that I have. So it was a very frightening thing, because I'm trying to help my lawyers get my full story so that in trial there's nothing that will come up that will surprise them. I'm also trying to save for UCLA, and as an alumni of UCLA, exactly what an oral history should be: the real facts of one's life that are significant, or historically of public interest. So it was a very alarming situation. For that reason, fortunately, the tapes were in the possession of Loeb and Loeb.

Because of this intrusion where the FBI really was moving, it had already reached the point where Anne Braden was faced with going to jail. All it would take is for Judge Tashima to rule that if the custodian of the archives at Madison did not turn over documents, that that person could go to jail for contempt of court. That's always the possibility. If they could do it to Anne Braden, they might do it for others. But, fortunately, the tapes were in the possession of Loeb and Loeb in their vault, where directly my lawyers were in a position to intercede.

So we stopped. We didn't do any more of these. We didn't want to give them-- We didn't want to just-- I didn't want to and I'm sure you didn't want to

proceed to give them an opening that the documents that they're entitled to hear were being made and they were being kept from them. So for very prudent reasons we stopped our tape recording at that point. I think it was unfortunate that we stopped. I might very well have died in the last seven years. I am seventy-seven now. Whatever the value of this history might be would have been lost.

But for all those reasons-- We need to go one step beyond this now and then we can go back to where we were. In order to protect Anne Braden's file and in order to protect my oral history work product, we stipulated at that point to the FBI--in order to prevent depositions of 1,700 persons in a class action, Anne Braden, my work product, your oral history and 1,700 or more persons being subject to almost an inquisition under the guise of the lawsuit--that we were dropping all claims to damages. The suit was filed on a \$19 million damage claim. If we had proceeded successfully with the lawsuit, the end result might have been many millions of dollars that would come to the organization and to me. Certainly the thirty-eight years of damage they did to my life is compensatory in a lawsuit of this kind.

It was put to me by the lawyers, "What do you want

to do?" I made the decision, as key plaintiff, that I do not want to endanger Anne Braden; I don't want to endanger the persons who supported our committee and willingly had signed to be part of a class action; and I certainly did not want to turn over to the FBI my private thinking, which is--

TRELEVEN: --on the tapes.

WILKINSON: --of concern only to me and something that I control, and even went to the point of specifying that it wouldn't be seen till five years after I'm gone so that anything that I might believe, or think, or say, or discuss regarding myself or other people, would not be of harm to other people.

So for all those reasons, I agreed to the stipulation that we would drop all damages. That was a very weighty consideration. Loeb and Loeb, as lawyers on this thing, technically under their contract with ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] have a contingency fee that if there were damages they would be entitled to some percentage. So they gave up a great deal. In fact, out of this twelve years work that Loeb and Loeb put into this, which I've estimated at \$100,000 a year--and I'm sure that it's more than that because at only \$100,000 a year we're dealing with \$1,200,000 that Loeb and Loeb put into this already, to

say nothing about what ACLU put into it; they made a significant sacrifice on this thing--all Loeb and Loeb got out of it was a claim for damages for the cost of having forced the FBI to admit that they had more than just the original 4,000 [pages], and they were forced to admit to finding 40,000 more, and asking for a delay, and then "just finding" 70,000 more.

Twice in those early years the FBI came to the judge right at a crucial moment where they had a showdown and said, "We have just found 40,000 more pages. May we have a year's delay to read the record?" Then the judge gave it to them. Then the second time, 70,000 more. At that time the judge, in effect, blew the whistle and said, "No more 'just found.' What is your bottom line?" At that time the FBI came in with all 132,000 pages.

So Loeb and Loeb got \$25,000 dollars compensation from the FBI for having compelled them to reveal what they should have been doing voluntarily under the Freedom of Information Act. They were clearly in contempt of court.

TRELEVEN: Okay. NCARL got nothing.

WILKINSON: Nothing.

TRELEVEN: ACLU [of Southern California] nothing.

WILKINSON: Nothing. I don't know. Maybe ACLU

received part of it for compelling more information. There might have been something that went to ACLU before that. I don't know what their contractual arrangements were. The major expense was Loeb and Loeb's. ACLU's expenses were minimal. I mean, paper costs, my travels to Madison to find out what was there.

Anyway, I think this explains for this oral history why there was a six-year hiatus in completing this oral history. I personally am very grateful that we continued. I fully expect to live another hundred years, but at seventy-seven I find it hard to convince most people that I have more than the normal span.

TRELEVEN: Well, I take it you still have your hammer and chisel--

WILKINSON: Absolutely.

TRELEVEN: --and intend to show up in Washington, D.C. sometime.

WILKINSON: Did that ever go into the record? I doubt it.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, we have it. We definitely have it.

WILKINSON: Is the hammer and chisel in the record?

[laughter]

TRELEVEN: Yeah, somewhere. We'll get back to that.

So the settlement involves NCARL materials--

Excuse me, the FBI materials are now in the National Archives [and Records Administration], sealed for a period of fifty years?

WILKINSON: That figure was my figure based upon the [Alexander] Meiklejohn-[Thomas I.] Emerson decision on the files of the unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities].

TRELEVEN: Okay. Relief to Anne Braden.

WILKINSON: By the way, just one minute more. I want to emphasize--and I think this is something very cynical here about the FBI--that they had done this for thirty-eight years. They followed me all this time. They spent, I've estimated, \$17 million in following me over thirty-eight years. They've done great damage to my life and to the lives of other people, and directly affronted in the most serious way the First Amendment rights of all Americans. When they get caught--and there is not one page of evidence that would indicate any wrong doing on my part that would rationalize an FBI surveillance unless you want to uphold the speech crimes of the [Joseph R.] McCarthy era, which themselves have been declared unenforceable, if not unconstitutional--the FBI at that point, when the judge says, "Remove every page you have," they say, "Tell Mr. Wilkinson we'd be willing to burn them." I'm then

consulted and I said, "Absolutely not! I want these files placed in a library where historians for posterity can read and understand that what we loosely have referred to as the McCarthy era, will one day be documented as the "J. Edgar Hoover era."

TRELEVEN: So that takes care of the papers. Anne Braden's given relief. In other words, she is not forced to go to jail. The agreement that she has with the historical society, if she has renewed it each five years, is still in force.

WILKINSON: Except, may I say, there's an article written on this by one of the archivists--

TRELEVEN: Yeah, Harry [Harold] Miller.

WILKINSON: --at the Wisconsin archives, that the decision here on the Braden case--part of it, indicated that the privacy that most scholars, and historians, and archivists had assumed was protected--one could say, "This is not to be seen," that it is now seen that there is a very major chink in the armor of privacy if a person wants to turn over their papers.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: One could argue that the judge said it isn't that you turned over those to the library under restriction; if you had those in your attic, we could climb up in your attic and take them away from you. So

privacy took a real setback here, I think, by the court rulings which of course were never subject to appeal because we worked around them. We settled it by dropping the damage claims. As soon as we dropped the damage claims, the FBI loses their rights to depositions.

TRELEVEN: Then, finally, the FBI agreed--I take it in writing--that they would never ferret out, or they would stop trying to ferret out the oral history tapes?

WILKINSON: I think I can paraphrase the 1987 court decision that we won clearly. Beyond sealing the archives, the court said that if the FBI ever again attempted to either surveil or disrupt my work, or that of NCARL's, the FBI would pay monetary damages without further litigation. I think within that order from the court, it's a little more serious for the FBI person who does it, that that person who did proceed to surveil or proceed to disrupt in the face of the court order would be subject to a contempt order and would be jailed for having violated a court order or the intent of the court order. So one of the miracles of this lawsuit is that today, by court order, NCARL and those directly connected with it--and myself--may be the only people in the United States who cannot be placed under surveillance by the FBI under the new guidelines of the

[Ronald W.] Reagan [Attorney General William French Smith] and [George H.W.] Bush, who threw out the protections that we got from Gerald [R.] Ford and Edward [H.] Levi, his attorney general. It was thrown out by Reagan, and the FBI today--we know from the empirical data obtained under the Freedom of Information Act--is back again doing the same type of surveillance and disruption that they did under Hoover from '24 to '72. I cannot be touched.

Just a bit of humor here, I think, would help: Lawyers have mentioned to me (or I have said they mentioned to me. It's a good anecdote anyway; it's what I claimed all the time) that when I go out speaking to an audience anywhere in the country, I will say, when somebody asks me about, "Well, if I get on your mailing list, won't the FBI go after me now?" That question often comes up today. People are still afraid when they hear the whole story. "Do I want to give five dollars to that committee? Do I want to sign their petition? Won't I get into the file?" I tell them the story about the '87 court ruling, and say my lawyers told me when they heard I was coming here to Chicago, or coming here to Atlanta, coming here to Boston, wherever it is, said, "Look over your audiences very carefully. Maybe some FBI agent has not got the

message yet. If you find a person there that appears to be an FBI agent, overcome your pacifism and make a flying tackle, and get witnesses, and as I've characterized it, bring home the bacon!" Because we would get these monetary damages that we gave up if they made another mistake on me. It's a very important--

I think in this reference, for anyone following this history, Kim Murphy of the Los Angeles Times was given an exclusive on that story in 1987. She is the top federal court reporter for the L.A. Times, and later on was assigned as top reporter for the L.A. Times in covering the "Desert Storm" war [campaign] in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. She was given an exclusive. It's very interesting because she wrote 3,000 words in the L.A. Times [October 18, 1987], beginning on the front page with very good photographic coverage which was then reprinted in the Arkansas Democrat, which is owned by the L.A. Times, and the Portland Oregonian, which is owned by the L.A. Times. So the story went out very, very widely. She put in, as I remember, eight days on this assignment. She first met with the lawyers at Loeb and Loeb and spent hours with them to learn about the case. She then said she would like to hear me make a speech. She drove

down to a lecture I was making to graduate students in social work at Cal State Long Beach [California State University] in a class taught by Chauncey A. Alexander, and she heard an hour-and-a-half lecture and questions. She then came back to Loeb and Loeb and said she wanted to read the FBI files, and they gave her all the FBI files. This is before the dangers of the protective order came up two years later when the Anita Bell Schneider case came up. She put in several days on the FBI files. The next word I heard from the lawyer at Loeb and Loeb, Douglas [E.] Mirell, was that she then wanted to interview the FBI themselves, the lawyers for the FBI. Loeb and Loeb gave them the names of the lawyers for the FBI, and she went to see them. They blew it. This now is first-hand information.

After she left the FBI, as I say blowing it, she called me at my office. For eight days it had been very formal, "Mr. Wilkinson, this is Miss Murphy at the L.A. Times." She left the FBI office. She calls me and said, "Frank, this is Kim. I've got to talk to you." So I went down to the L.A. Times and had the following conversation with her. She said, "Frank, I've read all the files that I want to. I've talked to you, I've talked to your lawyers, and now I've been to the FBI. At the FBI I just didn't want to talk to

them. I happened to take with me the assassination document that the FBI was involved in, or knew that you were to be assassinated." (Even Kim, at that point, did not know that the commander of the L.A. Police Department anti-subversive detail was working with the FBI that night; we'll come to that later. I think we now know why I was not killed in March of '64. We've now found new evidence about that.) She said to the FBI lawyers, "Why did you let this man get killed?" The FBI laughed at her and said, "Ma'am, this man is very much alive."

"But you knew he was going to be killed. Why didn't you stop it? Why didn't you warn him? Why didn't you warn Mr. Newman or...." (What was the name? The Century City lawyer, State Senator Alan [G.] Sieroty's law partner.) "It was his house. Why didn't you warn him that his house was going to be a place for assassination?"

They just laughed at her. At that point she walked out on them. They blew it, as I say. Her question to me was, "Frank, I've read everything the FBI has. I cannot find why they did this to you. Tell me, why did they do it to you?" This was very important because she'd read the worst that the FBI had in there. I can say that the FBI had nothing on me in

there, you know, that showed any intent even or thought of violating a federal criminal law, which would be appropriate for an official FBI investigation. I can go on and say that one of the FBI documents said that I lacked the capability of overthrowing our government or doing anything that would violate the national security, but now she said it. She, an independent, top reporter of the L.A. Times, looks at it. "Why did they do it to you?"

I feel--very correctly--said, "Kim, I think the strength of this story is that I'm relying entirely on the FBI record. Nowhere in the FBI records which you found or I found do they say they're doing this because...." One can speculate (I didn't say this to her) because I was working with Monsignor [Thomas J.] O'Dwyer to compel the integration of a housing project. That's where it began. It doesn't say that anywhere. "I think that if I speculated I'd weaken my case to you. I think that that's your story: there is no reason for this that you can discern, and I haven't suggested one to you." There was a long pause and as I now see it, she wanted a handle for her story, a lead.

TRELEVEN: Yep.

WILKINSON: She just was disappointed. I then interrupted her pause and said, "Look, Kim," (I was

trying to be light. I couldn't get over the fact of calling her Kim yet.) "Look, Kim. Maybe when you are seventy-five years old...." (or whatever I was in '87) "Maybe when you are seventy-three, whatever the year would be, maybe you'll have a big FBI file." Just joking.

Again, a long pause and then Kim said directly, "You know, Frank, if I write the story I'm thinking about writing, I will have an FBI file."

TAPE NUMBER XXVIII, SIDE TWO

APRIL 11, 1992

TRELEVEN: As the tape was running out--and I want to make sure we got it--Kim sat down and--

WILKINSON: Wrote the story.

TRELEVEN: --wrote the story which you said was 3,000 words long.

WILKINSON: Not only that, but in 1989, when we got the Anita Bell Schneider story showing that the FBI had withheld exculpatory information from my lawyers and from the federal district and the Fifth Circuit [courts], and the Supreme Court itself, she handled that case and handled it very straightforwardly for the Times.

I stress this story because if you want you could talk to my lawyers, you could talk to me, you can read the files, and I could be very self-serving by fixing this [a newspaper article] the way I want the public to think of me. My lawyers could remain silent because they have a lawyer-client relationship and they don't want to talk about some subjectivity on my part. But Kim Murphy, before we knew the dangers of having her, as a reporter, look over the files and using her discretion between public and private persons, spent

all that time and wrote this story. It sort of vouches for the story, the whole ridiculousness of the FBI's following me for these thirty-eight years, spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' dollars on this thing, and for no avail. When they're finally tracked down at the end saying, "We'll burn the files," I mean, it's just cynical. It is bad government. It violates the First Amendment.

TRELEVEN: Maybe one more question, then we'll quit for today. That, again, gets back to the oral history. Why was the FBI so interested in the oral history?

WILKINSON: In the oral history?

TRELEVEN: Yeah, why do you think?

WILKINSON: Well, they, first of all, at this time--

TRELEVEN: Above and beyond the legalities. I understand that this is something that they consider discoverable. I guess what I'm asking is, okay, granting that, did they have other motives?

WILKINSON: I think we have to answer that by saying we're speculating.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, we're speculating.

WILKINSON: No where in court did the FBI say, "We need to know this because...." They argued only that it was their right as defendant in a lawsuit to know any and all documents that would relate to me. For that reason

they had a legal right to do it. The judge, in effect, upheld the defendant does have that right. When you're a defendant and somebody accuses you, you have the right to defend yourself. That's what they were doing.

I think that the FBI-- Let's put it all parallel with Daniel Ellsberg. Throughout the files on the FBI you'll find where they tried to break up my meetings and ban me. Geometrically, my audiences would increase. At Berkeley thirty-five goes to 5,000; that sort of thing happened. [J. Edgar] Hoover repeatedly writes--you'll find in the file--"Be careful that you do not make a martyr of Wilkinson and Braden." That set the tone here. "Do this in such a way; don't let anybody know that we're doing this. It might interfere with academic freedom, and do nothing to make a martyr of him."

There was case after case where Hoover was getting the word that every time they stopped me, it boomeranged on them. I'm sure we dealt with the Knox College story. Maybe we did or maybe we didn't. We'll have to go back and refresh our memories.

TRELEVEN: Well, we're going to be picking up a lot of that.

WILKINSON: What?

TRELEVEN: We'll be picking up a lot of that in our

subsequent--

WILKINSON: Okay later. At any rate, that was that.

So in the Ellsberg case, why did [G. Gordon] Liddy, why did the [Richard M.] Nixon plumbers want to get hold of his psychiatric data? They were looking for something because he was winning in court, and the Times was upholding it. They wanted to discredit Ellsberg. The Nixon administration wanted to discredit him because here's a guy that was for the first time telling the truth about the Gulf of Tonkin, about our involvement--Democrat and Republican alike--and getting into the [Pentagon] papers. They wanted something that would show that Daniel Ellsberg, according to a psychiatrist, is a man that such-and-such and such-and-such, and they could use that secretly to attack Ellsberg.

In my case, I think they're looking into my life. They followed me for thirty-eight years. They've wire tapped me. They've done everything they can about me, and they come up with zero in terms of any criminal intent on my part. So they might have been thinking, "If we can once get this, this oral history, where Wilkinson may be for the first time saying something that would show intent to commit violations of law, then we would have him." Even if we lose in court, the

public relations would be such that I would be discredited.

But I would assume that they wanted to have the case thrown out because they could present it to the judge in deposition. "Your honor, we find out such-and-such...."--something they would not find out because if they had the tapes there's nothing there they could use. But they would hope that there might be some "smoking gun," in my own words, in this oral history that they could then go to the judge and say, "We move that the case be dropped on the basis that Wilkinson has shown to be of a certain criminal mind and that the FBI had every right to invest taxpayers' dollars to uncover this man before he did great damage to the national security of our country." That would be their purpose.

TRELEVEN: Criminal mind or political affiliation?

WILKINSON: I don't think political affiliation would help them on that because by the time of our trial here, '80 through '87, political affiliation would have been helpful to their public relations, possibly.

TRELEVEN: Well, I was thinking more in terms of a leak to the press.

WILKINSON: That's right. They could have continued. Right now they are stopped from doing anything to me,

leaking to the press, or otherwise.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. You see--

WILKINSON: See, the FBI was never sure. They had Anita Bell Schneider. They knew--we now know--that in '55 this woman was emotionally unstable and, as I can say, an absolute liar, because she had absolutely no information from me that would give her the right to say that I was a communist. She knew nothing. I met her at a podium. She said, "I'm the head of the Democratic party of San Diego." I said, "Well, good, form a committee down there and we'll come down and speak to help organize against HUAC. Here are some names. Here's who we know in San Diego. See so-and-so." That's what she knew. Period. Nothing more. Why would I say anything more than that to a woman not only the president of the Democratic party of San Diego but who approaches me at a podium? (What was I saying? I want to get the context of that.)

Oh, I think the FBI knew--we now know--that Anita Bell Schneider was the first person they could find who would say I was a communist, who would come forward and say so. They needed evidence. For example, we had the Smith Act trials. We had the Subversive Activities Control Board trials. In those first 4,000 pages of the Dick [Richard] Criley research, one of the things

we found is that twelve separate times J. Edgar Hoover had all the agents following me. I was all over the country. He had enormous problems trying to keep track of my travel schedule. You read that over and over again as they're trying to follow me, all agents to present evidence that would show I had violated the Internal Security Act of 1950, the Smith Act, or [violated] what we call speech crimes, crimes which have now all been declared either unenforceable or outright unconstitutional. Twelve times J. Edgar Hoover put those into what the FBI called "prosecutive summaries" and submitted them directly to twelve separate attorneys general, Republican and Democrat alike. We have those documents. I've read those documents in the FBI file. We have twelve letters back from twelve attorneys general saying, "You have no evidence here of any violation of any federal criminal law." So that was their problem.

They can't prosecute me under even these speech crimes because the attorneys general say they don't have enough data. Anita Bell Schneider is the only one they have who'll come forward and they know she's emotionally unstable. So they're searching. You'll find in here statements where Hoover is saying, "Identify, or find someone, who can identify Wilkinson

as a communist." They kept saying I was a communist, but they didn't know it because I didn't discuss my politics. They didn't have any witness that they could level on the thing.

I think that if they could have heard the tapes they would have known what all readers of this oral history now know.

TRELEVEN: Well, I'm curious in a larger context of the FBI having spent god knows how many person-hours at the State Historical Society [of Wisconsin]. Somebody back there added them up once and it was just astronomical. Out of all of that sifting and winnowing, or snooping, or whatever they were doing, you'll recall--as well me--that they came up with two documents prepared on typewriters with two different fonts which was to demonstrate to the court that you had written these as the First Amendment positions of CPUSA [Communist Party of the USA]. Out of all of that material they went through in Madison, why did they select very few documents to attach, but those two in particular?

WILKINSON: It's so interesting.

TRELEVEN: Is there a connection between their having done that and having, by some means, knowledge about some of the material that we've collected in this interview?

WILKINSON: Inasmuch as the FBI undoubtedly was responsible for falsifying my opinions in a typewritten document, it reminds me very much of the Alger Hiss case where they have a typewriter that says, "Alger Hiss said so-and-so." They had a typewriter on me. I had reason to go into the files just yesterday--the 10th of April, 1992--and I came across those very two documents by chance and looked at them. You know, when they came to me I pondered, "Where did this come from?" See, at the time I got them I never thought the FBI was involved. I would think HUAC would be involved. But they had me saying things that are absolutely out of my belief. I mean, I've never talked, or believed, or thought the way those documents had me talking. They made it appear as though it's a letter from me to the Communist Party, putting words into my mouth that were not mine.

It may be that in trying to find those documents in Wisconsin, they hoped to present those in court to discredit my position and to justify their position: they had truly found the smoking gun that I really was not a peace-loving civil libertarian, non-violent, etcetera, etcetera, but was in fact a person who was intent upon going far beyond the First Amendment to do definite damage to the national security of our

country.

It's very interesting you brought that up because I found that and yet we don't know yet. They never said that was our document. But we don't know. From everything else I've seen and know about the Hiss case, it's obvious that somebody had tried to use my typewriter, or some typewriter in the office, to make it appear as though I personally had said things that I never dreamed of thinking.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, the allegation was that each of the documents had been typed on typewriters that were in the NCARL offices. That's right. That's the reference to--

WILKINSON: The point is, they obviously had, from what we know of the record, what they've admitted to, in burglaries-- I think the only case where we have an admitted burglary was in our Chicago office where they wanted to find out if Dr. Quentin Young was a sustainer of the Chicago office. He was then president of Cook County General Hospital, a leading medical doctor in Chicago. Hoover says, "Find out about this." They write back saying that the custodian, the superintendent, the janitors are friendly to NCARL in the Chicago office, and we can't get it. Hoover writes back, "When do the janitors go off duty?" The word

comes back, "Two a.m." Hoover says, "Burglarize after two a.m." We have a signed statement by the FBI director in Chicago to burglarize after 2. They did break in; they did find out that Quentin Young was giving us ten dollars a month, or some great deal.
[laughter]

Just throwing it in as a parenthetical point here, the order to burglarize our office by the FBI agent on instructions from Hoover was signed by the FBI agent who resigned two years later and was named by Mayor [Richard J.] Daley to be the president of the Chicago Police Commission.

The other thing that they were trying to find in our office-- This is getting back to the statute of limitations argument. They were on shaky grounds on when I actually knew--or should have known--early enough to file a lawsuit. They were trying to find some letter where I knew that the FBI was involved here. They did produce a number of letters. They produced the [national] ACLU Aryeh Neier thing in which we actually went to the point of getting ready to file a lawsuit and dropped it, but it was an ACLU type of matter. I didn't put the FBI into my life at that point. It was in the ACLU thing.

I spoke on CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System]

television. I debated the federal district attorney for southern Ohio on CBS television. The head of the ACLU of Columbus called me and said the radio station just told me that the FBI had been there wanting to know who had invited Wilkinson to speak there. My instinct immediately was, "Find out. Who is it? Verify it. Is this a rumor? Find out who did it. Give me his name. I want to talk to him. If there's anything like that, we want to immediately file a court action if the FBI interfered with my talk there." The ACLU director in Columbus wrote back saying, "I can't find out who actually talked to the FBI. There's no evidence."

Later on, when I spoke at Amherst College, they found a document where I spoke at Amherst, they liked it, and they invited me back a second time. The president of Amherst College invited me back and jokingly wrote, "You know, the last time you were here the switchboard operator had calls from the FBI wanting to know who had brought you here." I got his letter; he threw it out as an anecdote. My response was immediately, "I can't believe the FBI would do that. Find out. Go back and find out who the switchboard operator was that night." The president wrote back, "There's no way we can find out; it was just a rumor."

But the point is, wherever I found even a suggestion that the FBI might have been out of line with me, I immediately took action to try to find out and, obviously, take legal action. So it bears out that actually what I've been saying about not knowing or having no evidence, and if there was evidence moving immediately, I was not saying, "Well, of course they would do that," and not checking it. I immediately checked it out and found I could not get any evidence that I could use.

TRELEVEN: Well, why don't we leave it there for today? We've gone a little longer than we anticipated. So till next time--

WILKINSON: Okay.

TAPE NUMBER: XXIX, SIDE ONE

APRIL 18, 1992

TRELEVEN: It's April 18th, and we're back with Frank Wilkinson. Last time, Frank, we sort of got into the heart of the matter of Wilkinson v FBI.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: In turn, we got into that because it was a rather long and detailed explanation of why we had ceased taping for a while. I sort of want to stick around the near-present today, in terms of what happens in Wilkinson v FBI, but I want to go back and see if you can explain in more detail what I'd call the hows and whys of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union, Southern California Chapter] being interested in the case to begin with and the hooking up, then, with Doug [Douglas E.] Mirell at Loeb and Loeb. You gave me the outline of that in general terms, but I wonder if you can be a little more specific. In other words, maybe we could just start with your association with ACLU of Southern California going back for some period. Were you on the board at the time? In ACLU, as far as you know, is this the kind of thing that took a group decision about whether to take your case?

Now, that's a lot of questions at once here, but

do you get the gist of what I'm trying to get at?

WILKINSON: I do. I think it's best to look at my association with ACLU historically. Up until 1952 at the time of my eminent domain experience and blacklisting, I'd had very little contact with the ACLU. I knew A. L. Wirin, Abraham Lincoln Wirin. I knew Fred Okrand, the counsel for the group at offices on Spring Street. It was a very small office, just literally a part of a lawyer's office. The director of it at that time was Reverend A. A. [Aaron Allen] Heist, a Methodist minister from a suburb here in Los Angeles. They did all the things in the papers that you expected of ACLU, but I didn't really have much contact with them. I know that when the internment of the Japanese Americans came, they were out front on that [in opposition], along with Carey McWilliams and other people. I remember specifically agreeing with that, that the internment was in error. But I didn't really have that much contact with them.

Somewhere around 1951, '52, when the first [Howard K.] Levering oaths were applied in California, a professor of English at San Francisco State [College] by the name of Eason Monroe refused to take the loyalty oath and was discharged from the teaching profession at San Francisco State. Ironically, at the

very time that he refused to take the oath, I signed the oath. I had signed it every year that it came along and even federal loyalty oaths before that, and in 1942 had sworn that I was not a member of the Communist Party.

Immediately after my discharge [from the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles], the lawyers in support of me were not from ACLU but rather from the law firm of Robert W. Kenny and his law partner, [Robert S.] Morris, [Jr.], and a little help from another lawyer who was just a friend through the [First] Unitarian Church, Bob [Robert J.] Schmorleitz. *[Daniel G. Marshall of the Catholic lawyers group worked with Kenny and Morris in helping me in 1952.]

TRELEVEN: Okay, would you call these [National Lawyers] Guild lawyers?

WILKINSON: I don't have much consciousness of the lawyers guild per se up to that point. I knew there was a guild. I knew that Robert W. Kenny, either at that time or the year before, had volunteered to become president of the guild when it was under severe attack from the attorney general at that time, something that

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

became stronger during [Dwight D.] Eisenhower's period. But after I was blacklisted and was unemployable, I then began to hear about the Reverend A. A. Heist. He retired from ACLU as director in 1952 and Eason Monroe, who had been discharged from the teaching profession in Northern California, became the director of ACLU. I didn't know Eason immediately, but I did come to meet A. A. Heist because it was he and a number of other people who came to me and asked me if I would work as secretary to the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms [CCPAF] that had started in 1951 at the time that the unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] had come out here and singled out doctors and lawyers. That had been a great kickoff for the committee. They produced the long playing LP records, Voices of Resistance. They produced a pamphlet, "Courage is Contagious."

About that time, I hesitated to go to work with them because I thought anything I would do would hurt. I felt so completely destroyed in terms of my own public image, my own public reputation. I think the way I felt about myself when I was blacklisted was that I just thought I could do nothing any longer; I was finished for an indefinite period of time. I turned them down the first time they asked me. They came back

again and asked me, and I reluctantly took it.

So that way I came into the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms and through the Reverend A. A. Heist, who had just retired as director of the ACLU of Southern California. Then a new friendship developed at that time with ACLU's Eason Monroe. I came to know them.

As soon as we began defending the victims of the unAmerican activities committee in 1953, almost at the beginning we started a process--not by any plan, just a logical process--that when the hearings were held I would invite Eason Monroe to come to our meetings where we got the subpoenaed people together. Eason came to some of these, but he also sent either A. L. Wirin or Fred Okrand to be with us at those meetings. It was to give a legal input from the ACLU at these first meetings of the subpoenaed people.

I think it was in 1953, certainly early '54, that certain court decisions had come down in the United States Supreme Court. The Quinn case particularly, I believe, where for the first time the claim of the Fifth Amendment was accepted as a protective claim when called before an inquisitorial committee of government. Up to that time, there was no certainty that the claim of the Fifth Amendment would protect one from a jail

sentence. People were actually cited for contempt when they used the Fifth Amendment at that time.

As soon as the Fifth Amendment became secure, then there was a gradual move on the part of Wirin and others that it was time to get a First Amendment challenge, the first in Southern California since the Hollywood Ten. Some of the earliest indication from the Supreme Court--the dicta, I think, in some of the decisions of the Supreme Court under [Chief Justice] Earl Warren--gave some hope that maybe the court would take a look afresh of the role of the unAmerican activities committee and its violations of the First Amendment. They were beginning to look for a person who would voluntarily not use the Fifth Amendment, but use the First Amendment and probably go to jail. It was a change in legal history that, at last, the Fifth Amendment was secured; now let us work to try to get the First Amendment into the picture.

From each hearing that we held beginning in '54 certainly, forward, whenever there was a group of subpoenaed people in our room there in our offices on Beverly Boulevard, we would ask, "Are there any persons here who would like to make a legal experiment and use the privilege of the First Amendment? ACLU will represent that person and carry it as far as

necessary." No one was willing to accept it, and in that way we came up to 1956.

TRELEVEN: So, up to this point, ACLU of Southern California made it clear that it was willing to support a First Amendment challenge?

WILKINSON: Yes. In '56, when I got my subpoena--in November of 1956, maybe even early-December of 1956--I immediately called Eason Monroe and Al Wirin and said that I had a subpoena and I would, myself, be willing to be the guinea pig to make this challenge. I'd reached that point in my thinking. They immediately took the case. Now, you asked in your initial question how was this decided. To my knowledge there was no meeting of the board of ACLU. This was a decision that was empowered to be made by the legal counsel and the director of ACLU. I think Al Wirin and Eason Monroe on their own made the decision, maybe Fred Okrand, I'm not just sure about it. I never heard of a board meeting.

TRELEVEN: What kind of personal conversation did you have with, say, your wife leading up to this phone call and saying that you would be the guinea pig?

WILKINSON: Jean [Benson Wilkinson] was familiar with all of our work from '54 through '56. She herself had been blacklisted at that time for four years; in fact, she herself had been subpoenaed a second time in regard

to a summer camp where she worked. I think we generally were prepared to do anything we could to fight the unAmerican activities committee, either politically, in defense of people, or in the courts. In actually telling Wirin and Eason that I would be the person who would make the challenge, I don't recall that I consulted Jean. I just on my own motion said I would do it.

Then it was this point of trying to define what was the narrowest position we could take. I understood that other people had taken a First Amendment position, but usually there was a lot of collateral discussion in the hearing that altered it from being a pure First Amendment. ACLU and I were looking for a legal position to be so narrowly drawn that the Supreme Court would either have to send me to jail, or declare that the First Amendment was violated by the unAmerican activities committee. In other words, a court decision that in effect would have abolished the unAmerican activities committee because without their power of compulsory testimony--to demand that you answer their questions or go to jail--there is no threat from the committee.

When we sought out other lawyers, Jean was with me at those things. We talked a great deal about the

whole thing. I don't think we really weighed on the idea of how we would support ourselves and what we would do. Things were moving too fast for that. I decided I was going to do this and Jean was supportive. I never heard her being unsupportive. There was a moment when I sat around with these eight or ten lawyers when I had asked all the important civil liberties-minded lawyers to come together with Al and Fred Okrand and Dan Marshall of the Catholic lawyers group. I said, "I want the narrowest possible position," just what I'd indicated here a minute ago. At that point, I think six or seven lawyers rose and said that they didn't want to be part of this conversation. This was, literally, inviting going to jail. They thought their job was to keep people out of jail, and the only way to stay out of jail was to use the Fifth Amendment. I was saying that as a matter of conscience and personal responsibility I wanted to make this challenge.

I've often remembered the fact I was deeply influenced when I got hold of a book that was published by some forerunner of the John Birch Society. (I don't remember the name of the organization.) It's called Communism in the Churches, Communism in the Schools, communism in the various fields of life, a multi-volume

bulletin. I found my own Methodist bishop, James C. Baker, had seventeen citations for so-called unAmerican activities. That had quite a profound impact upon me in terms of how bad things were getting. Of course, by 1956, many, many, many hundreds of people were losing their jobs--not going to jail but just losing their jobs--and having their careers, their professions ended.

TRELEVEN: Okay, can you remember the names of several of the lawyers that did not want to take part in that discussion?

WILKINSON: Yes. The most important would have been Bob Kenny. At that time he had been Attorney General of California, and had run for [governor] against Earl Warren, and was a very, very important voice in many ways. He was a Superior Court judge and then in private practice. He and his law partner, Robert S. Morris, were very, very strongly opposed to what I was trying to do and would not hear it. They were the two that led those going out. I'm almost positive that both Ben Margolis and John [T.] McTernan were in the room at that particular time and left, too. But they were hostile personally to me. They were coming to my office to talk me out of this thing as soon as they heard about it, and on the phone with me.

But at that point--

TRELEVEN: Well, what was your understanding of-- You said their position was that their job was to keep you out of jail, and if this involved the risk of going to jail they didn't want to have anything to do with it; I think that's a rough paraphrase of what you said.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: Did you have a sense, also, that the Hollywood Ten case, which had been a First Amendment case, had made Ben, John McTernan, and others gun-shy of pursuing another First case?

WILKINSON: I'm sure that that was motivating them because they had been counsel for the Hollywood Ten, those very names mentioned: Margolis, McTernan, Kenny. They had been. They had believed that the First Amendment was a good protection for the Hollywood Ten. I don't think the Hollywood Ten expected to go to jail. They thought they would set new law and establish the First Amendment as a protection back in 1947, whenever it was. So that influenced them. But I don't remember the words Hollywood Ten coming up in those conversations at that time. It wasn't that way.

At any rate, back finally into the role of Jean. Jean was supporting me, but when those people walked out I know that she felt bereft, I think. Well, we all

did a little bit. I did, too.

TRELEVEN: Old friends.

WILKINSON: Right, walking out. Here was Dan Marshall and Al Wirin, possibly Fred Okrand, possibly Eason. We loved Dan Marshall. He was a kind of a saintly Catholic lay leader. His wife, Dorothy [N.] Marshall, was the president of the Catholic Women's Club. And I remember Jean turning to Dan Marshall and saying, "Well, Dan, what do you think?" Sort of almost wanting some handle to hang onto here. Dan said, "Sometimes, Jeannie, you have to listen to the still, small voices." I took that to mean some reference to Joan of Arc and her religious motivation in France and the revolutionary struggle she was involved in at that time. Something about Dan Marshall's point of view gave us a little added comfort.

I don't think anything could have stopped me at that time from doing it. I think if Jean had opposed me at that time, I would have done it. I really didn't want this to be subject to any type of a collective decision. This was my own personal conscience. I was expressing what I personally felt.

TRELEVEN: Okay, but you have a spouse, you've got three children. What was your sense of the risk of imprisonment if you pursued this?

WILKINSON: I didn't think too much about it. I assumed that somehow, some way, things would work out. But the point--and I may be repeating myself--the point that really was the hardest on me--to force this to my consciousness--is the night before the hearing when Ben Margolis called me up at late at night--ten or eleven o'clock--at the office and still argued with me about it. He was saying that, "We need you. You'll go to jail. We need your organizing." Everything he could think of and I was not answering him. I was saying, "Other people can do this. This is my responsibility." Then he used the ultimate weapon. He said, "Frank, you're forcing us to support your family, your wife, and your children by doing this. That's not fair." I angrily replied to Ben Margolis, "I don't want to take one dime from you, Ben. I'll work this thing out my own way."

TRELEVEN: Okay. A further question in terms of family. Your brother and two sisters were aware of what you were offering to do and what the ramifications might be? Their feelings on it?

WILKISON: Generally aware, but as medical professional people they were not familiar with all the legal implications of what I was doing. That evolved slowly. They'd become intensely aware of what the unAmerican

activities committee was, and what my stand was at the time of my blacklisting in August of 1952, because the headlines screamed it from the front pages of the papers here for a two-month period. But they--my two sisters, Hildegard [Roxanna June Wilkinson] and Betty [Clara Marie Wilkinson Evans], and my brother, Budge [Allan Blodgett Wilkinson]--always supported me in whatever I wanted to do, as did my sister's friend, Pete [Margrethe Petersen], who supported me. They didn't fully understand, but I think they respected what they probably didn't verbalize as my conscience, but that's what it amounted to.

Very supportive. Never once did my family try to talk me out of this.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Doing some leapfrogging now, because what I'd like to do today is to come back to that hearing, and want to then move on to Atlanta and the imprisonment years, but I want to keep the ACLU thread sort of flowing towards the present. So you by this time are a member of ACLU?

WILKINSON: I think I joined in '52, soon after I was blacklisted. But there was a problem with that. ACLU had a loyalty oath. You got a membership envelope and you had to not only give your money, address, name, but you had to sign this statement that I am not a member

of any Nazi, fascist, or communist organization, some language of that kind. ACLU had it, NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] had it, ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] had it, many of them had it. At that point I would not have signed that because I couldn't truthfully state I was not a communist and I'd already made this decision against loyalty oaths--taking them in any form--at the time of my appearance in the eminent domain hearing in 1952.

TRELEVEN: Okay, moving forward into the sixties, seventies, and up to the time that you were thinking about bringing the suit in the case Wilkinson v FBI, how would you generalize about your association with ACLU?

WILKINSON: Let's pick up one thread where we were. After the hearing where I used the First Amendment, as you may recall, I think I stated that that hearing involved a number of people who were supporting the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born. I was just brought in because I'd had-- I don't know, I was organizing the first major, major event with Alexander Meiklejohn coming to speak. When the hearing was over, it was obvious to all that heard it that it was a kind of a classical effort on the part of the unAmerican activities committee to turn the Fifth

Amendment into a bad word. Repeatedly, when I was up there, the committee indicated they were totally surprised that I was not going to claim the Fifth Amendment. I certainly was not going to put down the Fifth Amendment; I believe the Fifth Amendment is extremely important, equally important to the First Amendment, coming from similar common law struggles for religious freedom in England. But the committee kept saying, "Now, Mr. Wilkinson, do you have something else to say? Something else?" I mean, I refused to answer anything other than my name. They came back and said, "Now, please, Mr. Wilkinson, don't you have a little something more to say?" Then they would get into an argument saying, "Is he using, or isn't he using, the Fifth Amendment?" Back and forth, that whole story.

Anyway, that testimony seemed important enough to reprint. So we ordered a transcription of it so we could hear it. We needed that for the law case as well. We were waiting for the contempt citation to be voted by Congress. The committee voted it right then and there. We got hold of that and a decision was made by me and by others to print it up and make it known, use it as a piece of educational material. Ward Ritchie, I think, was the name of a printer in Los Angeles--a very important classical printer--and I went

to him and he agreed to typeset the thing and to print it for me. I asked Al Wirin to write an introduction, and I've had reason to look at that recently. I had assumed by that time that the ACLU of Southern California was free of the kind of positions of the national ACLU: the national ACLU would literally not defend certain people. If they did do it, it was taken on the basis of, "I hate your ideas, but I'll still defend you." In reading Al Wirin's statement--paraphrasing him--he then in that introduction--and I printed that--said, "We're not defending Wilkinson's ideas, whatever they may be." I mean, it was sort of a brush-off from ACLU of Southern California. I think that was one of the last times that that appeared. It was something that came in printed form; because of going into print and being circulated, I think Al Wirin--and I think he was speaking only for himself, not Eason or the others--wanted to make it clear that he's defending me, but he doesn't want anyone to be confused that he's going too far in defending communists per se, or something of that kind.

Anyway, that was printed and distributed nationally. Several thousands of copies of that were distributed. It was that particular document that came into the hands of Carey McWilliams, and I. [Isidor] F.

Stone, and Corliss Lamont that led them to bring me to New York to launch the campaign to abolish HUAC under the [National] Emergency Civil Liberties Committee [ECLC].

I'm trying to think of any other references to ACLU. I think a couple more--

I think almost immediately when I came to New York I went to the ACLU offices to introduce myself and get acquainted and meet the director, to talk to the legal director, to talk to the staff. We got acquainted. Whenever hearings came up, trying to get them to provide free legal counsel just as we developed this thing in Los Angeles. So there was a working relationship beginning, certainly, in September or October of 1957.

When I went to Georgia-- When I got my phone call to ask me to come down to Atlanta to help circulate the petition among black churches in Atlanta when Jim [James A.] Dombrowski and Carl and Anne Braden of SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund] called me down, my first move was to get an airline flight and then to call ACLU, Alan Reitman, their associate director, and ask him who are our lawyers--ACLU lawyers--in Georgia so I could help do the same thing in Georgia. I didn't want to go in there cold. I did get a list of names. When I got there and got my second subpoena, I knew we

had a new case.

The '56 challenge based on the First Amendment had been dropped by the committee, they claimed, because the Congress adjourned and they couldn't get the vote out of Congress in time. It was a December hearing and Congress was reconvening in January. That is false. There's plenty of precedent whereby one Congress--the Speaker of the House for one Congress--can confirm on his own a contempt action for the forthcoming Congress. But the committee just chose not to do that. They dropped it for whatever reasons they wanted to drop it. They didn't want it. They were probably a little bit worried themselves where it might take them because it was that kind of a challenge.

But in '58 when we get a new subpoena, my first call was to Eason Monroe back in L.A., and to Al Wirin, asking what they thought about getting the national ACLU to take it. They then, I know, did call the national ACLU urging them to take it. I called the national ACLU and asked them to take it. By that time Rowland Waits was general counsel of ACLU in New York, and they did accept it. But I think it's important to relate the fact that it was the Southern California ACLU's advanced position on all these things that helped to bring the national ACLU into it. At the

national level you had people like Rowland Waits who were just great, great people in terms of they would have been very happy in Southern California ACLU, but then you had leadership at the top of ACLU, Patrick Murphy Malin, who was really a cold warrior and would not personally have-- If he could have found any way to avoid defending me, I'm sure he would have done that from my personal conversations with him. We now know that [Irving] Ferman, the director of ACLU in Washington, D.C., was reporting on my activities directly to the FBI. Alan Reitman's role in this thing remains a mystery to this day. I did call Alan Reitman, "Who are our lawyers in Georgia?"

I got my plane reservation, packed my bag, said good-by to Jean and the kids and went. Within a minute after I checked into the hotel in Atlanta, I was subpoenaed. We don't to this day have a document showing how they knew it, but I believe personally that Alan Reitman--the role that he played within ACLU--would have called Ferman and told him that Wilkinson is going down to Georgia; there's a HUAC hearing down there, and that Ferman would have reported it to the FBI and the FBI--and HUAC, its punishing arm--would have then sent the courier down there with the subpoena to catch me on arrival. But that's the way that went.

That was my connection.

Of course, the national ACLU's position when handling my case was exactly what it should have been. There were no questions about "I hate your ideas, but--" This Voltaireian concept. But they were exactly where the Southern California ACLU was in terms of taking a case like my own.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Locally, nationally, in D.C., in Georgia, did any of the attorneys who you consulted with attempt to ask you the question?

WILKINSON: No, they didn't. That's the first time I've had anybody even ask me the question. I'm trying to recall.

TRELEVEN: To ask you the question if they asked you the question?

WILKINSON: I mean, asked me, "Well, Frank, are you a communist?" That kind of question. No, they did not. In fact, I think there were already probably doubts raised in certain minds that maybe I was not a communist simply because, as Clark Foreman once put it arguing why ECLC [Emergency Civil Liberties Committee] had no communists, "Well, you used the First Amendment." Meaning if I'd used the Fifth I'd be a communist, but by using the First I wasn't. So there may have been some thoughts that way. I think there

certainly would be a tendency among liberals at that time--a wishful thinking--that they hoped I was not a communist because they would be more comfortable in making a pure First Amendment stand without the person making the stand being a communist. But no one came right out and said, "Frank, I'd like to defend you. I'd like to sit there in court with you, but you'll have to tell me privately: are you a communist?"

Now, here in Los Angeles in the eminent domain proceeding, the question was asked, "What organizations, political or otherwise, have you belonged to since 1929?" My lawyer had not defended me properly and I refused to answer that question.

When I went out to get lawyers at that time, I went to old-time friends of mine. Monsignor Thomas J. O'Dwyer, this wonderful Catholic leader who got me involved in housing in 1939, and stayed with me till October of '52. He offered to put up \$13,000 dollars worth of Saint Mary's parish--at Fourth and Chicago [streets] in L.A.--funds to hire me "a good Catholic lawyer," as he put it.

But I went to see old friends like in the University Religious Conference [at UCLA], Richard [R.] Rogan; I went out to see him in Burbank. We'd been very, very close friends. Dick and I had worked on

trying to promote a world-wide student tour while we were still in UCLA. Dick said, "Of course, I'll represent you but I'd like to ask you, Frank, are you a communist?" This is a man who I'd been intimately close to in '35, '36; we all were close to each other. But by '52, when I refused to answer, the question was asked. I just couldn't believe that he would do that to me. I just said, "Well, that's it Dick. Let's forget it. I want a lawyer here. I don't want to take a loyalty oath from you in private. I'm finished with those things."

But in '56 and in '58, no one in ACLU sat down and said, "Are you or are you not?" The closest to it is that I made it very clear to Rowland Waits that I didn't want want any of this defend-you-despite-your-ideas business. After the trial in the Federal District Court in Atlanta in 1959, I guess it was, there was to be a sentencing the following day, or within two days. Rowland and I were staying in adjoining rooms in a hotel in Atlanta. He came in and Rowland loved to drink, and I like to drink, too. He brought in a bottle of bourbon and a couple of glasses, and he poured one for himself and poured one for me. I think it was almost a half a tumbler of straight bourbon. Three, four, five jiggers, I think,

certainly. He says, "Frank, I have to say something to you." He knocked on my door to come into my bedroom. He says, "As your lawyer I have to say something to you now. I have reason to believe...." He didn't say any more about how he learned it. "I have reason to believe that if tomorrow morning you'll tell the judge you are not now a communist, or that you have never been a communist, you will never serve a day in jail," and he looked at me. I'd been so strong on this thing that when Rowland asked me that I could just see he was sort of like saying, "I've done my legal job. My responsibility to my client is to tell him that. I'm sorry I have to do it, but you know what it is now. You've heard me, Frank." I said, "Thank you, Rowland, you've discharged your legal responsibilities and my position is my position, and I will answer no questions of that kind ever again." He leaned forward with his tumbler full of bourbon, we clicked glasses, and that night I drank more bourbon at one time than I've ever done in my life.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Along the same line, though, there were attorneys here in Los Angeles who knew that you were in the Party. I mean, there's no question about that.

WILKINSON: That's right.

TRELEVEN: As far as you know on the part of those people, were they concerned with the fact that you were in the Party and if, in this case, that somehow became revealed that it would be detrimental perhaps not only to you, but detrimental to other factors going on in this Cold War period?

WILKINSON: I think I was more conscious of that than some of these lawyers who knew I was in the Party and were opposing my taking a stand. My job at that time was to organize a common defense of all the subpoenaed people. There were probably thirty or forty people subpoenaed in 1956, all from the foreign born.

Everyone was brought together. They were fighting back. They had this big meeting with Meiklejohn. It was wonderful. Throughout that time, privately, I was meeting with Al Wirin and other lawyers to take this First Amendment stand, and never once told the other subpoenaed people that I was going to use the First Amendment.

When we went into that hearing that day, various witnesses coming up to the stand would take the Fifth Amendment, take the Fifth Amendment; everyone did it. Not one person in the group knew in advance that I was going to use the First Amendment. In fact, as they probably listened to it, they might have even been

confused because they seemed to be badgering me more than everyone else. "Well, Frank is the secretary of the committee so of course they're badgering him. Why do they hold onto him so long?" But if they were listening, certainly they would have known it.

I think if people had known that I was using the First--and everyone else was using the Fifth--there was always the possibility that that might be a devisive political issue, not because of I was a communist or not a communist; that had nothing to do with it. It's the fact that, "Well, let's all use the Fifth Amendment. If Frank is using the First Amendment, somehow it makes him a little different than the rest of us." That would be the danger I would see in it. I was very careful to avoid that and not one bit of damage was done. I never heard any of these lawyers who were opposing me saying, "You shouldn't do it, Frank, because you're a communist," or something like that.

TRELEVEN: No, I didn't--

WILKINSON: I didn't think your question said that, but it had nothing to do with communism. It had nothing to do with membership in the Party. This was purely a matter of personal conscience and responsibility. I had reached that point in my life where I was prepared

to do anything necessary to abolish that committee. Although we didn't say it at the time--I didn't say it--it was a form of civil disobedience, you might say. That's what it really amounted to. But it was not a tactic. It was not an idea of, "Well, we'll use the First and then we'll organize around Frank," but rather as a matter of personal conscience and responsibility I'll take that stand, period. What happened of value tactically, later, was coincidental.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I've got to turn the tape over.

TAPE NUMBER: XXIX, SIDE TWO

APRIL 18, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, I think we're back on. Two questions: what is your recollection of the [Communist] Party position about the First Amendment? Secondly, what was Dorothy [Ray] Healey's position?

WILKINSON: I did not discuss my decision to use the First Amendment with anybody in the Party in 1956. I just did this on my own responsibility. However, at the time that Ben Margolis and John McTernan were pressing me so hard not to use the First Amendment, I do remember talking with Dorothy Healey on the phone where she gave me full support for doing whatever, in my conscience, seemed best. Dorothy paid no attention to the arguments of Margolis and McTernan when she talked to me, and in effect said, "Do what your conscience tells you to do." That's my memory of that. I greatly appreciated that because I was in the Party, of course, and I wanted the support of the Party. What I was doing, I thought, was in no way contrary to what the Party should be doing itself. But Dorothy's support was very strong, very clear, and much appreciated because she was, in effect, the key person in the Party here at that time.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: I think that I, later on, had differences with John [H.] Abt nationally in some of the trials and post-trials of both the Internal Security Act and the Subversive Activities Control Board, in that area where I felt that John Abt was leading Gus Hall and others in the Party to take positions that were not in the interest of the First Amendment. I can't put the detail onto it, but I remember having heated arguments with Abt about this thing, not so much with Gus Hall. But we had a certain strategy going, legally, that was very well received. Now, when I went up to talk about how to handle the various hearings in '58, '59, '60, '61, '62-- [tape recorder off]

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on.

WILKINSON: I don't remember dealing with the fights to defend the victims, or our mounting campaign to abolish HUAC, as being something that was brought up as a Party issue. I never really inquired among subpoenaed people who was a communist and who wasn't, and tried to prevent that. In fact, our strategy was so clearly established by the end of the fifties that any position that a person wanted to take other than to name a name was acceptable. That was achieved, in part, through my own First Amendment stand. If you want to use the

First, if you want to use the Fifth, if you want to use what Bob Kenny called a "diminished Fifth," any of these positions are all right so long as you don't name a name. That's our common bond. But I don't remember that as a Party issue.

Now, there was a collateral Party conflict that developed with Carl Winter, who was one of the leaders of the Party in the Midwest. When the [United States] Supreme Court decision came down in 1965 upholding-- I'm trying to get this clear now; let's go back a bit and reconstruct this later, maybe. It was a Supreme Court decision that came down affecting the Subversive Activities Control Board act, the "Communist Action" section of Title I of the Internal Security Act of 1950. Nationally, the Party called a meeting and started to form a series of independent organizations all over the country in opposition to the Subversive Activities Control Board act, or something of that kind. It was just such a gross mistake that here we had been building a campaign to abolish HUAC for some years, at that point, and the HUAC had been the author of the Subversive Activities Control Board act when [Richard M.] Nixon was a member of HUAC. These new organizations were set up not to work to abolish HUAC, but to fight the Subversive Activities Control Board

act. Dick [Richard] Criley and I were arguing vehemently that the only way you can get at the law is to abolish the source of the law, the committee. We attended meetings at which Carl Winter was present in Michigan and in Illinois, in which we had sharpest differences with Party leadership on this thing. I think Carl Winter and others were angry with Dick Criley and me because we weren't taking a direction, as it were, from the Party leadership in New York.

But we were in the field organizing. We knew what was possible. We were dealing with congressional district committees all over the country, and we knew we were on the right track and we knew the Party was setting these things up. These committees were without any real base. There were some non-Party people, I presume, in all these committees--maybe several non-Party people. But, essentially, they were a creature of the Communist Party. We just thought they were weak. What we had set up were real grass-roots organizations to abolish HUAC, and that was where the movement would go. That was a sharp difference with Carl Winter particularly, I remember. Now, beyond that--

TRELEVEN: So the Party position was to eliminate--

WILKINSON: The Party position was not to go along with

what we already were establishing, but establish a new organization. I was trying to build ACLU and to get ad hoc committees on a congressional district basis to abolish HUAC. The Party comes along and, over the top of this, inserts an entirely new national organization and new national series of local committees that they organized all over the country. They were tactically wrong in not watching where people really were at, and they were terribly vulnerable because it's so obvious to anyone--you didn't have to be in the Party or close to the Party--you could just see how vulnerable these were. Each of these groups that was set up was attacked by the committee effectively and destroyed. It just was a blunder on the part of the Party.

TRELEVEN: Their mission was to wipe out the effect, not to wipe out the cause. The cause was the committee.

WILKINSON: That's right. That's right. They just ignored eight or ten years of solid political organization to abolish HUAC that we had going on. They ignored that and went their own way. They tried to pretend that these were not Party groups but were independent citizens groups. It just was wrong. The people who were already involved in things couldn't understand why there was a need for something more.

But they were done; there was an organization like that founded here in Los Angeles. We supported them in any way that we could, but we always said that they were on the wrong track. We didn't attack them; we just said, "You're on the wrong track."

In private meetings with Carl Winter in Michigan, as I recall--maybe Illinois--we really attacked the position strongly and we did not win. Carl Winter carried on. It was directly from the New York Party down. It was like, "We are going to have an organization. It's going to be this. We're going to have them all over the country." That is the "line," as it were, and Dick Criley and I were not following any "line." We were out there organizing where people were at. People were organizing. Many of them were communists, but that was not the issue. The idea was to organize effective committees to abolish the committee. With the abolition of the committee, the committee's bill would in turn fail, which is precisely what did happen.

I want to say one more thing that is a policy matter. I insisted in all of my national work that I would maintain contact with Party people, exactly as I would with any other organizational person or group. I would come into New York and we had a big campaign that

we were working on in the abolition of HUAC. I would call up the Communist Party office in New York, say I was in town, and that I'd like to talk to some of the Party leadership to tell them what was going on. They would invite me there, and I would go in and sit down with what probably was something like the board of the national Communist Party. I didn't speak to them as a communist; I spoke to them as an organizer on the abolition campaign, trying to get their support in the field to carry on the battle we were waging.

That, ultimately, led to some conflicts with John Abt and Gus Hall, who were taking a position--which I don't clearly recall right now--which seemed to me to be exactly the wrong direction and failed.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I'm still trying to follow an ACLU thread in Southern California, in terms of your personal continuing association into the sixties, seventies, leading up to Wilkinson v FBI.

WILKINSON: In the work that we were doing, which was setting up congressional district committees to abolish HUAC all over the country that was the thing that Aubrey [W.] Williams politically had insisted upon when we set up the National Committee to Abolish HUAC, we had to have at least fifty congressional district committees to abolish HUAC before we'd ever have an

office in Washington--in setting these committees up, wherever we could find an existing ACLU group or chapter we tried to build that chapter as the basis for doing what we wanted done. Where there was no chapter or where the ACLU would not go along with it, then we set up an independent ad hoc committee--say the Illinois Sixth Congressional District Committee to Abolish HUAC, or something like that.

So I, from the very earliest stages, began meeting and speaking before ACLU groups. In the sixties, the ACLU was still primarily a legal-defense organization; political action was not yet there. We were trying to develop political action. We were trying to instill it. I think the national organization watched that cautiously in varying degrees. I know Patrick Murphy Malin was just unfriendly, uncomfortable with anything that I was doing.

I mentioned, I'm sure, in another tape, that when we were both invited to speak before the Ohio River Valley Conference of the Unitarian Universalist Churches, that on the dias I spoke and thanked ACLU for their representation of me and Malin personally, and Malin just treated me like I was a case, "Wilkinson v FBI, something that we're handling." It was that kind of thing.

But later on--

TRELEVEN: How about the Southern California chapter?

WILKINSON: The Southern California ACLU became stronger and stronger.

TRELEVEN: In the sixties?

WILKINSON: In the sixties. Very, very strong. In the fifties and sixties it grew and grew. Eason Monroe was an excellent organizer. They did form chapters. The national organization, however, was afraid of chapters. The ACLU was ostensibly democratic, but it was controlled by a small group of people who were the board, and each affiliate board named one person to be on the national board. These were pretty well hand-chosen and selective, and strictly under the control of the national organization. The idea of chapters worried the national and it even worried some [local] boards. Eason Monroe went to the point of not only having chapters, but having chapters having the right to vote so when you elected officers to the board there were members elected at-large, and there were people who came in as chapter representatives to sit on the board. That policy was very advanced and it continues to this day. When we have an election of ACLU here now, the chapters--according to a formula of delegates per thousand members, are allowed to attend these

annual sessions where the votes are taken. They have a definite say-so on who the leadership is going to be, who the officers are going to be.

I remember working always with a great deal of difficulty with the ACLU on this thing. The director of ACLU in San Francisco [Ernest Besig], for example, just did not want to have any association with me. I treated him just exactly perfectly. I'd arrive in town, I'd see him, tell him I'm up here to organize so-and-so, and before I left town I'd call him up and say, well, we've decided to do this, we're going to have a meeting on that. When I worked with Meiklejohn we'd take a full-page ad on a HUAC hearing and place it in the San Francisco Chronicle. I would call him up and tell him what we were doing; then I'd find out later that he undercut Meiklejohn, and undercut all the work I was doing. I treated him correctly and then he went around and tried to cut down whatever we had set up.

TRELEVEN: Who was this?

WILKINSON: He was the ACLU director in Northern California for fifteen or twenty years, Ernest Besig.

In Illinois, the ACLU wanted nothing to do with this HUAC abolition campaign. They were afraid of it. So we there definitely set up an independent committee, the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights--

which Dick Criley chaired--always trying to build ACLU. Today ACLU in Chicago is fine. *[When Rachel Rosen DeGolia was the director of the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights, she also served on the ACLU Illinois board of directors.] But there were years, and years, and years there where you could not get anything done like that.

ACLU was pretty weak, by the way. I mean, take Washington state, where the ACLU today is quite strong: they must have had six or eight directors in a period of five years in Washington state. Constant turnover. So I think the main point is that I always tried to get ACLU involved in the abolition campaign politically, and in so doing to build the ACLU boards, and build ACLU chapters where I could.

[tape recorder off]

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on. Would it be fair to say, in all of this, that from early on that ACLU Southern California was sort of the backbone of support for the abolition effort in terms of legal assistance, in terms of inkind support, in terms of helping to produce materials, things like that?

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

WILKINSON: I think they were a model of what an ACLU should have been. Their positions were very principled. They were anti-Cold War from as early as possible. Eason Monroe led that. Ramona Ripston continued that when she came in. They built chapters. They believed in getting the grass roots organized. They weren't afraid of people. They weren't afraid of giving the franchise out to more and more people. It was a model. More than any other affiliate in the country, the ACLU of Southern California recognized that to be effective ACLU had to be not only into the courts on the legal action, but into the state houses and the Congress on political action.

Of course, today, by hindsight, that is almost the sole perspective of ACLU because now the top leadership of ACLU realizes that to go into the Supreme Court on an issue today is not only to lose, but maybe get worse law than what you did have. They tried to do it through the state supreme courts where they may have a more liberal possibility in the court system, and even in that the areas are being closed down slowly. So the ACLU today is clearly in the political action field, where we were trying to press them.

I think my role during that period of time: We not only built the ACLU, built the abolition committee, but

we strengthened ACLU. We never forced people. We never left them out. If they weren't ready to do it, we'd get them to be a member of a group that would be doing something. I think that probably, during this period of time, I must have spoken before every single affiliate of the ACLU in the country. Of course, I have, but I mean during this period of time I was doing it. I was into all the affiliates, and some of the affiliates many, many times. Wherever there was an ACLU, I tried to involve them, tried to bring them in. Where there was a weak ACLU, we'd set up our ad hoc committees but bring ACLU into that; we never left them out. We felt in the long term ACLU is the viable organization. It is the civil liberties organization and it should be built that way.

I was able to demonstrate to many, many affiliates that if you do straight political action, you can get new members and you can raise more money. John Shattuck, the ACLU Washington director for many, many years and now vice-president of Harvard University, used to say that I was the "last of the lock-the-doors, pass-the-plate-a-second-time, sign-up ACLU people in the country. He referred to it as my religious background which taught me how to get money out of people that way. Often to the detriment of our

own work, I'd get people to join ACLU rather than contribute to our committee just because I wanted that building process to take place.

Examples of the program in how this worked can be seen in Milwaukee, in Ohio, and possibly one or two other communities that don't quite come to me now. But in Milwaukee, where the ACLU had been very cool toward my approaches--I've now seen the FBI documents showing that they had been warned against me when I came to speak there, not even allowing Criley to sit in a room where I was reporting to them what we were doing; that's the Milwaukee affiliate--we found individual academics, Sidney Peck, David Luce, a philosopher and teacher at Downer College, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, and others in the churches to set up an ad hoc committee and call it Milwaukee Ad Hoc Committee of 100 in Favor of the Abolition of HUAC. The idea would be that we would never be able to get a congressperson to vote correctly on this thing unless we had one hundred prominent citizens on record. It had to be a cross-crafted thing. So we would go out and invite individuals to be part of the one hundred. I mean, we had a real problem there. We not only agreed that we would not release it until we had one hundred, but we allowed people at the very end to withdraw their name

if they didn't want to be associated with somebody else who had signed it. It was a very, very well-crafted, difficult-crafted thing. I mean, you could get a hundred people, then show it around. Okay, this one can go. Then somebody would say, "Well, I don't want to be on there with that person." So you'd have to take that person off and go out and get someone else to replace it. We struggled; it took over a year, and we got up to fifty, sixty, seventy. I would say, "Well, we'd better go now. We need that support."

"No, we promised the people it would be a hundred."

When we finally did get the hundred, we went and took a full-page large ad in the Milwaukee Journal, and it appeared there. Within a week after that, the congressperson from that area introduced the right bill to abolish HUAC at that time. Reuss, I think was his name.

TRELEVEN: Henry [S.] Reuss.

WILKINSON: Right. Personally, we tried this thing in every community. We tried to build it up and the outstanding example of that--

By the way, back to Milwaukee. The people working on that were all ACLU members, I think. I'm sure they were. But ACLU itself was not prepared. We had to do

it through an ad hoc committee. We didn't criticize ACLU. We'd asked ACLU to do it.

Now, in Columbus, Ohio, the president of ACLU was Jack [John] Childers, a lawyer there, the former husband of my wife, Donna. When we came in there, I was selling this idea to each town: Oberlin, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton. Build your committee of one hundred; it was sort of the model we wanted everybody to follow. We announced this at a reception after one major meeting in Columbus and Donna Childers agreed to help form this committee. With Jack Childers as the president of the ACLU and Donna Childers the head of this ad hoc committee, it was never an ACLU project, but everybody saw the connection to it.

Donna Childers's work in Columbus was more outstanding than even Milwaukee. She got more than her hundred and she outreached into the board of education, into many, many lawyers, into the academic community, into Ohio State [University], into the NAACP. Really important community leaders signed that thing. So that Columbus Committee of 100--I think they changed it to the Columbus Committee of 500 because they did so well on this thing--was a way. If you could show a congressperson that there's enough support in his district or her district to take a stand on this thing,

the congressperson is going to do it. To my way of political thinking and organizing, that's exactly what you have to do: you have to demonstrate that it is politically safe to take the correct stand. You can't just call upon a congressperson to take a stand, put his neck out and get it chopped off, and lose a liberal that we need in there. You had to demonstrate that the people were really behind it so that the opposition, when it came along, could not chop him off but would face the fact that, well, how can you say this when these hundred distinguished citizens all supported the issue?

TRELEVEN: Okay. So the structure of the abolition campaign and its relationship with ACLU is really, in a sense, the political action arm of ACLU--in addition to those legal types of things ACLU is doing. The abolition campaign not only works towards abolishing the committee, but it's building ACLU membership, as I think you've described very well.

WILKINSON: I think I'll give you one other example of how this was done. When we set out to develop the Constitutional Authorities Petition to Abolish HUAC, which we wanted to get signed by one hundred constitutional law authorities, it was drafted by Tom [Thomas I.] Emerson and Meiklejohn. At their meetings

where they were putting the final touches on it, I made a point of inviting the national director of ACLU at that time to sit in on these meetings so that he was fully familiar with it. His name was not on there; he later came on. His name was Jack [John deJ.] Pemberton and he was one of the more far-seeing, friendly ACLU directors we'd had up to that time. He was in on it. He sat with Meiklejohn, Emerson, and myself when we did it; that way I was bringing in the national ACLU to know what it was. When we went out to get the one hundred law professors, Jack I'm sure did come on, and if anyone had called up the ACLU from some law school out in Iowa and said, "What do you know about this?" Pemberton would have said, "Oh, it's a fine thing. I know all about it. I was with them on this thing." It was a matter of drawing them in.

ACLU would not have taken this initiative. They would not have drafted this petition. In fact (I hope I'm not repeating this), it's certainly very important to mention that when we had the petition completed and signed, and were ready to have it introduced--that was then during late '63 and '64, and we were getting it introduced in January of 1965--Don Edwards, who was the congressperson from San Jose, had been one of the people who had been deeply influenced by our campaigns

in Northern California, and was fully sympathetic to introducing the resolution.

So I took the Meiklejohn resolution to Edwards and he liked it. Then I took it to the ACLU Washington director, Larry [Laurence] Speiser. I went to him and showed him what we've got. He said, "Well, that's fine. You do what you want to do." I said, "Well, now, Edwards asked me to write the actual legislation that we need. I'm not familiar with writing legislation, to take the petition and put it in the legislative language you need. Could we work together?" This ACLU guy said, "We'll do our thing, you do your thing. Let's keep this thing separate."

So that last weekend before Congress opened, I went into the Library of Congress and dug up the original resolutions establishing HUAC to get the technical language, what we had to repeal. I found it and I drafted it, all by myself with no legal knowledge, on a Saturday and a Sunday in the Library of Congress, and got it typed and had it exactly right.

At the end of our draft, which is very important to us--something that Meiklejohn and Emerson had insisted on--and that is about the disposition of the files. When HUAC is abolished, what happens to the files? That's the real danger. Some people talked

about destroying the files. Meiklejohn and Emerson said the files should not be destroyed; they should be preserved for posterity. People can look at them. So we wrote into our resolution all the things you had to do to abolish, but then the last clause was that the files of the committee shall be sealed in the National Archives for fifty years. That was our decision.

So, all by myself I go over to see Edwards the morning of Congress' beginning, and he had a draft resolution there from Speiser. We sat down and compared the two and they were identical. I had come up with the right language. I'd done all the right things. I said, "Except he doesn't take care of the files. He just leaves them there." We waited and waited for this ACLU director to come over so we could get our heads together on it and the ACLU director never arrived. We're getting down to ten or fifteen minutes before Edwards had to get over to the Speaker's office to file this, indicating that it would be the first order of business on the opening day of Congress. I said, "Well, you've got to put this on." So Don Edwards took my copy, cut off the part at the bottom about sealing the files, and Scotch-taped it onto the bottom of the ACLU copy. That hybrid is what became the resolution to abolish HUAC.

But right to the end the ACLU would not cooperate with us. Jack Pemberton, again the director at that time, I remember came down once or twice all the way from New York when he knew I was getting together with the Washington director just to be there to keep some harmony, to keep the thing cool. He was obviously bringing indirect pressure to bear on his own staff person in Washington, who didn't want anything to do with this, and Pemberton thought that the ACLU should work with the Committee to Abolish HUAC and with me.

That's a very interesting story about how that was tagged on. [laughter] That resolution in '65 was finally adopted by Congress in 1975, when we abolished the committee.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: We had to overcome every kind of petty opposition. We were building ACLU, yet ACLU was cutting us down at every point they possibly could with this guy Ferman doing his work, and Jimmy Roosevelt-- even working with ACLU, but if he heard what we were going to do-- Like, we were going to call for the abolition of HUAC in 1960 at the opening of Congress at that time. He said, "They think I'm going to do that. Actually, I'm going to merely call for a cutback of the appropriations." We got worried about what he was

going to do. We changed our strategy and came out all in support that the first step is to cut off the appropriations of the committee. We were always being short-circuited by liberals. Jimmy Roosevelt was the worst of all of them in the Congress--

TRELEVEN: Really?

WILKINSON: --and the ACLU director was a part of that thing. Whatever strategy evolved out of this short-circuiting situation, we quickly evaluated it and accepted as much of it as we could, and made that a national strategy to avoid the appearance of division.

A friend of mine, professor [Daniel M.] Berman at American University, a political scientist, had me come to speak. (One of the FBI's stories of where the Nazis attacked this meeting where Aubrey Williams and Jim [James] Foreman and I were speaking in '65, it was.) He was used by Roosevelt. He was also doing some volunteer work on the hill, and he would sit in with Roosevelt and Roosevelt would say to him, "Wilkinson thinks I'm going to do this. Well, we'll fool him this time. We're going to do that." Berman would come immediately to me and say, "Roosevelt knows what you're up to. He's going to do this, so you'd better be prepared to adjust to it." So we knew what Roosevelt was doing right out of his own office and we made the

adjustments. No compromises, just a matter of keeping a united front. Where a lot people would have liked to attack ACLU, or attack the liberals, or attack Roosevelt, we never allowed the attack to go on Roosevelt, but Roosevelt is taking the next step, it's a good step, not the right step; what we really need is this step.

We never forgot that the enemy was the unAmerican activities committee. The short-circuiting by certain liberals--in Congress and out, and within ACLU and out of ACLU--we never allowed them to get us off the track.

TRELEVEN: Well, in a situation like that, would you ever have an opportunity to meet with Roosevelt and learn from him what his rationale was in going--

WILKINSON: Yes, I did. In fact, when I came to New York the first time--in 1957 Corliss Lamont, Carey McWilliams, and the others brought me back there--the very first thing I. F. Stone said was, "You ought to immediately come down to Washington, meet with members of Congress, and get a bill introduced." I had carried an earlier petition of Meiklejohn across the country with me in '58; Meiklejohn had drafted one as I crossed the country and sent it to me enroute.

I went to the Rocky Mountain newspapers in Denver. I went to the Saint Louis Dispatch--Irving Dilliard--

and would show them the Meiklejohn resolution. Same in Chicago, and elsewhere. So I was picking up signatures from prominent editors as I crossed the country.

So I went in to see Roosevelt at the end of August of '57, after we'd already planned the big Carnegie Hall meeting where we were to kick the formal campaign off. I lived in Roosevelt's district. By that time, Eason Monroe and the ACLU of Southern California had helped us collect signatures. Something like 22,000 signatures were collected in Roosevelt's district on a petition to abolish HUAC that the ACLU and I had worked up to get on record. See, to get Roosevelt to take the stand-- Roosevelt was the most liberal, but we still felt he had to have pressure on him--we had to show public support. We had these 22,000 signatures so Roosevelt was inclined to move.

Beyond that, I had these contacts with Helen Gahagan Douglas back at the time when I was in the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles], and I had known Roosevelt that way at that time. One of Helen Gahagan Douglas's field representatives who I had worked with in the housing authority, Edward Lybeck, was also a close liaison with Roosevelt.

Anyhow, I go in to see Roosevelt and I show him this petition saying, "Here, this is Alexander

Meiklejohn's petition." (You have to understand, this is just five years before President [John F.] Kennedy awards Meiklejohn the Presidential Medal of Freedom.) We sat there, he looked at it, he read it, and he obviously liked the language. He said, "Why Meiklejohn? Why did you have to have Meiklejohn lead this thing?"--implying that Meiklejohn was too liberal. I said, "Well, he's the outstanding scholar in this area in the country." He said, "But for god's sakes, don't ask my mother to sign. She is identified." That was a direct quote from my conversation with Jimmy Roosevelt, red-baiting his mother, Eleanor Roosevelt, to keep her signature from a petition that was coming to him to abolish HUAC. [laughter]

Some very real stories there. See, Aubrey Williams was very close to Eleanor Roosevelt and Franklin [D.] Roosevelt. When we launched our committee in 1960, Aubrey got a statement from her which we printed and used very widely: "Let us end this agency of weakness and folly." It's typical Eleanor Roosevelt language to describe HUAC: "weakness and folly."

But Jimmy Roosevelt red-baited his mother, seriously, to me in his own office.

TRELEVEN: Good god.

WILKINSON: It started out with Meiklejohn, walked away from that, and then that. Jimmy Roosevelt not only played the wrong tactic in our abolition efforts, but actually introduced the resolution that would transfer HUAC to the Judiciary Committee intact, which would merely create in the House what they already had in the Senate, the Senate Internal Security Committee, which is the [James O.] Eastland Committee, which was doing the same thing that HUAC was doing. That was Roosevelt's proposal. So we had to oppose Roosevelt. In the Meiklejohn-Emerson resolution, the Edwards resolution, we avoided that. We did not transfer things to Judiciary. And we sealed the files when we got rid of the committee.

TRELEVEN: We're out of tape.

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APRIL 18, 1992

TRELEVEN: In all of this, returning to Southern California, I know ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union, Southern California Chapter] board is large. I can't believe that everyone on that board was in agreement with this position to support the abolition campaign. I think that possibly would be a distorted picture. Or was there unanimity, so far as you know?

WILKINSON: There was not. When Eason Monroe came in take over from A. A. [Aaron Allen] Heist in 1951, I guess, '52, the ACLU was just a board. It was a group of eight, ten, twelve people who met at a downtown law office. As the Cold War set in and the unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] hearings were being held, not just as they were against the Hollywood Ten in the late forties but with the Smith Act trials and the other issues developing, ACLU in Los Angeles was ill-prepared to do the role that should have been done by ACLU at that time.

When Reverend Heist came to ask me if I would head up the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms, which was the defense organization against

the unAmerican committee state and federal hearings, I said, "ACLU should do that," and I talked with ACLU. I talked with Eason Monroe, and said, "Aren't you able to do this?" And Eason, in private meetings with me, said, "No, my board is not ready for that yet. I don't have enough support to come out and openly defend the people called before the committee." We weren't just providing legal defense. We had a real PR [public relations] campaign. We made heroes of the people called before HUAC. The people who were standing up for the First Amendment, standing up against the unAmerican activities committee, we didn't treat them as just pariahs that were going to get legal defense even though they weren't very good people. Not at all.

Eason said no, he couldn't do it. So it was really Eason's argument that caused me to agree to begin working with Heist. Each year from '53 forward, once a year by my own motion, I would meet with Eason. I said, "Do we need this citizens committee anymore? Is ACLU now ready to take over this thing and do it itself?" As Eason was building, and building, and building, I knew what was going on. Ruth Abraham had come in and was starting to build chapters of ACLU. A lot of very healthy things were happening, and each time Eason would say, "No, not yet. Not yet." I think

the reading of the record would show that there were a number of people on Eason's board that were holding back the developments that were to come later. Eason very carefully didn't want to go over their heads, but wanted to bring people along, bring new people on the board that would support more advanced positions. So at any time between '53 and '60, if Eason had said to me, "I think we can do it now," that Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms, as far as I was concerned, would have have been abolished because ACLU would do the job. We don't want duplicate committees. But it did not.

The first really courageous step that the ACLU of Southern California took was to have Al [Abraham Lincoln] Wirin, Fred Okrand, and Eason come to meetings with the subpoenaed people where I called the meetings together. I introduced them to ACLU lawyers, and they would talk about what your legal rights are. That was a step forward. Then in '56, when ACLU took my case, ready to go to the [United States] Supreme Court with it when I was first called before the [unAmerican activities] committee in Los Angeles, that was really a turning point where ACLU formally took on a highly controversial case.

Does that answer the question?

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Let's see if we can carry it forward. How about in the sixties forward as the abolition campaign was picking up steam? How would you characterize the Southern California ACLU in terms of its possible unanimity in doing that? I suppose what I'm asking is, was there dissent that continued in the sixties from ACLU board members about going in this direction?

WILKINSON: I'm not as familiar with this internal picture of the ACLU as your question would imply. I think we ought to really get other sources on that. I feel, from what I've heard, that year by year new blood was brought in and the more restrictive holders-back, the more conservative, the cold warriors, were eliminated or dropped out. Certainly by the sixties ACLU was definitely getting to be a stronger and stronger organization until by the time that Ramona Ripston came out here--I think she came in '72--ACLU was really ready not only for a woman director, but for a director that would really lead the organization into very positive ways.

There were people who should be identified here. George Slaff, for example, is one person on the board who played a very important role. Alan [G.] Sieroty played a very important role. Bob [Robert S.] Morris

[Jr.] played an important role. I don't know the names of all the rest of them, but there were people coming on that board that were just what was needed in order for the ACLU to take steps ahead.

The HUAC hearings in Los Angeles ended-- I think the last public hearing in Los Angeles was in '62. Then the next public hearing was in '65 in Chicago, a major one. From that time forward, the unAmerican activities committee opted to not hold public hearings because we gave them such a bad time any place they met, developed such opposition to them, that it was nonproductive for them to do so.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Now, leading up to the decision to launch suit against the FBI--Wilkinson v FBI--up to that point, what was the relationship between ACLU in Southern California and what had become NCARL, the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation?

WILKINSON: The committee to abolish HUAC went through a couple of name changes. In the early seventies, when [Richard H.] Ichord became the chair of the committee, he changed the name of the standing committee from the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities to the House Committee on Internal Security [HISC]. See, that was already an achievement for us. We were forcing them internally to get away from the word "unAmerican."

TRELEVEN: Yes, right.

WILKINSON: We merely changed our name from the [National] Committee to Abolish HUAC to the [National] Committee to Abolish HUAC/HISC, the House Internal Security Committee. We were right in there on those things.

TRELEVEN: Well, there are name changes and then-- What I'm trying to do is [determine] where is ACLU Southern California in all of this: its relationship to the abolition campaign, then abolition succeeded in '75, and what's the ongoing relationship between them?

WILKINSON: Well, let's keep going a little bit the way I was.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: When we abolished HUAC [HISC] in 1975, I think a year or two before that we were on firm enough ground in terms of getting rid of the committee to seek out certain other issues. For example, we had taken on the repeal of Title II of the Internal Security Act (the Detention Centers Act) in 1968. We won that in '71. We'd taken on the repeal of the "no-knocks" statutes; we won those in '74. In 1970, we'd taken on other projects along with our campaign to abolish HUAC. HUAC was on its way down as a matter of meeting other issues as they developed.

So the committee to abolish HUAC, then the Committee to Abolish HUAC/HISC, finally took the name of [National] Committee Against Repressive Legislation (NCARL) because we were beginning to fight bills. That came, probably, in '73, '74.

Now, let's go back a little bit to the Los Angeles area. When we formed the National Committee to Abolish HUAC in 1960, in August, under leadership of Alexander Meiklejohn, Aubrey [W.] Williams, Clarence [E.] Pickett, James Imbrie, H. [Hugh] H. Wilson, and other people, I was to be the national director. The question was, what happens in L.A.? I cannot really run an L.A. local office and still run the national office. So it was decided to continue the Southern Californians Against Repressive Legislation; they took on the Southern California title of that. Then there was the Northern Californians Against Repressive Legislation; they picked up the titles, too. But we held onto the offices and we sought to staff them. When I was in prison, Dorothy [N.] Marshall, the wife of Dan [Daniel G.] Marshall and former head of the Catholic Women's Club, became the secretary while I was away. When I came back, we tried to get somebody on the staff to work with me while I'm doing the national work and other things. Dale [L.] Gronemeier came in to work

with us in L.A., then went north to form the Northern California Committee Against Repressive Legislation, then went by motorcycle and organized Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Arizona. Just a tremendous job that he took on. Dale Gronemeier later became one of the lawyers at Loeb and Loeb, and was a good deal responsible for the idea of Loeb and Loeb taking my case; it was presented to the lawyers of Loeb and Loeb by Dale Gronemeier.

There was a reason for keeping the L.A. office. First of all, the L.A. office had a base. It had sustainers. It had income coming in every month from people who supported it. There was not a need, however, to maintain the committee as a board--as an action group--because there were no longer HUAC hearings and the political action on legislation by the early-sixties was definitely being handled correctly within the new chapter structure within the ACLU.

I'm reminded that in 1964, in March, when I was speaking before a group in the San Fernando Valley where the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and the L.A. Police [Department] anti-subversive detail were involved in an effort to assist in an assassination of me. The meeting that night was sponsored by the San Fernando Valley Chapter of ACLU. It's just an example

of how they were coming in there. But the value of having a committee in L.A. is that it gave us a source of funds. It gave us a source of volunteers. We had our mailing list in L.A. When the national wanted to do a mailing--and we didn't use modern techniques at all, it was handwritten letters--we'd get fifty people in in three days and we'd hand-address 7,000, 10,000 envelopes to get them out nationally. We really didn't have even addressograph plates in those early days; everything was done by hand.

So when we went out nationally to organize these congressional district committees, we would say that you-- Everybody contributes to pay for my fieldwork trips, but my salary of ninety dollars a week at that time--whatever it was--was paid by Los Angeles. So the national didn't have to pay a salary; L.A. took care of that. L.A. took care of the mailings. L.A. was the national office. That was valuable, but less and less was a board involved due to the fact that we almost ceased holding board meetings somewhere in the early-sixties. It's just no longer a necessary thing. The NCARL national board became the directing board, the policy maker, and gradually there was a shift from the Southern California and national to a melding where Southern California drops away and the national takes

hold and gives the direction.

Did I relate it well enough to ACLU there to answer your question? I'm not sure.

TRELEVEN: Okay. One more detail. Your financial base is contributions that you get from members, many of them ACLU people. Did ACLU, in and of itself as an organization, help to sustain NCARL in various ways?

WILKINSON: Not by any direct financial contribution at all. But ACLU members were sustainers of our committee. They recognized the special role nationally that NCARL was playing. Our national office was in L.A., and they would support us in that way. They did not directly give money to it. But whenever I was speaking, there was always a pitch made for the support of the national campaign. I would speak to ACLU chapters and inform them of the next political action to be taken on given congresspeople, what we wanted done, and then I'd get those who were not members of ACLU to sign up and become ACLU members. After that was taken care of--and I really did recruit a lot of new members--we would ask people who already were ACLU members to make a contribution to support the NCARL.

It was a very close working relationship, but they were totally independent organizations and the finances were different. ACLU built a good, strong financial

base. From its very inception NCARL deliberately had a weak base because we saw our job as a temporary agency to get out of the field whenever the job was done, or whenever ACLU could take over what ever it was. We didn't maintain a board because it would compete with the ACLU board. We didn't build chapters because the ACLU was building chapters. So our income was very limited. For that reason, my own salary was unbelievably low. I think at one time at top I was getting a \$125 a week, but out of that I had to pay about forty dollars in expenses. So it was close to ninety dollars I was getting. We kept it low. By then I owned my own house, living very frugally, and everything in the office was done by volunteers. Betty Rottger, who came in as a volunteer somewhere in the mid-fifties, literally ran that office from 1955 through 1988, maybe 1990, I don't know, a couple years ago. So the only expenses were very low rent, like \$100 a month, my salary which was very low, and everything else was free. That money helped to pay for my fieldwork travel.

So we'd set up committees without making them say, "You have to send X dollars to pay Frank's salary," or somebody else's salary, and most of these committees operated on very, very little money. We encouraged

them to get small staff. We funded a staff person in Seattle, in San Francisco, in Boston, in Washington, D.C., in the South, and then the Midwest office had Dick [Richard] Criley, and these staff people were paid sixty, sixty-five dollars a week. That money was supposedly raised in their own area to pay for themselves. Where they didn't have it, NCARL supplemented it and saw to it that they did receive salaries. They were actually on the NCARL payroll and we sent the checks to them from L.A., but they were supposed to raise the money to do it with.

TRELEVEN: Am I interpreting this right, that--again, using L.A. as an example--that there's a conscious decision made that in view of the relationship between ACLU and NCARL, that NCARL is deliberately, almost, relegated to a rather frugal position because NCARL is not supposed to grow strong and mighty because that would undercut ACLU?

WILKINSON: I don't like the way you ask the question because it wasn't like a conscious decision to remain frugal because of this. It's more what the realities were; we did not build a heavy-funded organization because we were doing an action job. We put our money into political action, 90 percent of it, rather than into bureaucracy and structure and people had a choice.

We'd always say, "Join ACLU." That was the reality of the situation.

For example, NCARL never had a pension system. They never had a health plan. You worked NCARL in and when you finished that was it; I mean, that was the end of it. We have remarkable people around the country who put in time as NCARL volunteers, in Boston and these other places I mentioned, that really did an amazing amount of good work. We really organized on very, very little money and they put in two or three, four, five of the best years of their lives doing this thing for hardly expenses. Sixty-five dollars a week is hardly expenses.

TRELEVEN: That sounds frugal to me.

[tape recorder off]

Okay, we're back on. To restate--I'll try and do it better: there was an understanding that NCARL--I think this is what you've been describing--was not going to build an administrative bureaucracy that would take more and more money and possibly detract from ACLU in terms of a pretty substantial bureaucracy at ACLU.

WILKINSON: Absolutely right. We dealt primarily with the Los Angeles picture. Increasingly, year by year in the sixties and seventies and into the eighties, ACLU affiliates have brought me into their states to be

annual meeting speakers and chapter builders. In Texas on two occasions, the director of Texas in the sixties and the director of Texas in the eighties, brought me in for ten, eleven-day trips where we'd go town by town--by automobile or Greyhound [bus]--forming a new chapter of ACLU in each town or servicing a new chapter in each town, and then speaking at meetings. I spoke at the annual meetings of ACLU in Hawaii, in Seattle, Washington state, several times in Oregon, in Northern California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado. I'm just saying these as we go along here; I've done important ACLU speaking and building in every one of those cases.

Now, from our standpoint with a very low budget, I could come in there on the lowest possible air travel. I'd stay at people's homes. I'd never, never go to a hotel. They would pay some honorarium to cover my travel, and I would get new members to join, and would also ask them to get on to NCARL's mailing list and make a contribution. So I did good work for ACLU and I came away with money and names on our NCARL mailing list. Our NCARL mailing list is now somewhere around fifteen to seventeen thousand, made up primarily of names of people I have received when speaking before groups all over the country, and a great many of those

were ACLU groups.

I think the answer to your question is absolutely and firmly yes. We serviced ACLU. We pressed them to do political action instead of exclusively legal action, and we were successful. Today, ACLU's position--I'm repeating--is very strong on political action, but there were years when ACLU only, only was handling legal cases.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So we have this overview. In the context of that overview of the relationship between NCARL and ACLU, you described last time how under the Freedom of Information Act you began to become a little bit startled when the pages in the FBI file were piling up. I believe you said you talked to Okrand first, perhaps Paul [L.] Hoffman, but--

WILKINSON: No, not Paul. I went to Ramona Ripston and Okrand--Wirin was dead--and showed them the Criley summary of the first 4,000 pages of FBI surveillance and disruption.

TRELEVEN: Oh, okay. Criley had done a summary of the first 4,000 pages?

WILKINSON: We received it in Washington. I read it in L.A., and didn't see too much about it. Esther Herst read them in Washington and didn't see too much. Criley read them and found a picture.

TRELEVEN: Right. Okay, so Criley's identified a pattern, a mosaic, a picture, or something like that, and you go to Ramona and Okrand, and what were you discussing?

WILKINSON: Asking them whether or not there was a clear justiciable case here against the FBI, which by that time everyone was inclined to agree, anyone who read it over. When I read the document myself, I wouldn't think of that that way. But when you read Dick's summary, very clearly you have [the basis for] a legal lawsuit. It's just clear they were disrupting my work for apparently thirty, forty years at that time. So I was asking them if they would file a lawsuit on my behalf. They were willing to represent the case, but said that I would have to find a private law firm that would handle this thing as an ACLU volunteer counsel.

TRELEVEN: Why?

WILKINSON: Because of the amount of money it would take to take on the FBI. We knew we were dealing with-- at that time--we were dealing with at least 4,000 pages in a span of twenty-five, thirty-five years. We knew something there. ACLU, as strong as it was--it was then probably one of the second strongest affiliates in the country; had three or four lawyers--just knew that they could not take on a case of this magnitude and

told me if I could get a private law firm to do it, they would represent it as an ACLU case. They'd pay the costs if the law firm would pay for the legal costs.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Was this solely your responsibility or did they have some suggestions?

WILKINSON: Solely mine.

TRELEVEN: Solely. Where did you start?

WILKINSON: Loeb and Loeb.

TRELEVEN: You started there?

WILKINSON: Uh-huh [affirmative].

TRELEVEN: Because [Dale] Gronemeier was there?

WILKINSON: Because Gronemeier was there and because they-- See, they had been the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles] lawyers back in the forties and fifties. I knew of the law firm. I knew it as a large, conservative law firm that I thought would be just right to take on this case. I don't know what pro bono work Loeb and Loeb was doing at that time for ACLU or anyone else; not too much, I think. I think my case was the first major, major case that Loeb and Loeb got involved with.

I met with Gronemeier and Gronemeier then carried it in to other people in the firm, including Paul Hoffman and Doug [Douglas E.] Mirell and then the

leadership.

TRELEVEN: So it was a combination of Loeb and Loeb having represented the housing authority and Gronemeier being a partner in the firm?

WILKINSON: Right. Not a partner, a key lawyer in the firm. He never became a partner.

TRELEVEN: Oh, okay. Would you have approached Loeb and Loeb had Gronemeier not been there?

WILKINSON: Probably, but I'm not sure.

TRELEVEN: So what happens then? Gronemeier identifies these two individuals he had talked to and then what?

WILKINSON: I was told that the firm would take it and the person who will be in charge is Paul Hoffman.

TRELEVEN: Had you ever met Hoffman before?

WILKINSON: I met him then, at that time, for the first time.

TRELEVEN: And Mirell?

WILKINSON: Mirell I met later. Maybe simultaneously, but a little later. But Paul Hoffman was already there and he was the one I first talked to. When they took the case then there were certain formalities to put the stuff together in their office, to bring the stuff from Dick Criley's place down there. They wanted certain materials to begin the case. They wanted to make it a class-action case. They asked us to write a form

letter to a couple thousand people who'd been contributors in the fifties and sixties to get them as part of a class action if we could get it that way, and got their agreement. Whatever the lawyers wanted in order to get going. They used Criley's summary, which they verified, as the basis for the initial brief that opened the lawsuit in March of 1980.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So Hoffman clearly felt, from looking over the evidence, that this was a very strong case?

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: How is Loeb and Loeb able to do this? Do you know the inner workings there in terms of-- How are they able to allocate the time of one and then a second, and later on even more attorneys?

WILKINSON: I don't know the internal workings of Loeb and Loeb. There are people there at the top who strongly believe that a large law firm should do a great deal of pro bono work. They believe in it as a matter of good law firm responsibility. [Howard I.] Friedman was the man that more recently--

TRELEVEN: Who?

WILKINSON: Friedman, the man that handled the clemency brief for [Robert Alton] Harris in a death penalty case. He was with the firm as a leading partner at that time and has always advocated that all law firms should do

pro bono work. It's a canon of the bar, that successful lawyers should do a certain amount of their work free of charge to help the general public, and Loeb and Loeb just did it.

The fact of their taking on this case, which was a highly controversial case: I don't know how it was resolved, what the structure was within there, all I know is that the firm came back and said, "Yes, we're taking it."

TRELEVEN: Okay. Do you have any sense that here is where the "twain shall meet" between socially conscious people and conservative lawyers about the First Amendment? That there's a feeling in Loeb and Loeb? Did you ever talk to anybody in Loeb and Loeb that despite the fact that it's a conservative law firm, that conservatism by definition means protection of the First Amendment? Did you ever get a sense of that?

WILKINSON: I have a total sense of agreement with every voice I've heard or spoken to at Loeb and Loeb in terms of the absolute commitment to the First Amendment and the violations of the First Amendment by the FBI. Never was that questioned. Never was there any searching out in ways that would indicate [questions of] should we be handling this case or shouldn't we be handling it? From the beginning it was an ideal

relationship. I think that the lawyers handling it were given a great deal of free hand. It started off with Paul Hoffman, then Doug Mirell. Then when Paul Hoffman became a professor at Southwestern University School of Law, then Doug became more important in the case inside Loeb and Loeb. When Paul left Southwestern to become general counsel of ACLU, Doug and Paul became co-lead counsels, Paul from ACLU and Doug from Loeb and Loeb. But there were a dozen or more lawyers within Loeb and Loeb who were involved over the twelve years the case has run.

TRELEVEN: Okay, now that we--

WILKINSON: Incidentally, let me give you just one idea of structure. When we were getting ready to file the case, I was brought down to Loeb and Loeb to meet with lawyers who had been assigned to the case. Paul Hoffman was probably chair of the meeting. There would be eight or ten lawyers around the room and they would discuss, "Together, what are we going to do? We've got to research out that, we've got to research out this. Check this out. Check the statute of limitations. Check that out." All these various things are being done. People were given assignments and went off to do them. We had several strategy meetings like that where I sat in while the lawyers outlined the suit, outlined

the problems, and assigned responsibilities. "You're to get this thing done by the end of the month. You're to get that done by the fifteenth of next month. Get this thing done...." It's all brought together so the filings were all systematized. It just worked amazingly well. Always as many lawyers as we needed to do the work, and expert lawyers. No question about the lawyers we were getting; they were people who just were highly skilled, bright people who were happy to be on the job. If you were to pay for it, it would be just astronomical.

TRELEVEN: Well, assuming that within those first 4,000 pages that Dick had looked at, assuming that that material goes back to when the surveillance began in '42, there are lots of allusions in that material to your being a member of the Communist Party. Was that ever an issue with Loeb and Loeb? Was it ever an issue with the attorneys who represented you?

WILKINSON: Never to me. What they talked about among themselves, I don't know. But never to me, not even tangentially. They never once asked me a question that would in any way imply, "Well, were you a communist then, Frank?" or, "Where do you stand?" and so on. They were dealing with this on the highest levels of a violation of an organization's, an individual's First

Amendment rights, and the need to defend it, not in any way interfering or questioning who I was or where I'm coming from.

They were interested. I'd talk to them. They'd ask me questions. I'd speak to them about that period of time. They would want to know what was going on then. These were younger men and women, younger people.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: They would want to hear about certain things. I think the lawyers were free of cold warrior thinking. As far as my contact with them was concerned, they were diligent, they were curious, they were interested, and they really wanted to win. They saw it as a clear-cut case. They were increasingly shocked themselves by the behavior of the FBI. In fact, the FBI's behavior in the whole lawsuit convinced a lot of young lawyers of what the FBI was guilty of.

TRELEVEN: You mean the FBI's sort of cavalier attitude?

WILKINSON: Right, their attitude in the court room, in their sessions, their withholding, their getting right up to the edge of perjury, saying, "This is all we have: 4,000 pages," then at the very final day--the Friday before our hearing in court--a memorandum from

the FBI to the judge and to Loeb and Loeb saying, "We've just found 40,000 more pages. Will there be a delay?" Then a second time: "We just found 70,000 more," till finally we got up to the 132,000-page picture.

In the court room, the behavior of the FBI-- The behavior of the FBI today, at some national levels, presumably is trying to be a "kinder, gentler [George H. W.] Bush FBI," you might jokingly say. In the court room, the lead lawyers for the FBI reminded me most of all--and they were older men--of the same kind of personnel that I encountered advising on the staff of the unAmerican activities committee. They were really all the way in there. They fought the case with a feeling, a conviction. They gave me the feeling that I'm really an enemy of our country, what the FBI was doing was correct, and they're really going to save the FBI. Not like a group of young lawyers saying, "Well, we made some mistakes back then; we don't make them anymore." You had a feeling that J. Edgar Hoover would have been perfectly happy with the representation of the lawyers he left behind to represent them against us.

TRELEVEN: Well, listen, shall we leave it there today?

WILKINSON: I think so.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: My cold is just slowing me down a bit.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Very good, very good.

TAPE NUMBER: XXXI, SIDE ONE

MAY 23, 1992

TRELEVEN: We last taped on April 18 and little did we know that some rather monumental events would take place before we got together again. Since this is an historical document, I don't think it would be fair to divorce ourselves from the very recent past and what went on in the [Los Angeles] rebellion [of 1992]. There's certainly been enough written in various publications, there's been enough in the media, so that there's a heck of a lot of information about the results of the uprising. But I think what I'm interested in asking you is that you were also here in 1965 during the Watts rebellion. I wonder, from a strictly civil liberties perspective, how you look at both the rebellion that took place within the last two weeks and the Watts rebellion. In terms of civil liberties, are there some threads of continuity that you see that are on your mind? Have there been shifts or changes? How would you compare the two from a civil liberties standpoint?

WILKINSON: I believe there is a continuing contribution to the uprising in terms of housing that relates back to civil liberties issues forty years ago,

in 1952. In 1965, after the Watts rebellion, Frontier magazine, under Phil [Philip P.] Kerby--the magazine no longer exists; it was kind of the west coast edition of the Nation magazine; Phil later became an editorial writer for the L.A. Times--asked me to write a story on the connection between the Watts rebellion and the destruction of the housing program in 1952. I wrote an article, which I still have available. Frontier called it, "And Now the Bill Comes Due." We dealt very specifically with how, in terms of the housing component, that rebellion related back to the destruction of the program in 1952.

Now, this is twenty-seven years later. We have this second uprising and, in answer to your question, I definitely feel there's a continuing impact from the destruction of the housing program in '52 on the problems today. I've thought a great deal about it. I've written a letter to the L.A. Times expressing this, which I have no reason to believe they'll print, but at least it's on my mind enough that I wrote it. Just last week I was invited to come to the University of Georgia at Athens, Georgia, to speak at their annual civil rights festival.

Very interesting that Athens, Georgia, has their fourteenth annual civil rights festival. It's, you

know, a reflection of efforts of an important segment of the community down there which has been consciously concerned with advancing civil rights. The mayor of Athens, Georgia, who has become a good friend of mine, spoke. They'd invited me down to speak generally about civil rights and civil liberties because, in their minds, I was subpoenaed in Georgia in 1958. I was tried in Georgia, convicted in Georgia, and began serving my year's prison sentence in Georgia thirty-one years ago.

But when the Rodney [G.] King uprising came this time, they called me four or five days in advance of my coming to Georgia asking if I could relate my material to the Rodney King uprising and what connections, if any, I saw between that and the L.A. Police Department and FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. I had already in my mind the thought of doing this, and I readily agreed.

I just want to put aside the content of what I said, which is really an answer to your question, and indicate the atmosphere there [in Athens]. There were between two and three thousand students--mostly students--in what they call College Square, where for a two-block area the streets are closed entirely for this festival. It's a two-day festival. They have powerful

loudspeaker equipment comparable to what they have at a rock concert where they're trying to reach 100,000. So every bit of music, every voice, is carried for a couple blocks distinctly. I arrive there the second day on a Sunday afternoon, and I'm trying to think how in the world to speak because I'd looked at the schedule. I'm put down as sort of the wind-up person, and their twenty-five-page brochure announcing the festival featured me on the back cover of this promotional piece that was first developed, I think, at the University of Florida a number of years ago. There's a picture of me: "WANTED BY THE FBI." Then the story about that story, and there were other mentions of it. Inside, some of the stories from Life magazine were reprinted. But the way they handled it is that they have a band playing--a set they call them, I think usually running twenty minutes--and then they'll have a couple of speakers, and then the band, then a couple speakers. This goes on from ten o'clock in the morning until midnight, and I'm put on at about ten o'clock at night. I also am always thinking of distributing literature. I brought with me 100 copies of Dick [Richard] Criley's First Amendment Foundation book, The FBI v. The First Amendment. I looked at that crowd of 2,000, and here I have 100 books. But I still, as an

organizer, want to get rid of them. So I've got them arranged on a table--sort of a folding table, ten-foot-long table--to my left as a speaker. I'm up on a high platform, and I spread them out there and put some of these signs around the front page of The FBI v. The First Amendment: "The Book the FBI Did Not Want You to Read." I'm thinking in terms of if I'm up there how am I going to sell this? I have no one there to watch my table. So I just spread them all out. I had the suitcase I'd carried them down there in. I opened it up and put a sign on top of it saying, "\$5.00," which is a reduced rate when you sell in volume. When I finished my talk, somehow or other in the course of the applause--which I think it was significant--I got the microphone again and said, "Any of you who would like a copy of the story of what's really behind much of what I've said here today, it is on this table over here. I only have 100 copies. But if you'll leave \$5.00 there, help yourself." I just watched. Within five minutes or three minutes all 100 copies disappeared into this crowd. I came down afterwards--long afterwards--and here's my open suitcase with a pile of money in it, student money. I counted it out and to the penny [for each copy] there was five dollars there.

TRELEVEN: No kidding.

WILKINSON: It was a very, very, very moving experience. Then as the next band began to play, the man who heads up the festival said, "I have asked Mr. Wilkinson to sign this book. Any of you who got a book and would like it signed, we'll move the table back to the end of the street and you can go there." So I go down the back stairs--I leave my speaking notes still up on the stage--I go down and follow this table. Four or five people pick up the table and move it down a block through the crowd. There's a chair there and I sat down and I signed, I'm sure, ninety of 100 copies of the book while the band was still playing.

One other thing about it that worried me. The rock music was fine, a wonderful thing. This is the town that produced Michael Stipe and the REM band, Rapid Eye Movement band. There's a lot of good music down there, students. Just before I was to speak, in fact, while I'm backstage a bit waiting to get up there--this crowd was dancing wildly, joyously, in the streets, just a big sea of dancing bodies. Then the band ends and they get their farewell and they leave. Then before introducing me, he said, "Before I introduce our next speaker, the next band will set up." So here I'm speaking to a crowd that is just out of breath from dancing and even before I'm introduced a

new band comes in with new equipment, new personnel, new drums, new everything behind me. I said, "Well, if I get any attention here...." I'd heard some other speakers that didn't draw. There'd be a couple hundred closer up that would listen, but in back there was a lot of conversation. In fact, even during the band there was food and conversation all over the place. There was dancing and it was very noisy. Anyway, I was introduced; a very inadequate situation. No podium for any notes I like to carry with me, and I was limited to twenty minutes like everyone else. I actually took thirty, but [laughter] stopping occasionally to turn to the people and say, "I'm sorry, but may I just have ten more minutes, or five more minutes?" The audience at that time gave us our first reaction, "Yes!" You know, there was a real reaction to it. While I was speaking, that audience of at least 1,000 nearest just sat down where they were in the middle of the street, the very people who had been dancing. Then the whole end of the street seemed to come around it, standing up, and there was no conversation that went on while I was speaking. (This was too much background for you, but it relates to what I was telling them about the answer to your question, the interconnection between Rodney King or Watts and civil liberties.)

The producers of the festival said they'd never had such a response to any speaker in the fourteen years they'd been having it. The people on the street just stood up, and like they were dancing, they were just jumping, clapping, and applauding. Very, very important. I think the main thought I had, and that Dick Criley had when I reported to him, indicates that we are still relevant, that our efforts now to organize--to do something about political spying by the FBI--means that we're really relevant to a real, active student audience.

TRELEVEN: What was the substance of your remarks?

WILKINSON: Right. In the article I wrote for Frontier in 1965, we had no idea that the FBI was involved. It was just a struggle over integrated housing that fired me and got Mayor [Fletcher] Bowron removed. Now, of course, we know that what we thought was just the action of Chief [William H.] Parker then and the real estate lobby--the dossiers, the whole thing they used to get rid of me and ultimately to remove the mayor and finally destroy the program--was all orchestrated by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI.

Essentially it was this: in 1942, when the first housing units were built under the New Deal--under the [Franklin D.] Roosevelt housing program--Los Angeles

was absolutely segregated. We had what they called restrictive covenants. These restrictive covenants were not declared unconstitutional until 1948 in the Shelley v Kraemer decision. But up till '48, L.A. was as segregated as any town in the South. I know it so well because I studied it so carefully. Take even the area that we now think of as the south side, a mostly black, some Hispanic areas. Central Avenue, for example, right at the point where, we'll say, Slauson [Avenue], not far from where the uprising on Rodney King started, when you went down Central Avenue, the right side was black; the left side--the west side--was white. You go down that area and get to Ninety-second Street and it stopped being black. From Ninety-second to Seventy-second it's white; then from Seventy-second to Washington [Boulevard], it was black. That's true all over L.A.

When I was brought up in Beverly Hills, there were no black people living in Beverly Hills except as maids and even for that you had to get permission, to have a servant living in your household.

So that is the picture that we started out with. The fact that we had to battle--I missed one basic point. The only place in L.A. that was naturally integrated in 1942 was the Watts ghetto, barrio. It

was one-third white, one-third black, one-third Hispanic, Latino. It's hard to believe that fifty years ago that that was that way. It was a little island of integration in a segregated city.

Of course, the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles], following the old Plessy v Ferguson separate but equal [doctrine] of 1896, decided to clear those slums, take those people out of their misery--but integrated experience--and segregate them into separate projects, one African-American, Latino, Anglo. That's where Monsignor [Thomas J.] O'Dwyer and our little committee set up our picket line and fought, and we won the battle, and I became the manager.

That, of course, was the week that the FBI declared me to be a national security risk and began following me. In fact, at the point of this interview: today is May 23rd. It was April 20, 1942, when we opened that project and you'll find the first FBI files on me developing. It's just exactly fifty years ago almost to this day we're interviewing now.

The '52 thing, to summarize more quickly here: In 1949, the federal government, after four years of delay, passed the massive housing program. Roosevelt, during World War II, had promised that at the end of the war every family was going to have a decent home.

The four freedoms were all part of it, and shelter was a big part of that. But Roosevelt died and Republicans took over. There was a period there where you had a Democratic president and a Republican Congress, and so things were deadlocked. The original bill was to be called [Robert F.] Wagner-[Allen J.] Ellender-[Robert A.] Taft, Wagner being the liberal Democrat who was behind the original program--Wagner-Steagall--from New York; Ellender, a Senator from Louisiana, was an effort to reach into the South; Taft, Mr. Republican himself, from Ohio. That program was killed in '46, '47.

The moneys that should have gone into housing--for veterans' housing in addition to the slums we had--went into building very large commercial enterprises like big department stores, Sears, May Company, you name them. They were all built in '46 and '47, the massive expanse after the world war, where the money, the materials, everything went into commercial [property] rather than providing homes for veterans or people.

In '49, finally this [housing] bill went through. It was still under Republican control because it was the Taft-Ellender-Wagner bill, the name of [one in] the controlling party goes first, so it was Taft, Ellender, Wagner. Between '45 and '50 we had done such an educational job on the need for housing, the need for

slum clearance, and the need to do something about segregation in our community, and we'd won the mayor over, we'd won the [Los Angeles] City Council over, that our city-- Let's say the bill was passed and signed by the president in March of '49, we'll say March 15th of '49. On March 17 of '49, Los Angeles petitioned for the program; it was adopted by a fourteen to one vote in the city council, supported by the mayor, and approved. We were the first city in America that got it. It was publicized as enough money to clear every slum of L.A. and to end segregation in L.A. The amount of money was \$110 million. I've done some calculations in terms of the dollar value. It would be well over \$1 billion today. It was a vast amount of money. We were only trying to do what private enterprise could not do. We were that way. Everything was rolling so well.

Then we had this strange thing develop where a kind of a witch-hunt began to evolve. We didn't know where it was coming from, until now we know that the FBI was behind it. But the slum owners who were making enormous profits out of slums and their allies in the L.A. real estate lobby, headed up by Fritz Burns, and the homeowners' association--a group of lobby groups-- began a massive attack on this program as "creeping

socialism." Ridiculous, considering that Senator Taft was the sponsor of it.

This creeping socialism was not quite a silly word to anyone who was living then. In 1949, it was the third year of the domestic Cold War. The Hollywood Ten were already on their way to jail. The [Henry A.] Wallace campaign had been wiped out. The unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] was starting to hold hearings on a regular basis. In 1950, the start of the Korean War and all that that meant in terms of the fact of the resurgence of the communist threat in the Far East.

TRELEVEN: The "domino theory."

WILKINSON: Right. The whole thing evolved at that point. So our most positive thing, a program that I think-- I'd studied it; the words 10,000 units was not just something we pulled out of a hat. We had all the figures. I'd worked with the [United States] Census Bureau very carefully and we knew exactly what the housing problem was and what the income status of the people was. It would have been enough. Then, in terms of the integration, it had been my job at that time as assistant to the director not only to do the educational job--which meant bringing 10,000 people from the west side to the south side, to the east side

to see the slum problem; then, finally Chet Huntley and the students at USC [University of Southern California], we developed a film to educate people; that film was shown widely--but I was then given the job of selecting the sites, forty-nine sites. Where are you going to put it? We decided that everything had to be integrated. In '48 restrictive covenants were outlawed. The barriers were still there: whites here, blacks there, sharp lines. It didn't happen over night. But by '49 you begin to have blockbusting where the black and Latino population began moving wherever they were in L.A. We were to build this new program not in the barrio, not in the ghetto--which in almost every case was a mixture of housing and industry--but we would remove people from the industrial area, convert the industrial areas into what they should be--trucking, industrial, manufacturing--and get the people out. We would also not build in what had become the barrio, the ghetto.

These areas that I've described: not only did the '48 [court decision] mean that the black explosion in the ghetto was allowed to move, what we now think of as an integrated area all the way through to the Pacific Ocean began by the end of 1948; it was blockbusting, block by block by block. It's a very interesting

period. You'd just see "For Sale" signs going down the road almost month by month as this thing happened. So there was that opportunity. The blacks were no longer confined. They could get out.

But secondly, we were going to take the worst of the slum conditions and the poorest of the minorities and move them out of that area into areas where people should live. Chávez Ravine, where the ballpark [Dodger Stadium] now is, was the largest site. It was the choice site. We were going to put in the equivalent of \$350 million into this massive housing project. Rose Hill out of the east side--northeast--was to be a second place. With those two big projects, beautifully designed by Richard [J.] Neutra and Robert [E.] Alexander, we were taking people out of Watts and moving them up there. It really would have meant that with that amount of housing, we could have eliminated the slums. In so doing we would have ended the segregation of the old ghettos and barrios because we were emptying them. Even Watts, in '52, had many white families still living there. Strangely, that little area of integration which was there in '42 continued.

Then the witch-hunt came--and without the detail because we've given it in prior interviews here--but when I refused to answer the question in the eminent

domain proceeding where I was an expert witness on the necessity of taking Chávez Ravine as a housing site, they asked me this unbelievable question: "What organizations, political or otherwise, have you belonged to since 1929?" This was '52. Gives you an idea about the measure of the thing.

When I refused to answer that question, the whole program collapsed within a matter of hours. I was fired. All the liberals in the housing authority--I say liberals, not only liberals, but I myself, who was not known to anyone to be a communist but was a communist--were removed. There were a few other communists within the housing authority, but the people who were removed at that time were not communists. They were a mixture of liberal people, progressive people who were devoted to the program. Then the attack went on the Housing [Authority] Commission, and they were removed. Then the attack on Mayor Bowron.

They still had these valid contracts. The real estate lobby went to the supreme court to challenge the legality of these 1949 site contracts for the new program, and it was upheld. So the program was tight. I was out, others were out, but the program was still tight. We now know that the dossier that was developed and used by the real estate lawyers in the eminent

domain proceedings was jointly developed by Chief of Police Parker and the FBI. That dossier, which I never saw but was floating around, was taken to Mayor Bowron by Chief Parker. Parker and Bowron were bitter enemies and just very much like [Thomas] Bradley and [Daryl] Gates are today. I think--this is my own speculation--that Parker took the FBI dossier on me to Mayor Bowron not to help him, not to say, "You've got a problem here. Let's get rid of this guy. He's going to hurt the city." But knowing that Bowron did like me, and did trust me, and was an old family friend, that he would reject it and then they would really have the evidence that the mayor--this wonderful Republican mayor--was soft on communism. Forget your creeping socialism. So that was taken to him, and I never knew about that.

Months before, a lot of things were going on at different levels. All I know is that the mayor continued to use me more and more. Within a week after the time that Parker took the dossier on me to the mayor, the mayor--we later learned--tore it up and threw it in the basket and said, "I trust this man" (or, boy, he probably called me): "Get out of here." The mayor then brought me down to the chamber of commerce where for four days on television we were

selling the housing program.

By '53 the witch-hunt--and I think that's the correct word here because it's a cumulative picture; it was a witch hunt--climaxed four or five days before the election, when Chief of Police Parker and the representative of Congress, Clare [E.] Hoffman, who came out of Michigan and was closely related to the unAmerican activities committee, had this television interview. Every station, everybody was lined up on it; the rumor was we were going to find out the mayor's association with communism. They, by the way, tried to subpoena me and I got wind of it, and managed to get over a back fence and hid out. I heard the interviews on television at a place where I was hiding out, out in the San Fernando Valley, and so this whole thing was described. Parker said, "I went to the mayor and I said, 'Mr. Mayor, do you have a man working for you, so-and-so?' and he read it. I gave it to him, he tore it up," and so on. And on television Clare Hoffman said, "You're not serious? The mayor had this document and tore it up?" What did that document say? Do you have a copy?" And Parker hammed it up. He said, "Well, yes, I think I do," and he pulled it out and read it over television. There was nothing in there that I remember other than where I'd spoken. There was

no allegation that I was a communist; it was just where I'd spoken, as though that was saying if I'd spoken at a People's World banquet that was in there. Although Bob [Robert W.] Kenny may have spoken at the same banquet as attorney general, and so on.

Within a few days, the election came up and where Bowron would have been a shoo-in, he was defeated in an atmosphere of unbelievable witch-hunting. I've focused on the slum property owners, the real estate lobby and Chief Parker. The other major factor of exciting this whole thing was the role of the L.A. Times, which bannered it, editorialized it, for months building up to this thing.

So Bowron is out. The new mayor comes in. Without the detail, the program is finally canceled. Chávez Ravine is killed, Rose Hill is killed, so there's more than 50 percent. There's \$500 million worth of housing which had been the heart of the program, the heart of not only the end of the slums, but the end of segregation because those projects were taking blacks and Latinos into areas where they had not lived before.

TRELEVEN: What does all of that have to do with Watts '65 and what does it have to do with the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict in '92?

WILKINSON: Right. Two things. First of all, with the destruction of the program, the slums remained. The integration process was stopped, except as upper-income blacks and Latinos could block-bust out of their ghettos and barrios. The problem which we had had enough in '42, in '65 became frozen. I mean, the ghettos and the barrios became set. By '65 they already were pretty badly set. The integration program was stopped.

Then aggravating the problem was the fact that the housing authority, trying to hold onto jobs which are involved in the management of new programs, took parts of the money that was to go into Chávez Ravine and into Rose Hill and hurriedly slammed them into the old ghetto areas. They took the Russian Flats area, built a project in between there. They went to Watts, Nickerson Gardens, Imperial Courts, Jordan Downs, these places that are today the drug, gang--(pardon me, I don't like to use the word gang)--the massive unemployment of youth in the Watts area. That's all congregated out there in Watts and, of course, all through that area.

So the point that I think honestly relates here is that had the housing program of 1952 been built, there would have been not only no Watts ghetto, there would

have been integration way up into town. Much, much integration would have taken place. Thousands and thousands of people. The sharp segregation would have ended. New housing would have been provided. With the new housing and the use of the new housing to help people get on their feet, and then bring in more people--the reuse of the new housing to help people develop themselves--would have made L.A., I think by 1955, I'm guessing; at the latest 1960--the slums of L.A. would have been torn down and that segregation pattern would have been so badly broken that not only were people of color being able to get out of the ghetto, but it was beautiful. People would want to live in Chávez Ravine because it's the best place to live because of the plans that were designed for that place.

So I do feel that there is an honest continuum between the destruction of housing--the witch-hunt in '52--and first the Watts, and now the Rodney King uprisings, as far as the housing component is concerned.

TRELEVEN: Had integration taken place, are you assuming then that the white police who were, in some respects, the instigators of '65 Watts and the '92 King trial which resulted in the pummeling of Rodney King

that everyone's familiar with now, that that might not have happened because integration would have produced less racism on the part of whites, and the part of white police?

WILKINSON: I think yes. I mean, I think the end of racism is a different thing than the end of segregation. I think racism is so deeply inherent in the psyche and conscience of a people, but at least the segregation which prevented people from knowing or contacting and prevents the black or Latino from getting out of the ghetto and also has the people that are on the west side knowing people of color as neighbors, I think that would have begun the process of ending the racism. That certainly would have been reflected in the police department.

I'll relate it to this one thing. There's one other thing that I thought about and I mentioned in Georgia. It's very interesting to note that Rodney King's beating was undertaken by the Foothill Division of the L.A. Police Department. When you look at the assassination document where the FBI was involved in some effort to assist in an assassination of me on March 4th of '64--two years ago we got the whole document--whereby the stakeout-- The original document we got in '83 just said, "So and so will stake out the

residence to witness the assassination." The stakeout, we learned in 1990, was referred to as information provided by the Foothill Division of the L.A. Police Department. The stakeout himself was the commander of the anti-subversive detail of the L.A. Police Department. We've tried, of course, to find out who was the commander of the anti-subversive detail. We've had lawsuits on that and the police department told us all those documents are destroyed. British Broadcasting [Corporation] on their own found out that Daryl [F.] Gates was in charge of counter-intelligence work under Parker in 1964. Whether the anti-subversive detail and counter-intelligence are intermixed words, or they are separate divisions, there's no question about it that Parker, who had led the campaign to fire me in '52, was still on the job in '64. His protégé, Daryl Gates, not only racist in his own background but very, very, anti-communist, anti-terrorist (his language is up to date now; it's not communism, it's anti-terrorism and so on), was very much involved in that thing. It's just ironic that the FBI document indicates that the source of the information and the control of the situation was handled by the Foothill Division, although the point of my assassination was in

Sherman Oaks. *[In 1994, when Gates published his autobiography, The Chief, he states that in September 1963 Parker assigned him to be in charge of all LAPD intelligence work, including the "anti-subversive detail." Gates assumed the position six months before the date of the March 4, 1964, "assassination document." Gates also names the head of the agency by name.]

TRELEVEN: Well, we're near the end of the tape, so maybe it's a good place to pause and turn it over.

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

TAPE NUMBER: XXXI, SIDE TWO

MAY 23, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on; you've been discussing is part of what you imparted to the crowd at Athens just last weekend.

WILKINSON: Right. That's right. I really didn't overstate the connection. I was dealing generally with all the factors, the economic, the 45 percent unemployment among black youth in the areas. I mean, I wasn't just there to talk on the housing issue. I brought that in because I was asked to bring it in. But I would talk about the whole thing. But the sensitivity by the audience against the police, the brutality, the Rodney King verdict, and other things: the students down there were riveted to every word you had to say.

I understand a few days before I got there, there was a minor uprising in Atlanta where students--I think black--did some trashing of stores. I've found that's a better word than looting: trashing. Something to indicate that you're expressing anger, you're not out stealing, you're--

TRELEVEN: You are assaulting property. Property is the sacred word of our republic.

WILKINSON: I know.

TRELEVEN: Right?

WILKINSON: So trashing is just another word for looting, I guess. It's the anger that is exploding there. You know, you saw it [the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion] with your own eyes too, I presume, wherever you were at the time. But I had to drive out of my office. I went to my office every day during these times and nearly didn't get home in time after the curfew a couple times because I couldn't find a route to get back home without going through areas that were too dangerous to go through. But that second night--

TRELEVEN: Was there destruction in the area of your office?

WILKINSON: Oh, a great deal!

TRELEVEN: A great deal. Which we don't read as much about.

WILKINSON: Right. I heard that the freeways were jammed. People said, "Get out of there. You can't get home, the freeways are jammed. They're gridlocked." I got three phone calls trying to get me out of the office. People were not working. The office building was empty. That was the second day, third day, maybe.

So I decided to avoid the freeway. I thought, well, I'll go out--like I often do--I'll go out Eighth

Street, or Olympic [Boulevard], or Venice [Boulevard], and then I won't use Crenshaw [Boulevard], I won't use La Brea [Avenue] or La Cienega [Boulevard], all of which went through burning areas. Donna [Wilkinson] had called me up, and said she'd driven by the FEDCO store just when it exploded in flames.

TRELEVEN: Of course, going down Olympic takes you right through Koreatown.

WILKINSON: Well, I didn't know it [that there was trashing].

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: So I started west. I got two blocks from my office, and got to Union [Avenue] and Eighth [Street]. People were running back and forth on the street looting, right there at Union. By that time we knew of the attack on this--what is his name?--Denny?

TRELEVEN: Reginald [O.] Denny.

WILKINSON: Reginald Denny. (That's funny. That's a motion picture star, Reginald Denny.) We knew about that and the danger of a white person going through any of these areas. So I got up to Union. There was no place I could go. I couldn't back up. I couldn't turn around. I was in the middle of it before I realized what was going on. I just sort of slowed my car down because the people were paying no attention to

signals at all; it was back and forth across it. I just went at about ten miles an hour and came to the point where I'd be sure that no car in front of me was stopped. I kept fifty yards ahead of me clear so I could do something to maneuver. Then I got through Union and I was relieved.

Then I get down to Alvarado [Street], which was just burning. There it was really troubling because there were so many hundreds of people out in the middle of Eighth Street, all around Eighth and Alvarado, I just was lucky. I just went very slowly. I didn't allow any situation where either too large a number of people or that no cars in front of me would block me, and then where there were people I paused to let people run in front of me, or didn't try to hurry through.

By that time I didn't know what in the world to do. I wasn't going to go down to Olympic and I wouldn't go down to Venice, which was my usual route. So I went up to Wilshire [Boulevard] to see if I could get out. Well, I got up to Wilshire and it was gridlocked from Crenshaw all the way through Beverly Hills. It took me one hour to go from La Cienega to Robertson [Boulevard] on Wilshire Boulevard. It was that gridlocked. And my thought was, well, I'd go up-- I knew the danger of La Cienega--so I knew I had to go

around and come back in from the west side. So I thought I'd go to Overland [Avenue], or something. Well, you couldn't. There were problems on Wilshire Boulevard. There were police. There were arrests being made, whatever's going on right there. I got off that area right near where my old home was, where I know the little alleyways and whatnot, and I jiggled through streets and got clear down to Overland and Washington [Boulevard] without too much gridlock. Then from Overland, I went down to Sepulveda [Boulevard], from Sepulveda to Slauson, and then back in. Slauson [coming] in, by the way, which I felt would be really dangerous, was absolutely no problem. There was no looting at all out in that fancy area of Slauson where those new buildings are, where Ladera Heights is. I got up to La Brea and our gas station was burning. The gas station across the street was burning. The 7-11 was burning up at Overhill [Drive]. But it was like the last two blocks of it.

TRELEVEN: We should explain for the researcher of tomorrow that this is your immediate neighborhood--

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: --when you get to La Brea and Slauson and Overhill.

WILKINSON: Right. Of course, in our area our

cleaners, our 7-11, our liquor store, our department store, all the gas stations, our pharmacy, everything was burned.

TRELEVEN: Did the motel survive? [laughter]

WILKINSON: Unfortunately. I wanted to keep Donna at home because I thought she'd go down and throw a fire bomb into the motel, get involved in the destruction. She wants that building torn down so badly.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Some of that area you traveled through: there hasn't been much press about it because what we see image-wise, media-wise has been largely, "This is a black-white thing." It's only when we read individuals like Mike Davis we learn that a lot of the activity involved individuals who are immigrants, individuals who are arrested, individuals who apparently had been turned over to the [United States] Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS]. It strikes me as there being a real civil liberties issue involved in that whole thing. It certainly probably has some relationship to [the] [Alan K.] Simpson-[Romano L.] Mazzoli [bill in Congress], which you worked very hard on at one time, several years ago. How do you read that whole situation from a civil liberties standpoint?

WILKINSON: Well, what I saw myself on that frightening

night where I tried to get out of my own office, there were no blacks at all involved in that. That was Latino, and Korean, and poor whites. I saw kind of an amazing thing the third night of this thing at the time some of the worst looting was going on. In fact, a large three-story building was burning at the corner of Olympic and right--below my office--when I went by it. I go on another two blocks to get on the freeway. To get on the freeway ramp, like there are on so many freeway ramps, there are three people standing with signs saying, "HOMELESS--WILL WORK FOR FOOD," in the middle of that problem. People who were not out looting were standing there asking you for a job in the middle of this uprising. Signs. I don't know whether you have them this far out [to Santa Monica] or not, but down near our office I always take two or three dollars in quarters and put them in my change dish because you get so many requests at every intersection you come to. You just can't stand watching these people that are begging and just turn your eye, avert your gaze, you know. I can't stand that. So I hand it out. Here, right in the middle of everything, are people that are doing the same thing they were before the uprising, which is reflecting the homeless problem, standing there asking for money.

Getting back to the Latino, Central America refugees who live in great, great numbers to the west of my office and on up to Third Street, on up to Santa Monica Boulevard, East Hollywood. That was not at all black. That was Latino.

Now, I think the word's become really important here. Latino is really the word, not Mexican. They're Salvadorians, Guatamalans, Nicaraguans that were in there, and where such a large percentage are undocumented and are illegals--quote, unquote--according to Simpson-Mazzoli. The Asian/Korean shopowners: I saw them standing there in front of their shops trying to think of how to save their shops. Asian guys on the rooftops with guns, trying to protect themselves. It didn't do any good, but trying to do it.

Now, I don't think there's a conflict between the--what is it?--the Latasha [Harlins] story.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: The black youth that was killed by the Korean woman.

TRELEVEN: Harlins. Right.

WILKINSON: Which was much further south.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: These were Latinos who were gathering

groceries. I mean, this was not a furniture area.

This was a grocery.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, little shops.

WILKINSON: Little shops. They were getting what they could out of those places, and I just watched it. I don't think I saw a single black person. There were some poor whites doing it. I guess I should have been more of an observer like you need to be, but my thought at that time was to get through there without having my car smashed and getting pulled out and beaten up myself, because it was a great, great danger for a white guy to be driving through there in a decent Honda sedan. I mean, I was in trouble.

But getting back to the Simpson-Mazzoli thing that we opposed as much as we could for many, many years: for at least three years there's been an agreement between the police department and the INS that they will not cooperate together. The police do not call up the INS and say, "Hey, we've arrested a guy without documents. Come pick him up." The INS has to do their own dirty work. The police do not cooperate. But we now know of at least 600 people picked up along Eighth, Seventh, Alvarado, on up Western Avenue, where the police would call the INS and people without any due process, were put on busses and shipped below the

border.

TRELEVEN: That's been done already?

WILKINSON: That's done.

TRELEVEN: You can document it?

WILKINSON: That's documented. Oh, absolutely. The figure is the question. The statements are that 600 were treated that way. So when you have so many arrested-- I didn't see the processing. We could talk to Peter Schey, or other active attorneys on the thing, and they could probably tell you that where this transfer came, it probably came after they got down to the holding stations at the jails, or courthouses, or wherever they were doing it, and were then transferred over. The INS came in and just took 600 or more people off their hands. How many of those people were really undocumented? How many of those people were really entitled? How many there are entitled to continuing due process under the amnesty program? We haven't got into that data yet. We don't know it yet. But clearly there was a teamwork between the INS in deporting people and the police department wanting to get people off their hands.

TRELEVEN: So they take them by bus to Tijuana?

WILKINSON: I don't know where. I presume it's Tijuana.

TRELEVEN: But they're just dumped in Mexico?

WILKINSON: That's right. Dumped. There's a new effort now to get them away from the border. I'm not talking about the uprising; I'm talking about generally the dumping has become a problem in the Tijuana and Calexico border towns because it just gives them a problem. Also, the people turn around and come right back in. On top of that it leads to great poverty and a great deal of crime right at the border towns. So there's a plan now to fly these people on down to a point in central Mexico where they are then turned loose by our authorities.

TRELEVEN: Also in the media one picks up a notion sometimes, of that bad old Gates; if we could only return to the good old days of good police administration under Parker. What are your thoughts when you read stuff like that?

WILKINSON: It's just unbelievable. The thing that surprises me most is that Jim Davis-- Is it Jim Davis, the chief of police between Parker and Gates?

TRELEVEN: Ed [Edward M.] Davis.

WILKINSON: Ed Davis. Was there another one? There were two chiefs in between there.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. I'm not going to think of the other one.

WILKINSON: All right. But anyway, the two chiefs: you had Parker on call there for so long, and then you had Davis, then you had this person we can't remember, and then you get--

TRELEVEN: [Thomas] Reddin.

WILKINSON: Reddin, that's right. Those two guys are on record condemning the police behavior in the Rodney King [beating], in the verdict, and in the way the police behaved: the lack of proper response when things began to get out of control. But Parker and Gates are, in my mind--to answer your question, and I really knew Parker as well as I did Gates--they are one and the same.

It's just that I now have the record on Parker so much better. He literally developed false information. He not only gave the FBI data to authorities, he provided the dossier to the lawyers for the real estate lobby, the slum owners. He used the thing against Bowron.

More than that, he became an active anti-housing person by having the police department develop statistics proving that there was more delinquency in the new public housing projects than there was in the slum areas. Whether I mentioned this or not before, it's very much relevant to the issue right now. When

we were using the film--the Chet Huntley film And 10,000 More in our education effort--Fritz Burns and I and I think Parker (I can't be sure of that)--were debating on television. Burns came in and said, "I have here statistics showing that you have more delinquency in these projects that you're building than there are in the old slum areas." I was caught, surprised. I said, "I don't believe that. Let me see your data." The very next day I go into City Hall, I go to the police department, I go to the research people--I'm doing research with housing, health, planning; all these people are people that I know--and I go into the police department and said, "How did you get this data? Let me see your areas." They pulled out their maps where they had their crime records by block, by precinct, or whatever it was, and they had compared, I think, Aliso Village and Pico Gardens housing projects with an area nearby which we had completely cleared two years before. It was absolutely vacant land. They said, "There's no delinquency in that area." I said, "Have you been out to that area? Have you gone out to do it? You've got this field work here. I see what you used. You've got the project here and the project there and you've got that slum area there. Have you been to that slum area? Have you

looked it over?" They said, "No, no, no, we're just working on it in the office here on the statistics." I said, "Well, you tell Parker that the area he cited as having no delinquency was cleared by us two years ago, so he's comparing vacant land with a housing project." These guys, you know, they're subordinates; they're not bad guys. They're researchers, police researchers. "Really?" I said, "Go look for yourself. Come on, I'll take you out there." Well, immediately after that I go on television and just blasted Parker for providing false information, blasted Fritz Burns for using false data, unfairly comparing it. Well, the public was entirely on my side.

It was at that point, when you now read the record, that the dossier was then developed with the FBI and they began going after me in a political way. Up till then it was just sort of an objective thing.

Another thing that relates to me, going back to this thing, is that Fritz Burns had a son, Fritz Burns, Jr., who was a student at USC [University of Southern California]. When I was invited to speak on housing at the Sloan Institute of Economics at USC (Alfred P. Sloan; what is that, General Motors? It's a big-funded program at USC), and I was the lecturer. Then I took them on a slum tour. After the slum tour, the

professor--Professor [Robert B.] Pettengill, I remember his name--he invited all the students to come back to his house for cocoa and doughnuts. We went in there, except Fritz Burns, Jr. He left the tour at that point. Then he went before the unAmerican activities committee in October, after I'm out, and testified that I had tried to recruit students at USC into the Communist Party. He said I went out and showed them these conditions and lectured them and, of course, "He repeatedly mentioned my father. Then when we got back to Professor Pettengill's house, he invited us all in, and that, I knew, was the place where the recruitment for the Communist Party was to be done." One of the key informants against me in the HUAC file.

TRELEVEN: So you had little application forms, CPUSA [Communist Party USA]? [laughter] Handing them out?

WILKINSON: [laughter] Anyhow, Parker was really a vicious man. Again, I don't want to overemphasize this assassination attempt, but he was the chief of police at the time when they were involved. Whether Daryl Gates was involved in the stakeout that night, we may never know for certain. But it's that atmosphere, that witch-hunting atmosphere in the police department where they would literally work with the FBI in an effort to kill somebody, somebody else's idea-- The thing doesn't

say "we will kill him." It says "to assist in an assassination." They were involved in it. This is only ninety-nine days after President [John F.] Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas, and where Lyndon [B.] Johnson had the FBI scouring the country trying to find out all the information as to who killed the president. Here's the fox out looking for the hens in the chicken coop.

TRELEVEN: Since we're on the subject of police chiefs, going up to the present--Parker, Davis, Reddin, Gates--how would you generalize, from Parker to the present about the relationship between the LAPD and the FBI, based on documents that you might have gotten through FOIA [Freedom of Information Act]?

WILKINSON: Well, I've handled enough regarding my own files. There's a very clear relationship. But I think what we know beyond that--and there was a trial here in L.A. where we found within the last ten years the police department under Gates had their anti-subversive details spying upon those of us in the movement working for social change. Really, you have to say it that broadly. They went after Unitarians, they went after the Quakers, they went after ACLU. We had informants. In fact, the first time we sat down to try to talk about what we could do about--I don't to recall the

specifics; I'm not sure--my memory isn't clear enough on it.

There was one meeting where we had the head of the Unitarians, the head of the Quakers, ACLU. We had a meeting to work on a problem, whether it was police or whatnot. There was an informant within that group, reporting. In ACLU a regular volunteer was a police informant, and when that case was brought to light and the police department had to pay a couple of million dollars penalty for spying on people, there were 225 of us who were spied upon.

TRELEVEN: This is what? All evidence that was ultimately revealed in the--

WILKINSON: --in the court trial.

TRELEVEN: --in what we now know as the Police Spy Case.

WILKINSON: Police Spy Case, the first police spy case. It was a class action, so we who were plaintiffs met collectively with lawyers to discuss what to do with it. There was a settlement. I received, I think, \$2,000, \$3,000, \$6,000, something like that. (It's the source of my savings account to this date that came out of that.) But it was all done according to who got hurt the most. The person that was hurt the most was the woman who had been seduced by the police informant

who was living with her at the time he was spying on her. So that was one case. Certainly I'd have to go back to Paul Hoffman, or somebody, to find out to what extent that [information] went from police to FBI. But once we get that cleared up, then we come across Western Goals.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: This is the outfit headed up by the late congressperson from Georgia, [Lawrence P.] McDonald, or something like that, and they recruited a police officer in the Gates police department to take the files out of the office to his home, to his garage, to put them into a computer that was immediately shipped to a computer post down in Georgia, or North Carolina, where these massive files were maintained. That was Western Goals and that was closely tied up with the FBI.

You'll find Western Goals in other documents more recently. The FBI under [Ronald W.] Reagan and Bush used Western Goals information and they were allowed to provide materials which were put into FBI files as source material. We know that. In fact, when I went down to speak in Tampa, Florida, ten years ago, twelve years ago--I was down there to speak at the University of South Florida at Tampa-Saint Pete[rsburg]--where

they were having a month-long civil rights history series and I was brought in. It was a very distinguished group. What is Baldwin's first name? The black writer? James [A.] Baldwin?

TRELEVEN: James Baldwin.

WILKINSON: I was the only white guy that was brought in as a lecturer during this month-long thing. I flew down there to speak. I arrived at people's homes and they said, "Have you heard what's going on?" They said that under Turner Broadcasting, or some outfit like that, a release had been made (we'd better not say Turner; I'm not positive about it). Two days before I arrived there, a guy comes on and, quoting Western Goals information, says, "A leading communist is coming here to speak at the University of South Florida." All this stuff which, we obviously later learned, came out of the L.A. Police Department guy moonlighting, shipping this stuff down there, so the file on me went from the L.A. police to Western Goals, which released it to discredit me in recent times when I'm speaking at a civil rights meeting--a very prestigious one--in Tampa.

TRELEVEN: Okay. We're developing a thread that makes more sense than anyone might realize up to this point. In terms of the settlement of Wilkinson v FBI--in

terms of the decree made by Judge [A. Wallace] Tashima-- were that to happen today, would the FBI be in violation of the court order were something like that to be done?

WILKINSON: The settlement in 1987 from Judge Tashima is very precise. It, first of all, tells the FBI to remove every page they have on it from their own files. They have nothing on me today.

TRELEVEN: Okay. It goes to the National Archives [and Records Administration].

WILKINSON: The FBI came to the judge and offers to burn them. I was consulted and said, "No, I want them in libraries," so they're archived in the National Archives.

Two, be able to receive all the documents ourselves, a set of them, under the 1984 protective order where we get raw data as long as we protect the names of non-public persons.

Third, [if there is] any further spying or disruption of NCARL or me, the FBI will pay monetary damages without further litigation. It's that specific.

TRELEVEN: Okay, but that does not forbid LAPD from spying on you?

WILKINSON: That's right. This is solely a restraint

on the FBI.

TRELEVEN: Strictly FBI.

WILKINSON: You know, you find increasingly an interconnection between the FBI and the police, who are all over the country, where Hoover trusted the local red-squad police people. They worked closely. Where he didn't trust them, he played a very separate game. Sometimes the FBI knew what the corruption was in a town, they didn't want to get involved with the police, so they'd say, "Hands off."

But take the burglary of NCARL's office in Chicago. The man who signed the burglary [order] over Hoover's said, "Burglarize after two a.m.," when he found out that the janitors and building custodians were friendly to us. "Burglarize after two a.m." The man that signed the burglary order the following year retired from the FBI and became the president of the Chicago Police Commission.

There are those interconnections. Lots of it. Lots of it. The assassination document just couldn't be more specific because you find that the informant on this program to assist seems to be coming out of the police department to the FBI. You can almost read that thing as being worse on the police department than it is on the FBI. They were working together. When you

first read it: "From the Agent in Charge L.A. office" to Hoover, "Subject Frank Wilkinson," then five lines redacted as to who was to assassinate me....[names blanked out] "to assist in attempt...." When you get into the raw data, you find out it's confidential form so-and-so, "confidential form so-and-so--three different times used--of the Foothill Division of the police department," and the "head of the anti-subversive detail."

TRELEVEN: Okay, 1992: the LAPD has gathered information on you or NCARL and it happens to turn up at an FBI office and you find out about it. That is a violation of the judge's order?

WILKINSON: It is.

TRELEVEN: In other words--

WILKINSON: They're to have nothing in their file.

TRELEVEN: Okay. According to Tashima's judgement, therefore, theoretically if LAPD were to offer the FBI something, the FBI has to refuse it, theoretically. Can't keep it. Can't have it on the premises.

WILKINSON: I think that's a fair reading. I think the lawyers, Doug Mirell and Paul Hoffman, would answer definitely, yes. There can be no further spying, surveillance, disruption, whatever the words they used, in my case.

By the way, this was written up specifically and quoted specifically in the article I wrote for the American Bar Association's magazine, Human Rights [Volume 15, Number 2 (Summer, 1988) "Why I Won My Case Against the FBI"].

TRELEVEN: Human Rights.

WILKINSON: I wrote it up according to my understanding but then I had the lawyers review it for accuracy, and it's exactly put the way the settlement reads.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: By the way, the whole question comes up: how can you trust the FBI? You know, that kind of thing. Even after we started our trial in '80, in '81, '82, I was speaking at Indianapolis at Butler University in an auditorium and the chair of the meeting came up to me just before I got up to talk and said, "I want you to know that those two men in the third row are FBI agents." He said, "Do you want me to ask them to leave? Do you want me to identify them? What do you want done about it? I'm an attorney. I see them all the time at the federal building. They're FBI agents." I said, "No, leave them there." So I went through an evening to maybe a crowd of thirty-five, forty people, but I talked about what we now know about the FBI. I walked up to the front of the first

row, looking right in the faces of these FBI agents: Can you imagine people coming into a meeting where we're discussing civil liberties, discussing peace, studying housing, and infiltrating them to try to disrupt the work we're doing?" These guys--we watched them--had their notebooks out. They stopped writing. They were very nervous. They were sitting up to a point where to get up and leave would be too noticeable. But I just hammered them. You know, you can walk over or when you're making a gesture, you emphasize a point, I would emphasize within eight feet of their faces. Can you imagine looking them right in the eye? [laughter]

As soon as it went into the question period, I stopped. These two guys quickly got up and left the room. I came back and reported this to Doug and Paul because the FBI claimed they had done no further surveillance since '75. So there was a check made by the FBI office in Indianapolis--Butler University is where this happened--and the FBI denied that there was any such thing as that.

Another time I was invited to speak in the early-eighties up at San Luis Obispo. I got up there to speak and every seat in the auditorium at Cal Poly [California Polytechnic Institute] had the Anita

Bell Schneider testimony on the chairs. You go out to the car parking lot, they were under the windshield wipers of cars. Then we checked that out and the FBI disclaimed any knowledge: "It was done by individuals we don't know anything about. We have no knowledge about it."

My lawyers joke about it, but if I'm leaving on any field trip, they're quite likely to say, "Where are you going? Look over your audiences carefully. If you see somebody you believe to be an FBI agent, overcome your pacifism, make a flying tackle and, in effect, bring home the bacon," because we would get a great amount of money from the FBI on this basis.

TRELEVEN: Well, it's unlikely the FBI's going to be disinterested in H.R. 50.

WILKINSON: That's an interesting question for them. We're leading the campaign to get congresspeople to sponsor H.R. 50. We presented the bill as our major plank for the Democratic Party platform when they met in Cleveland on Thursday about this. We have fifty members of Congress now supporting legislation by representatives [Don] Edwards and [John] Conyers [Jr.], H.R. 50, the FBI First Amendment Protection Act is what it's called. How do they respect the court order and the fact that NCARL is leading that campaign? It's a

very interesting problem for them.

TRELEVEN: Well, in the further context of bureaucratic behavior bureaucracies are designed to not change at all, and what you're suggesting here is rather radical.

WILKINSON: Right, and there's so much that the FBI under Reagan and Bush continue to give us new information [about] how they're continuing to do to the American public in general what Hoover used to do to another generation. There's always the possibility that some guy hasn't got the message and knows nothing about the lawsuit and may just hear that a guy is coming to town to talk against the FBI, and they could get involved in it.

You know, you don't want to wish for these things, but every time we get information where we know of the fact that the FBI agent is going to a librarian specifically saying, "Do not discuss this. Here's names. Tell us the books this person has checked out," when we know specifically what they did to the 190 peace organizations on El Salvador, and all these other issues. It's just more and more information that the FBI is, under the Reagan guidelines, so far as we know is entitled to do the very same type of infiltration, disruption, agent provocateur, the whole thing, so far as we know, is in the Reagan 1983 guidelines. The

reason I say, as far as we know, is that Reagan classified that on April 1, 1983, as top secret. So what we have is thirty-one pages of 90 percent blanked-out as top secret. So we have the empirical data that we've picked up under the FOIA, knowing what they are doing and what they've then been forced to admit they're doing. [William S.] Sessions, for example, as recently as a month ago, confirmed the fact that the FBI is still going after the Library Awareness Program, "checking on the reading habits of the American people." That was confirmed by Sessions just a matter of a month ago.

TRELEVEN: Well, I think we're almost at the end of the tape.

WILKINSON: Okay.

TAPE NUMBER: XXXII, SIDE ONE

MAY 23, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay. In terms of contemporary events, Frank, before we turn to ECLC [National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee] in the fifties, I want to get straight the details--you've explained this somewhat--relating to the coram nobis brief in Atlanta. To get you started, I guess I would introduce this by my understanding that after the settlement of Wilkinson v FBI, you and your attorneys decided that you would introduce this brief into federal court in Atlanta based on some of the information you obtained through FOIA [Freedom of Information Act]. Can you pick it up at that point or fill in those details?

WILKINSON: The settlement of Wilkinson v FBI, 1987-- In 1989, we were still receiving the documents ordered by the settlement in which the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] was to turn over all the documents. They were coming through to us, many thousands of pages.

TRELEVEN: These are the duplicates of material that is being placed in the National Archives [and Records Administration]?

WILKINSON: Right. Correct.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: In 1989, we get a document. This time the material we're getting from the FBI, unlike the FOIA sources in which so many of the pages are totally redacted, we're now getting raw data. Dick [Richard] Criley did the analysis of them. Say each page will identify whether or not that page comes from an informant or from a wire tap. You know that at the top of the page somewhere, some codes they put in there to indicate that.

So one of these was a memorandum written, I think, in 19-- It deals with a period around 1955, which is three years before the data was effectively used to jail me in Atlanta in 1958, leading to the [United States Supreme Court] decision of '61. The document simply was read. Not one line was crossed out. It's all raw data. "Witness not to be used against Frank Wilkinson: Anita Bell Schneider." We read that. I don't want to duplicate what we've said before, but in brief the document says that Anita Bell Schneider is emotionally unstable, that her testimony in an earlier case involving the Subversive Activities Control Board showed instability, and that the defense department [Department of Defense] asked to borrow her in another matter as an undercover agent and the FBI turned the

defense department down because she was not stable. No agent is to have any further contact with her. That's the document we received.

With that in hand we go back and take a look at the unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] hearings of me in '56 in Los Angeles, and in '58 in Georgia. In both cases, I was making a First Amendment challenge represented by the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] of Southern California--national [ACLU] in Georgia--in which it was agreed that I would answer no questions except my name. In Georgia we had to answer one more question, and that was that I did not want a lawyer, because we could not get any lawyers to sit with me in the hearing in Atlanta in '58. In Los Angeles there was one humorous situation where they couldn't believe that I was not using the Fifth Amendment, could not comprehend that I was only using the First Amendment, and they sent the chair of the committee, Clyde [G.] Doyle, down from the podium to look in my ears--because he noted I was wearing a hearing aid--and he shouted at me, "Are you wearing a hearing aid? Did you hear us when we asked you if you are using the Fifth Amendment?" I did volunteer and answer that. I said, "Yes." At that point, they told me to remain in the chair--I'm still

under oath; I'm just to remain there--and they asked if Anita Bell Schneider is in the room. I'd never heard the name. A woman stood up in about the second or third row. I'd never seen her before to my knowledge. She said, "I'm Anita Bell Schneider."

"Can you identify Frank Wilkinson?"

"Yes, I can."

Then she waited till all the newspapers, television, and radio were gathered around for this dramatic moment. I'm on the stand testifying. Suddenly a woman in the audience stands up. So she's all there and she very dramatically points to me: "That is Frank Wilkinson." I am dumbfounded as to who she was. Her testimony was that she had been, I believe, married to a naval officer in San Diego, had been recruited to become an undercover communist for the FBI for pay in San Diego in '51. By 1953, she'd done such an effective job as an undercover communist that the FBI asked her to infiltrate the Democratic Party. By 1955, she is the president of the Democratic Party of San Diego as a full-time, employed, well-paid informant, communist, for the FBI. She then describes her knowledge of me. She came to hear me speak at the Rosslyn Hotel downtown [Los Angeles] on Bill of Rights Day, 1955. Eason Monroe, the then director of the

ACLU, and I were speakers. A couple hundred people were there on a Bill of Rights Day celebration. She'd come up to the podium after I'd finished speaking and asked me if I would speak before her group in San Diego. I apparently had said, "What is your group?" She had said, "I'm the president of the Democratic Party of San Diego." I said, "Yes, get in touch with me. I'll be glad to come down." Other than that day, I never saw this woman before or since.

So then they put the question to her, "Are you familiar with the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms?" (That was the name of the organization with which I was working under Reverend [Aaron Allen] Heist.) She said, no, she wasn't even familiar with the organization. Anyone in L.A., Southern California, would have known Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms; it was the organization which was organizing all during the HUAC hearings. Then she was asked, "Do you know who the ringleader was of that organization?" She said, "No," and that brought a laugh out in the audience because I was not a good organizer and I was sort of a ringleader of the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms. (I'm a little better now, but not much better, I guess. A little self-study.)

TRELEVEN: What you're saying is it was publicly well known that you were instrumental in CCPAF?

WILKINSON: Right. I was the secretary and I had been the secretary of that from 1953. About ten months after my blacklisting, Eason Monroe, Reverend Heist, Phil [Philip P.] Kerby, others, came to me and asked me to become secretary of this group which had been formed the year before in '52, at a HUAC hearing.

TRELEVEN: Okay, but she says, no, she doesn't know?

WILKINSON: She doesn't know the organization and doesn't know who the ringleader is. Then she was asked, "Do you know Mr. Wilkinson to be a communist?" She said, "Yes." I'm sitting there listening to this thing, trying to figure out who is she? Where is she? I don't know any of these things. It's just one of these unbelievable stories. Then they stop that [questioning]. They come back and ask me a question, "Do you know Anita Bell Schneider?" I again used my First Amendment. I refused to answer any questions about her. I refused to answer any questions.

The important point here, legally, to remember is that when you received a subpoena from the House Committee on unAmerican Activities, you'd get a little booklet telling you your rights: number one, you may have a lawyer, but your lawyer may not address the

committee; number two, you may not cross-examine any accusers we may place before you. So when this happens Al [Abraham Lincoln] Wirin is sitting there with me--A. L. Wirin, general counsel of ACLU of Southern California--and he cannot cross-examine. He cannot stop and cross-examine her. It's impossible. He cannot even address the chair. In fact, at that point he'd been trying to introduce himself that he was even present. The committee told him, "Keep quiet, counsel, we'll come to you later." (That was the tone of the thing.) So there was nothing you could do about it.

Well, in '56 they gave up on me. They voted from the podium to cite me for contempt, but they never carried it on to Congress. The full committee cited me, but they never carried it on for a vote by the Congress for contempt of Congress, which is what it would have to be. So it's forgotten about.

In '58 I'm in Georgia and subpoenaed and I come before the committee. In leading up to the very first question, Richard Arens, who was the committee counsel, asked a question that runs about two pages in the Congressional Record, agate type. A long, long, long question loaded with such things: "Now while you're before God under oath, will you answer such and such a

question? You have been identified by a competent witness as a communist at hearings in Los Angeles in 1956 by Anita Bell Schneider." He goes through all these things, and then he comes up and asks questions. He gets on the record-- The whole premise is recited about the '56 hearing. It's almost repeated in a question to me; I continue to refuse to answer. Then the committee cites me for contempt and takes it to the Congress; I am cited, arraigned, tried, convicted, and go to the Supreme Court. We lose, 5-4.

Now the Anita Bell Schneider thing crops up again for the first time in court proceedings in February of 1961 when the final decision was read. Hugo [L.] Black, who was one of the spokespersons for the four on our side--Chief Justice [Earl] Warren, Black, [William O.] Douglas, [William J.] Brennan [Jr.] were on our side; five were against us, led by Potter Stewart--but in his dissent Black read every word of the 1956 Schneider testimony against me, and very emotionally said, "Such testimony...." (and he refers to it, all the testimony by her, "Do you know the ringleader? Do you know this? Do you know that?") "Such testimony, without cross examination, lacks all probable cause." Black goes further, saying, "In the atmosphere existing in the country today, every member

of this court has been, at one time or another, accused of being a communist." Very dramatic.

Well, for the majority side Potter Stewart begins by saying this unprecedented thing where he ad libs. Before he holds up the document to read, he said, "The majority, in rendering this opinion, wants it understood we are not passing judgement on the merits of the unAmerican activities committee." (It was a washing their hands, as you might say, of the evils of the unAmerican activities committee. I compared it to Pontius Pilate washing his hands of whatever the mob wanted out there, and then let the mob do it.) Then Potter Stewart, in effect, says it's true I was in Georgia on First Amendment activity. I was circulating a petition among black churches as part of the First Amendment [work]. He said, "On the other hand, we have a competent witness who says he's a communist," and refers to Anita Bell Schneider.

TRELEVEN: Did he refer to her by name?

WILKINSON: By name.

TRELEVEN: By name?

WILKINSON: By name. Then he goes a little further and refers to a competent witness again, twice. "And on balance, he goes to jail." So it was entirely upon her testimony. The government had found no one else other

than Anita Bell Schneider who would say I was a communist, and this is a person who I didn't even recognize when she stood up to testify against me. I vaguely remembered when she told the story about San Diego--her name and certain circumstances in San Diego where Reverend Heist actually went down, at her request, to debate Clyde Doyle at a Democratic Party affair in San Diego where she was the chair. But I-- You know, thousands of people over a period of fifty years, forty years, come up to your podium afterwards. You don't remember who they are. You don't remember that very evening who you spoke to after a meeting unless some unusual thing happens.

So I served my year in jail. Then we get this document in '89, twenty-eight years after my United States Supreme Court conviction. We now know, of course, that the FBI was directing the unAmerican activities committee. Kenneth O'Reilly's book on the FBI and the UnAmericans [Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace (1983)] provides very clear proof that the unAmerican activities committee was really nothing but a front for the FBI. It was the punishing arm, the hatchet. When you didn't cooperate with the FBI, they turned your name over to the HUAC, they call you up, you lose your job. That's

the way they meted out punishment.

So we suddenly had evidence that the FBI, the Justice Department--the director of the FBI is the subordinate of the Attorney General of the United States--had all this information in hand in Georgia when I was tried. They had it in the court of appeals in the then Fifth Circuit. They certainly had it in the Supreme Court when the court divided, 5-4. If that information, which could hardly be a better example of exculpatory information, had been made known to the Supreme Court, I would never have gone to jail. In fact, we might have had a 9-0 decision. We might have won hands down.

TRELEVEN: Okay. If the information that was available to the FBI at that time--

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: --had that been viewed by Supreme Court justices, it would have in effect convinced them, presumably, that she was unstable and not to be trusted? And, presumably, Potter Stewart would have not have come to the conclusion that he did?

WILKINSON: Hugo Black's prescient judgement in the dissent at that time would have been the majority opinion, because he said, "Such testimony, without cross examination, lacks probable cause." Here is a

government's own witness [and they're] saying that she is emotionally unstable, we can't use her.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So that leads to the coram nobis.

WILKINSON: So we filed our lawsuit on that thing.

TRELEVEN: Okay, but the FBI got unhappy and Judge [A. Wallace] Tashima got very unhappy.

WILKINSON: Correct.

TRELEVEN: What I don't understand is why Tashima got unhappy if Anita Bell Schneider had been mentioned by name by several justices of the Supreme Court.

WILKINSON: First of all, as I have learned from this twelve years of legal trial, any federal judge-- including a good one like Judge A. Wallace Tashima (very interesting name)--doesn't look at FBI documents. They're ruling on motions. They will order, produce, so many hundred [rulings]. If we challenge them on a certain-- When we got over 3,000 blacked-out pages, we submitted samples of the blacked-out pages to the judge to try to get better evidence. He sees that, maybe. Samples. But he doesn't really know what's going on. He doesn't really know who--

If he had read the 132,000 pages, he would have found Anita Bell Schneider's name used 10,000 times, page after page. Whenever the FBI finishes a certain story about disrupting a meeting or why a meeting

should be disrupted, it said, "Wilkinson is identified as a communist by Anita Bell Schneider in 1956," whatever they're saying. That's the way it was used, always, always, always. Wilkinson an identified communist, identified communist, Anita Bell Schneider.

So we were surprised that the judge became angry. But the circumstances are these: you file a writ of error, coram nobis; it's an ultimate protection that comes down from seventeenth-century common law in England where if evidence becomes available after everything else is over with, the convicted has a right to one more hearing before something. It even has to be after the sentence is served. Everything. If the sentence is not served you couldn't get a coram nobis; you'd challenge it in the courts to block jailing a person. But in this case, where everything is over with, you have a right.

In the case of the Japanese Americans [during World War II], they used a writ of error, coram nobis. They'd already been interned under [Franklin D.] Roosevelt from '42 to '45. Then they learned in the seventies that the evidence used against them was known by the army to be false, and so they got their redress. We used the same, same thing.

But we fill out the writ of error, coram nobis.

That's a document that runs about ten or twelve pages just setting forth the facts of my subpoena, my trial, my conviction and whatnot in Georgia, what I was doing, and then citing Anita Bell Schneider as being the key witness against me. So they asked the original Georgia court in which I had been convicted in 1959 to accept the case and to give us discovery on what else do we know about Anita Bell Schneider? I mean, we used her name in the proceedings.

In our writ of error, coram nobis, we attached a document which was this one page, "Witness not to be used...." That is attached to the back of our brief. One page. Within three days after that was filed, the FBI files a lawsuit with the court demanding that Tashima charge us with the contempt of court--myself, Paul [L.] Hoffman, Doug [Douglas E.] Mirell, and another lawyer in Loeb and Loeb--because we violated a 1984 protective order whereby we were to receive raw documents and were not to release the names of a non-public person. Anita Bell Schneider is a non-public person. We violated the thing. *[My lawyers thought that due to the thousands of times that HUAC had

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

distributed Schneider's testimony against me, that she was very much a "public" person!] Tashima acted very hastily and cited us for contempt. There was brief discussion, but then he came down and cited us for contempt. Our lawyers, I think, were shocked. They were more shocked than I was because the penalty for them can be disbarment for having done this. But for me it's just one more example of how vicious the FBI is.

In preparing to answer the FBI's claim of contempt of court, we had gone through the record. We went through the newspapers of the time. Anita Bell Schneider's name was all over the papers. We cited the fact that her testimony, possibly as many as 500,000 copies of her testimony, was placed on the seats of lectures I made steadily from 1960 through 1980; in fact, right up to 1981 Anita Bell Schneider's testimony was used.

TRELEVEN: In the court room, I think you were saying before, there were all kinds of media there.

WILKINSON: Yes, absolutely. The press in both 1956 and 1958 in Georgia had very publicly covered her role. So she is not a private person, she is a very public person, and, therefore, we had no reason to protect her. She's been the government's primary instrument

against Wilkinson for the past twenty-five, -six, -seven years. But the judge cited us for contempt.

We were cited for contempt, but we had a right to appeal. The first thing that we did [is] the lawyers faxed the federal court in Atlanta, telling the judge there to seal our coram nobis suit. Seal it, which means that no one else would be able to see that document. Every place where we had used the document-- at a press conference where we'd used the document--all those copies were picked up and removed. Not destroyed, but removed. I was instructed, in all of my talks after that point, to never mention the name Anita Bell Schneider. "In any of your talks don't speculate, don't do anything, about Anita Bell Schneider." We just went through all the kinds of precautions we could. We told the judge we'd tried to seal the document. We've done this. We've done, this, and this, but we still feel that she was a public person.

On appeal, the judge reverses the contempt of court against the four of us. But he tells us that we have to pay for the FBI's legal costs in filing their contempt of court action against us and tells the FBI to present an invoice for their charges. That's an amazing thing. Their little contempt of court thing was about four pages long, yet they charged travel for

so many people to Los Angeles, back and forth, hotels, documents, contacts, phone calls, and whatnot. They came up with a bill of \$14,000 for that four-page document. We knew we had to pay that price. We came in to challenge the whole idea of the expenses, and the judge reduced the \$14,000 down to \$9,000. ACLU and Loeb and Loeb had to shell out \$9,000 to pay for that contempt of court thing.

Then in the actual proceedings in court-- By the way, the main reason we won is not because of our good legal arguments; the judge in Atlanta we faxed to seal the document refused to seal it for his own reasons. In other words, the judge in L.A. says that's a violation of a protective order. The person has been hurt. You shouldn't have done a contempt. We say to the judge in Atlanta, "Seal the document because we've hurt somebody", and the judge in Atlanta refuses to seal. So we're in a situation where the judge in Atlanta takes--

TRELEVEN: Adversarial? He's in conflict with--

WILKINSON: He's in conflict with, and so his holding is accepted. You cannot protect somebody in this court if another court makes it public. So once that judge in Atlanta made it public, then anyone can look at it. So that's where we won.

Now, when we came to the actual coram nobis action in the federal district court in Atlanta--

TRELEVEN: Did Tashima concede that Schneider was a public person, based on--

WILKINSON: No, he did not.

TRELEVEN: He did not?

WILKINSON: He ruled that because of the conflict between the court in Atlanta and his court, that the matter was moot, or whatever you would say.

TRELEVEN: So he, in effect, yielded--

WILKINSON: He yielded to the court in Atlanta.

TRELEVEN: The court in Atlanta considered, in effect, that Anita Bell Schneider was a public person?

WILKINSON: Well, even the court in Atlanta didn't say that. They just refused to seal.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: The document was seal or not seal.

TRELEVEN: If it becomes public record it means that she was a public person.

WILKINSON: At least as far as this trial is concerned, she's public.

TRELEVEN: Okay. All right. Go ahead.

WILKINSON: But Tashima to this day says we violated the protective order. He removed the contempt on the basis that we were trying to overcome all of our evil

ways.

Anyway, just think of the cost that Loeb and Loeb and ACLU had to pay on this. You know, Loeb and Loeb: I think we had a figure of a \$100,000 a year they were paying. This is the twelfth year. Of course, it hasn't been as much as that in the last year, but enormous amounts of money are paid on this thing. ACLU paid and then Loeb and Loeb paid all the legal expenses.

All right, now I don't think you want the detail on this. A month ago, first of all, we lost in the federal district court on our coram nobis. What we lost on was not the issue of whether exculpatory information had been withheld, but we asked for discovery to find out more about Anita Bell Schneider. The judge refused to let us have any more information. We wanted to know what about her? I mean, technically, my lawyers could argue, maybe she had information. First of all, at that time if you were a communist you didn't have any protections because the court had upheld in a number of cases that communists do not have First Amendment rights. So if she really knew something and the government knew she knew something, her emotional instability would not prevail because the government had reason to believe despite this woman's

messed-up life, we know she was telling the truth in the case here, regardless of anything. That's what we wanted to discover. So, in effect, we are endangering ourselves. We want more information. We want the FBI to produce.

Well, the government-- I think it's very interesting that the Cold War has now ended and yet the mindset within the FBI is just so clearly there--and in the federal courts in Atlanta, including the Eleventh Circuit [Court]--because they fight tooth and nail to keep us from getting one more page. It's just as though somebody slipped up by letting us have that one page and they're not going to get one more word to us. So we don't know what else they had there. It would be fascinating to have it. It would be very interesting to know. It would prove more than ever that this woman didn't know anything. I'd never talked to the woman. How did she know anything, you know? That would have come out.

But the treatment we had in the courts in this [latest] case, now, is a reflection of what I think we're facing in the country generally today in the Supreme Court and the lesser courts. In the last twelve years [Ronald W.] Reagan and George [H. W.] Bush have nominated a majority to the federal bench in this

country. I don't know the exact figures, but it's an enormous number of federal judges who are their judges. In the Supreme Court we know that because of a combination of [Richard M.] Nixon and Bush and Reagan, the Supreme Court is made up of judges who are totally contrary to the civil liberties point of view.

TRELEVEN: It's somewhat similar to what's happened in the state of California.

WILKINSON: Right. It's very similar. But in the case we never got to the supreme court. At the federal district court [United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, Atlanta Division], we prepare our documents, we come down there for our meeting with him, and we arrive in court. That means Paul Hoffman and I take a plane to Georgia. We prepare briefs, go to hotels. We're all prepared. We come to court at 9 a.m. and there's nobody there from the federal government. They make a phone call. Some guy comes in and said, "Mr. so-and-so, apparently it has slipped his mind. He's handling a case in such-and-such a town fifty miles from here. Now, if you can wait till this afternoon, I'll get on the phone and get him to come back in quickly." The federal judge takes us into chambers and said, "Well, this is unfortunate. You people have come a long way. But will you wait?"

Of course we wait. We come back at two o'clock in the afternoon. The guy has flown back in. We meet either in chambers or outside--I don't know which it was--and the judge wanted to hear the reasons behind the case. That was a real giveaway in terms of what has happened to the Cold War mentality and how it persists. The judge said to Paul Hoffman, "I don't see what's wrong with being called a communist. If it's true, then the guy is a communist. If it's not true, it's a matter of perjury." Something like--no, libel. He says it's like libel. "You have a libel action here." We're trying to explain to this judge that this is not a libel action. This is a First Amendment issue, a basic political right of silence and protection. Anyway, the judge rambled, and we got a transcript back from this thing. It's just unbelievable ignorance on the part of the judge on this thing. Then the government wrote their opinion, totally incompetent stuff. Our lawyers just tore apart their briefs. I mean, if we were in a decent court of law, you'd win because they made twenty errors. They cited three different precedents where the precedent had gone the other way and they didn't even know that the court had lost. Even in their own circuit, the court had gone the other way. Incompetent. But we wait, and wait, and wait and this judge in

Atlanta--his name was [Owen S.] Forrester--rules not only to deny discovery, but to drop the case.

We then appealed to the Eleventh Circuit (it used to be called the Fifth, now it's the Eleventh), and, again, we very carefully prepare and the government comes in with equally incompetent stuff. I mean, you don't have to be a lawyer to understand this. You can just read what they say and then read our answers and you'll say, "Well, they're wrong and we're right." Kind of a victory was scored when we were to get oral arguments because the government had argued there's no need for oral arguments; it can be done all on the basis of briefs. Just deny discovery, throw out the case on the basis of our briefs. The judges ruled that there had to be oral arguments, so that was an opportunity.

We go down there two months ago for oral arguments. Three judges--one from Nixon, one from Reagan, and, I think, one from [James E.] Carter. The Carter judge was the only guy that even began to open up asking helpful questions at all, but he wasn't forceful. He just sort of near the end-- The chief judge of the Eleventh Circuit who obviously was the chief judge in this three-person panel, was [Gerald B.] Tjofack. He was just merciless from the very

beginning. He said, "I don't see what your case is all about here. You say that she was emotionally unstable. So maybe she was emotionally unstable. Was she telling the truth or wasn't she?" Then right in court he says, "Well, I'd like to know. Is he a communist?" Doug Mirell said, "Your honor, this is a case involving the First Amendment; whether or not this man was a communist or not, he did not answer it then. He went to court, went to jail for a year, and he has still not answered that question. It is irrelevant to our point of discovery. On discovery we might find out that she was competent, but without discovery we don't know. What we have on the record is that she is incompetent and her testimony should never have been allowed." When he said, "Your honor, your question is irrelevant to this suit," this judge leaned forward to Doug and me and just shouted, "Aah, c'mon, now!"--just as loud as that in open court. It was a terrible thing, just shocking.

I brought with me for you a copy of the legal journal in Atlanta where a court reporter by the name of Liza Kaufman [Fulton County Daily Report] was in the court room and wrote a story. From Georgia I went on to Archbold, Ohio--a little town in western Ohio--to speak. She reached me on the phone there because she

had not reached me in court and asked me an hour's worth of questions. She's written an excellent article which we're going to reprint because it says the extent to which the Cold War is not gone. The mindset is there in the FBI and the mindset is there in the Reagan, Nixon, Bush judges. It's what we're faced with.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Before you decided to take it to court, especially on appeal, did you have an inkling at all that these judges might be, for lack of a better word, reactionary?

WILKINSON: We knew we got a bad district judge. But the court of appeals; it's not the Ninth Circuit. These are huge panels. I think there's something like twenty-five or thirty judges in the Ninth Circuit. I don't know how many there are in the Eleventh Circuit. They cover Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas; I don't know how far west it goes.

But I think the point is that the court's order in the district court was so weak and the government's briefs [so poor], we so completely overwhelmed them that we had every good ground for an appeal. We wouldn't have done it if they had really met us point by point. But the briefs that were prepared by Loeb and Loeb and ACLU are excellent. You just read it and

you say, "Boy, we're just sure to win because the government is wrong here. Clearly wrong. Their facts are wrong. Everything is wrong. But, Loeb and Loeb really prepares.

For example, the attorneys in Georgia-- It's very important that in order to go into court in Georgia, lawyers in California have to get permission to have lawyers brought in for them. So two ACLU lawyers in Georgia [Ralph] Goldberg and [Brian Spears] were Of Counsel. As soon as we found out who the three panel judges were going to be, we did our own research. I mean, Loeb and Loeb really does research. On Anita Bell Schneider, I still don't know what they found, but Loeb and Loeb hired trained investigators to track down Anita Bell Schneider, find out where she's living, what's happened to her? What has happened to her since 1955 when she disappeared?

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I'd like to know that.

WILKINSON: I would, too.

TRELEVEN: I'd like to go interview her.

WILKINSON: I'd like to interview her. It'd be fascinating. Doug somehow flinches on that. He doesn't feel it's my business to know. He said, "Just know that we're not...." See, they were concerned about a countersuit that she might file against us for

defamation of character because we're quoting the FBI on emotional instability. They just said, "All we can say, Frank, is don't worry about her." In other words, it sounded like she ended up in a mental hospital is the way they put it, but they never told me that.

I think you should know we have our right, now, to go to the Supreme Court. We're still within our period of time. But the lawyers on the case--and certainly with my full agreement--do not think it is worth the time, or the energy, or the cost to go up to the Supreme Court. By the way, the decision of the Eleventh Circuit, of these three judges, just said, "Denied." Just one word, "Denied." So to go up to the [William H.] Rehnquist court on an appeal, the thing is over with. I think the value has been obtained already. We have proven that the government withheld exculpatory information and we can use that in our education and political action.

TRELEVEN: Okay. End of the tape.

TAPE NUMBER: XXXIII, SIDE ONE

MAY 30, 1992

TRELEVEN: You'll recall that the last time we sat down we talked about events in 1992. Today I'd like to go back about thirty-five years or so and make this loop back to basically ECLC [National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee]. It's been a long time, so I thought I would remind you that we had discussed ECLC somewhat, five or six years ago. I think I wanted to get into the whole period leading up to your being subpoenaed in Atlanta, and then ultimately going to prison. I wanted to pick up with ECLC again, I guess with the basic question--and you may have answered this on a previous tape and to repeat is not going to be any big problem--of why you left CCPAF [Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms] and went to New York to get involved with ECLC in the first place.

WILKINSON: I went back to New York for work with the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee in the summer of 1957. The reason the invitation came concerns what I was then doing. After my blacklisting in 1952 and my total unemployment till '53, I then got this job with Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms and defending the victims of the unAmerican activities

committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities]. We organized a fight-back every time HUAC or the California state HUAC came to town. We developed a great deal of skill and became known around the country. We were the only ones doing it that way. Ordinarily, the committee would come to town and when they left town jobs were lost. In L.A. when they left town, a lot of people didn't lose their jobs. That was what I was doing. It was a successful organization, a small little group.

In 1956, at the time when the committee came to town to subpoena the foreign born, the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born and some other people connected with that--I think Reverend Stephen [H.] Fritchman was in on that hearing, and a few others. But even there it was probably connected with the fact that Fritchman was on the board of the L.A. Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, as was I. At that point in our fight-back, we brought in Alexander Meiklejohn to speak. I had reason to read his testimony before the [Thomas C.] Hennings [Jr.] committee in 1955 and was very impressed with it.

For three years, by then, Al [Abraham Lincoln] Wirin has been asking me and each group of subpoenaed people to try to find somebody who would make a First

Amendment challenge of the committee. People were turning it down. Gradually, I think I was reaching the point where I saw the damage of the committee myself and was prone towards making a First Amendment challenge myself, which you can't do unless you get a subpoena.

After all the foreign born had been subpoenaed and everything was organized and Meiklejohn was due to come and speak, a week after all their subpoenas came, I received a subpoena from the committee. Immediately I called up Al Wirin of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union, Southern California Chapter], and Eason Monroe to indicate that I had a subpoena. We needn't look any more. I would be the guinea pig and make the test.

The committee did not accept that challenge. They let me make the challenge. The committee here in L.A. cited me for contempt of Congress, but when they got back to Washington they didn't follow up on it. Exactly why they didn't follow up on it is not clear. But I think they were fearful that the challenge might have succeeded in 1956. They weren't sure where the [United States Supreme] Court was going or where the Congress was going, for that matter.

TRELEVEN: Let me interject here that among the

materials I have here are your wife, Jean's [Benson Wilkinson's] daybooks. They're very good to have for dates, because your HUAC hearing was Friday, December 7, 1956, just to get a date in here. Some events leading up to that, in '56, Owen Lattimore dinner in March--

WILKINSON: It's very interesting about that, that you raised it now. Owen Lattimore just died this last week and I was telling Donna [Childers Wilkinson] that I was responsible for bringing him out for this dinner we had in his honor and I got to know Lattimore and talked with him a lot just by coming out here to speak. I was telling Donna what my impressions were of him.

TRELEVEN: How were you responsible for bringing him out here?

WILKINSON: Well, our committee would organize these public meetings to educate against the Cold War, against the blacklisting, against the unAmerican activities committee, the [Joseph R.] McCarthy [United States Senate] committee, any of these committees.

TRELEVEN: This is CCPAF?

WILKINSON: Yes. Lattimore was one of the foremost victims. He was destroyed professionally because of McCarthy--I think it might have been Joseph McCarthy and other right-wingers that attacked him for having

lost China for the United States. So he was being put down, and therefore we decided to honor him, bring him out here. We always honored the victim. When you got a subpoena from HUAC, you were a guest of honor. When you're Owen Lattimore, you're being publicly attacked, we come and we honor you. We brought him out here and I found him to be a very interesting and a very good man. I liked him very much, what I saw of him. I hadn't seen any more of him until his death last week, here in 1992.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so that was March of '56. I'll let you get on with your narrative, but according to Jean's calendar, on July 15 the [UCLA] class of '36 had a reunion at Jack Stanley's, and there was a cocktail party at Gil [Gilbert A.] Harrison's that evening. Now, this is July of '56 and you go back to see old classmates at this reunion. How did they react to you-- and Jean, for that matter--who had also been blacklisted by that time?

WILKINSON: Well, by that time I had been blacklisted for four years and the press here just made me a pariah. I don't remember a negative reaction. I remember that I was really invited. We were glad to see each other and we're very friendly. The party was at a Malibu beach house where we all had a lot of fun

swimming, eating, drinking, and talking.

Then Gil Harrison had another reception at that time at a private residence. I was very, very pleased that Gil had invited Jean and me. I mean, Gilbert had been dating Jean at the time I was on my pilgrimage to Bethlehem. In fact, I wrote a letter--

[tape recorder off]

I was very pleased that he invited us. I believe that Gil was introducing us to his wife, or something, a reception of that kind. It was a very nice affair and some of our friends were there. Not all of them, but just some. I liked that. Now Gil had, as I said, been dating Jean and we used to be a threesome. I had decided I would never get married and never have children because of my deafness. They were very much a happy couple. We were a threesome; we went places together. While I was on my pilgrimage to Bethlehem in '36, '37, I wrote to Gil and Jean several times a week for a year and a half. You know, that was my connection: my letters to Ellinor Hoffmann, who I was in love with, and Gil and Jean, and my family. That's about it, and individual friends.

But I'm trying to put myself in context. When I came back from the Holy Land, Jean and I got married in '39. Gilbert and Jean and I remained friends

throughout that period. I think Gilbert was disturbed with me about my ideas, but we'd had a lot of chance to discuss it, Gil and I and that Rhodes scholar from Occidental [College] I met over in France. I know that Gil and our mutual UCLA friend, Hal [Harold A.] Levy, had published a book by Gertrude Stein. He'd cabled me up in Edinburgh, Scotland, trying to get me to make it all the way to Paris in three days, which I did, by bicycle in order to have a-- He wanted me to meet Gertrude Stein. He was staying with Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. So we did that, and then we also bicycled together in Germany. There was a lot of chance to talk and argue. I was having a totally different-- I was changing, on religion particularly, and Gilbert was disturbed by that. When we were at UCLA, I was the head of the University Religious Conference and Gilbert and Bill [William H.] Hensey, who was a Catholic, and I were the ones singled out as the stereotypes-- Protestant, Catholic, and Jew--who spoke in Royce Hall of what it means on brotherhood day, and at Rabbi [Edgar F.] Magnin's Wilshire Boulevard temple, and other churches around. Gilbert was very religious as a Jewish religious person and I was a very religious Protestant, and Bill Hensey was a Catholic.

So there was a religious tie in our background,

and also the deep friendship. Gilbert was very close at my home as a friend. When we graduated from UCLA, I was a year ahead of him. Gilbert was a poor fellow; he came from a poor family and his father was an itinerant jeweler. Gilbert bought a watch for me as a graduation present. It was very, very expensive for him to do that in 1936. I remember he gave me a note which I saved. In fact, it's probably still in my scrapbook. "If this watch lasts half as long as our friendship lasts, it's a lot better watch than I think it is," something like that. In fact, I used that watch every time I ran out of money between cables of money in Europe, and Northern Africa, and the Near East. I pawned Gilbert's watch to get five bucks to carry me through for a couple more days.

But when I came back and had gone through the change, Adaline [C.] Guenther, Tom [Thomas S.] Evans, and the others at the religious conference were dismayed at my agnosticism, my atheism. I was so completely changed in a year and a half. Gilbert was all part of that. He was still very close to Guenther. But we were still friends. I remember Gilbert coming over to see Jean and me after we got married, and we were together.

But then when World War II came, Gilbert--even

before World War II--he went back to Washington and became very close to Eleanor Roosevelt and stayed at the White House, and was a protégé of Eleanor Roosevelt's. She admired him. Gilbert became more and more sort of prestigious. What he did during military service--I don't remember now whether Gilbert went to service or not--but he pretty much left the L.A. area and lived in Washington. Then he married Nancy McCormick of the McCormick-Harvester company, whose grandmother had been a very radical person, incidentally, but whose daughter Nancy was very conservative. I think a lot of us were very critical of the marriage because we didn't see it as a big romance. I shouldn't say these things, even now in a closed record at this time, but it just seemed to me like Gil had married for money, we might say. She was not a strikingly interesting person, but suddenly Gil goes from being a low-income guy to a man with enough money that turns around and buys the New Republic so he can publish something, carry on his work record. Freda Kirchwey and Carey McWilliams were running the Nation at that time, and Gilbert took over the New Republic.

During my housing days, I'd come back to Washington and I'd see Gilbert. I'd go to the New Republic and we'd have a meal together, talk together.

But by 1942, Jean and I had already joined the Communist Party [CPUSA]. (I shouldn't say that about Jean. I may want that off the record. You know, I don't think it's proper in any record for me to talk about Jean's politics.)

TRELEVEN: You expressed that before, right.

WILKINSON: I joined the Communist Party. But the atmosphere was closing in tighter and tighter and I never told anyone except the very closest friends--and those were primarily communist friends--that I was a communist, because by that time I was working fulltime with Monsignor [Thomas J.] O'Dwyer, Archdiocese Director of Hospitals and Charities, and was moving up rapidly within the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles]. I signed a loyalty oath in 1942 that I was not a communist, and then shortly after I signed I joined the Communist Party.

So I'd see Gilbert and he was curious what I was thinking about, and we were beginning to differ about things. I remember him questioning me about things. Once I was blacklisted in '52, I still saw Gilbert but he became more and more critical of me, openly arguing with me about ideas. He as a real cold warrior. At the end of World War II, in 1946, he was one of the two head founders of the American Veterans Committee [AVC].

Gilbert took me with him once to Saint Louis to the annual meeting of the AVC--American Veterans Committee--where I sat in his hotel room while he plotted how to get rid of communists within the AVC. It was a very awful picture. Gilbert trusted me completely to sit in and hear them talking about how they would rig the vote, how they would rig the timing on the floor, how they would get their votes to get rid of alleged communists in the AVC.

Then, once I was blacklisted, I think Gilbert never said, "You're a communist." But I think he privately, probably, had real reservations about that. We'd still see each other. I remember once seeing him in Washington and after we had dinner--he always took me out to real fine restaurants to eat, which was sort of fun--he got through and he said, "I want you to read these," and he gave me three volumes of [George] Orwell's writings. He was very vehement: "Read these things and know what you're getting into," was an implication that I was a communist--or sympathetic to communism--and I didn't realize the dangers that Orwell recognized in 1984, for example. So I still saw Gilbert from time to time.

But going back to this thing that you began here in 1956--

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: I was already blacklisted for four years, and yet Gilbert invited us to this reception. It was just as though nothing had happened. He was treating us as noncontroversial people. I can't remember who all was there, but I know it was a very, very elegant type of affair in a very fine hotel, and prominent people there. No one on the Left was there at all and I don't think there were any other UCLA graduates there. It was just an old-times thing.

That came about the time of Jack Stanley's birthday party; Jack had been the president of our graduating class at UCLA. He was a great comedian. Wore a coon skin cap while traveling around on campus; invited people their first, second year at UCLA to be on the senior class council, just to make it more democratic. Crazy things, fun things. But that's what particularly comes out of that thing.

I just remember my love for Gilbert was so great, my respect for him. He really had this profound effect upon me in terms of intellectual development. He was much better read. He was very knowledgeable. He was a reader. Until '36, in Palestine where I go through this change, my reading habits were limited to typical topics and very, very provincial apple-pie American

authors. I didn't know much. I remember one book he gave me-- He was a muckraker: [Joseph] Lincoln Steffens' book. I'd never heard of Lincoln Steffens. Gil gave it to me and said, "You ought to read this because here is a guy who has gone through a lot of changes like you've gone through and he'll have something for you. Above all, Frank, Steffens was searching for a basis for his ethics." I remember, Gil always saying, "A basis for ethics. You've lost the basis of your ethics and you've got to find them." Gilbert, I mean, being a Jew, it's not those benchmarks like the virgin birth, the resurrection, that sort of thing that you tie into by faith. Judaism is not faith; it's not tied down to a messiah, except one that may come later on.

But his work with Gertrude Stein was fascinating to me. He was interesting to me. He was an intellectual. He was the editor of the Daily Bruin. He made the thing jump. He was also very close to Ernest Carroll Moore, so Gilbert had no problems at all with the fact that I was close to Ernest Carroll Moore. On the other hand, in our last year at UCLA Gilbert was the campaign manager for Jean to be vice-president of the student body, and she was elected. He also campaigned against me for student body president and

helped to elect Tom [Thomas] Lambert, who Gilbert later came to dislike for his arrogance and his pomposity, whatever Tom was. There were lots of things.

In fact, out of being defeated I get-- I'd known Jean through my father as a patient of his. Then Gilbert we knew. Then the election somehow didn't-- The fact they were against me in the election didn't bother me particularly. We were close and even closer after I was defeated and Jean was elected, Gil was editor of the paper, and Tom Lambert put me on the student council as the head of the men students [Associated Mens Students].

TRELEVEN: He made you part of the student power structure.

WILKINSON: Power structure. Gilbert wrote this long, long, beautiful column about me which appeared in the Daily Bruin. He didn't name me by name, but it was almost a romantic love piece toward me, "This man who drinks milk, who...." It's in my scrapbook. I'm sure I saved it because I was so moved by it because Gilbert wrote this thing. If you knew exactly how we felt, you knew it was me and it was Gilbert's tribute to me. But enough on that.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Going to twenty years later, in '56, you come back to Jack Stanley's, or at the Harrison

thing. Did anyone express any curiosity about what you were involved in? You're an immensely public figure by this time. Do you recall any questions being asked of you and Jean?

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: What the heck was really going on?

WILKINSON: I think it was very friendly, but there were no pointed questions. Very unusual. In other words, they were glad I was there. They reminded us of the fun we had when we were twenty years younger, but no one, as I remember, sat down and said, "Frank, what's happened to you?" or "What are you doing?" or so and so. I don't even remember any adversarial statements being made against me. It was just like all the sudden twenty years of vast political difference, where I'd gone from this conservative religious person to an atheist, political communist-- I'd become a communist within six years out of UCLA, and this is now another fourteen years later. I'd been a communist for fourteen years, and yet I coveted those old friendships.

None of these people themselves were political people at all. I mean, going over what each of them was doing, I was fascinated to see what each was doing. One guy (names begin to slip me here) who I'd been very

close to, also was a friend of Gilbert's; he's dead now. But when the internment of the Japanese Americans came in '42-- It's very interesting that I joined the Communist Party in '42. The Communist Party supported, I think, the internment; anything to win the war against Hitler. The Russians had been attacked in June of '41, so in December of '42 everything was done to bring Russia and America together and that the Japanese were a threat; they'd done all these things in Pearl Harbor. Rounding them up.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: I did not buy into that. I was deeply influenced by Carey McWilliams and Al Wirin, people who took a very correct stand on that thing. (The name I couldn't remember was Chuck [Charles K.] Ferguson; Chuck Ferguson became the educational director at Manzanar.)

TRELEVEN: I'll be darned.

WILKINSON: He brought Jean and me up there to lecture at Manzanar. Chuck and Lois Ferguson, they were friends of Gil's and mine.

I must say generally about Gilbert, as he went up the ladder both socially and economically, his old friends at UCLA did not have too much use for him anymore. I mean, he became less and less popular and

people were just critical of him that he was taking care of himself very well, and didn't seem to be quite the guy we knew when we were all together at UCLA.

TRELEVEN: Were you reading the New Republic during this time?

WILKINSON: Yes. In fact, I found the New Republic to be remarkably good during the Korean War and even moreso during the Vietnamese War because the Nation was weak and the New Republic had an awful lot of material which was critical of both the Korean and the Vietnamese wars. Gilbert was in on that; he was doing good stuff there.

TRELEVEN: I think you've described that he was a kind of--what shall I call it?--ADA/ACLU [Americans for Democratic Action/American Civil Liberties Union] pro-liberal, anti-communist, in that vein, right?

WILKINSON: Yeah. That's right. But I had seen-- None of my friends in UCLA became Left except Lloyd [V.] Bridges, my fraternity brother. He joined the Party.

TRELEVEN: Well, I was going to say Cliff [Clifford] Carpenter.

WILKINSON: Cliff Carpenter and I went to UCLA together. Cliff Carpenter, who I still know; Lloyd Bridges, who I still know; Remy [Remington] Olmstead, the football player, a strange character, became some

sort of a radical, but the rest of them were not. I mean, Gilbert represented the real Cold War liberal, you know. When the splits came in '48 in labor, and all the other organizations--ADA and the American Jewish Congress; all organizations start getting rid of the communists or alleged communist people--Gilbert was the leader of that. He drove the "reds" out of AVC.

Yet, I had these friendships with these people. My like of Gilbert is a real love affair. It's not just a friend, a UCLA friend; Gilbert was terribly important to me and my development. So as he does these things--I remember coming back and probably telling Jean and others where I'd sat in a room and I watched Gil organizing successfully to throw the "reds" out of AVC--and I was sick of it. I mean, I hated it. Yet probably the following year, I'd go back to Washington, I call Gilbert up and we get together. Gilbert would have me over for lunch, or dinner with Nancy at their house. We held onto the friendship during all this change in our lives. In fact, just a few years ago when I was in New York, I made arrangements to-- Gil maintains an apartment in New York as well as a home in--

TRELEVEN: Scottsdale?

WILKINSON: Scottsdale, Arizona. I indicated that he

sees Jean from time to time. He has children, I think, living in the Bay Area. I think Jean and Gilbert always liked each other. But I wanted to see Gilbert again, he met me in his apartment in New York, and we had an evening together. This was in the last four or five years.

Again, I mean I can forgive Gilbert for almost anything just because of my emotional affection for him that goes back to the thirties.

TRELEVEN: Okay. As long as we're on this thread of Harrison and the New Republic, how did you judge the coverage that the New Republic gave to Operation Abolition, your subpoena and trial, you and Carl Braden going to prison, and the abolition campaign continuing after you got out? How did--?

WILKINSON: I don't remember what the New Republic did on our case. You see, by '58, '60, '61, the Cold War of the forty-eights was mellowing among liberals. It was definitely changing. The Christian Century and-- Well, take for example when I went to jail: Reinhold Niebuhr; Martin Luther King [Jr.]; the man who was the secretary of the World Council of Churches; Bob [Robert W.] Kenny, of course; Dean John [C.] Bennett of the Union Theological Seminary, forwarded a petition to religious leaders, scholars, trade unionists all over

the country. There were 3,000 people who signed the petition to [President John F.] Kennedy to free us from jail. There was a lot of strong support. Even Tony [Anthony] Lewis of the New York Times was friendly. The guy that wrote lots of the Village Voice at that time--he's still living [Nat Hentoff; also Murray Kempton]--also wrote [favorably]. I mean, I have a whole folder of favorable editorials about Carl [Braden] and me at the time we went to jail. It was amazing how we were making breakthroughs. I mean, even Hugo [L.] Black in his [Supreme Court] dissent reflected a lot of those liberal points. When they begin to say people like [Lloyd] Barenblatt, [Willard E.] Uphaus, Braden and Wilkinson are jailed; who will be next?--that was the tone. That was repeated over and over again in editorials where Black sort of honored us by singling us out by name in his court decisions.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: It would be interesting to hear what the New Republic did on me.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: But let me go back to just one more thing. I remember once after all this happened, I go back to Washington. I have dinner at Gil's house--this would

be in the late-fifties--or at a restaurant: Very warm, very friendly. I mean, I'd call him up. "Hi! Great! Where are you? Can we get together?" It was not my pushing it. I took the initiative, but he wound it up and made it friendly.

But then there was another guy who had been student body president at UCLA the year before I ran. His name was John [M.] Burnside. When I worked with Ernest Carroll Moore at the time to get the students expelled from UCLA--it was five people--John Burnside was one of those who was expelled. Tom Lambert, John Burnside, and so on. John Burnside, by the late-fifties, was the top commander in the war college--U.S. [Army] War College--in Washington, D.C. So I reached him and he made arrangements to have me go right through security and come to the commander's residence at the war college in Washington, D.C. for a wonderful dinner and a visit together, and this is about the time I'm ready to go to jail down in Georgia. Those things held on together in a strange way. Johnny Burnside's father was a friend of my father's. He'd been in the [University] Religious Conference. I'd dated his girlfriend for a while. We were close friends. Last thing I heard of him, he was living and retired in the Palos Verdes Estates and head of the

Palos Verdes Estates Mercedes-Benz Owners Association.
A retired general. He was also active in the ROTC
[Reserve Officers Training Corps] at UCLA and then went
right on up the ladder.

There was a lot of holding together there. One of
the first guys that was killed in World War II was a
very close friend of Chuck Ferguson's and Jean's and
mine, Wally [Wallace M.] Bonapart. In fact, 1936, the
military, which Burnside was a part of--the ROTC on
campus--was one thing but then there were the
mavericks, the Fergusons, the Bonaparts, the other
people like Jack Stanley, who formed an organization
called "Veterans of Future Wars, demanding our pensions
now." Like the Scabbard and Blade--which is the big
deal for-- You know, you get married to Scabbard and
Blade; you have a formal thing and you march under
those crossed swords to get married. On the right
side, Jean was named the queen--or whatever you call
it, the equivalent of the female head of Scabbard and
Blade--of that for the Veterans of Future Wars.
There's a picture of her. They're out running all over
the campus. They're peering over the grass knolls,
looking, and Jean has got a nurse's costume on, hamming
it up. Ironically, Wally Bonapart was our first friend
killed in World War II. He and Don [Donald E.] Brown,

Joe E. Brown's kid who I'd known real well in high school. (Funny story idea. Names, people. But very wonderful people.)

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: And unlike a lot of my contemporaries who went Left and were in the Communist Party who completely turned angrily against the liberals who became red-baiters, I have always maintained friendships with those people. I've never quite overcome the friendship from UCLA days. Strange.

TRELEVEN: Okay, well, we sort of took this route--

WILKINSON: You got me into a long one on that one [laughter].

TRELEVEN: Well, no, it summarizes--

WILKINSON: Some of the things are interesting there.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Some things we've discussed before. Again, back to Jean's calendar: September 30, 1956, this was several months after your class reunion. There's a notation in her daybook, Pete Seeger, so I guess that must have been a concert.

WILKINSON: Yeah.

TRELEVEN: Perhaps? He was in town?

WILKINSON: Pete Seeger was not doing these giant concerts yet, I don't think. No. Occasionally one, I guess. He would sing at the [First] Unitarian Church.

That's the way I first got to know Pete. That's one of the first times I got to meet Paul Robeson. See, Steve [Stephen H.] Fritchman and the Unitarian Church was such a little hallowed ground--a throwback to the pre-Cold War days--that all these great, great people would come to perform there. I was on the board of the church and had been the one selected by Steve to go back to Boston to appear before the Unitarian Universalist Association board when they tried to throw him out when he used the Fifth Amendment.

TRELEVEN: Interesting notation on November 11, 1956.

This would be month, approximately, before--

WILKINSON: It's amazing you found these things.

TRELEVEN: --you went to the HUAC hearing. "Frank and kids go to [Los Angeles] Rams football game."

[laughter]

WILKINSON: How about that? That's interesting. Now, that shows that at the very time when I'm a full-time civil liberties organizer-- I mean, when these hearings came, like the hearing in November what?

TRELEVEN: November 11. The year--

WILKINSON: All right. It would probably be about November 20 when the subpoenas first hit. I didn't get mine until later.

TRELEVEN: I think you're correct because Jean's

daybook says on Saturday, December 1, you met with your lawyers, and that is probably the date of the incident you related last time about the conflict among certain lawyers.

WILKINSON: Right, right, right. Where Dan [Daniel G.] Marshall-- Jean turned to Dan and said, "Well, what do you think?" after everybody walked out on us except Al Wirin. "What do you think?" She loved Dan, the Catholic mystic that he was. "Jeanie, sometimes you have to listen to the still small voices." I'd never read anything about Joan of Arc, but I was told that he was talking about Joan of Arc, or something, and I loved Joan of Arc from that day forward. I still don't know what she was really like.

TRELEVEN: So here you are almost getting subpoenaed and you're off watching Bob Waterfield, I suppose?

WILKINSON: Right, right, right. At a football game with my kids.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Thank god you've got a few reminders like that, because I was a normal guy! I mean, I was interested. I wouldn't go to a Dodger game; the Dodgers Stadium wasn't finished till '59.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: But I would not go to a Dodger game.

Chauncey [A.] Alexander got me to go to a Dodger game in about 1968. First time I ever went there. He talked me into it.

TRELEVEN: Let me flip this over.

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WILKINSON: That's a notebook that Jean was maintaining?

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Over a long period of time or just at that time?

TRELEVEN: No, for a couple of years.

WILKINSON: That would really be interesting.

TRELEVEN: The other personal thing that is going on, Frank, in the midst of this--according to Jean's daybook--is that her father became seriously ill and passed away in early '57.

WILKINSON: No, it was earlier. There's something wrong with that. My dad died in 1940.

TRELEVEN: No, her father.

WILKINSON: Oh, yes.

TRELEVEN: Because there are notations about the hospital right around Christmas of '56.

WILKINSON: Aha.

TRELEVEN: Let's go back. December 7, HUAC hearing. You and Jean met with Meiklejohn on December 14. The 15th you went to Phil [Philip P.] and Elizabeth [Poe] Kerby's for dinner.

WILKINSON: Phil was then the editor of Frontier magazine.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: Betty Kerby was with the Fund for the Republic with Bob [Robert Maynard] Hutchins, and she had just written the history of the Hollywood blacklist.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Then as you get near Christmas, you and the kids went to Berkeley. I take it that this has somewhat to do with Jean's father's illness, and all of that.

WILKINSON: Yeah. He was living, I think, up in Riverbank, a little town near Modesto.

TRELEVEN: Anyway, all of this is surrounding the decision that we talked about before, about how you were to take the First, and you've taken a rather circuitous route, but a good one--into '57 where we began the discussion of what led to your decision to go to New York.

WILKINSON: All right. Let me just tell you what happened. When I took that First Amendment stand on December 7 of '56, I was the only one in the west, I think, that had ever come near the First Amendment since the Hollywood Ten. We now know there were fifty-six people around the country, including Pete Seeger,

mathematicians at Michigan, Lloyd Barenblatt, a lot of people, a black minister down in Florida.

TRELEVEN: And in the East, Harvey O'Connor and Corliss Lamont.

WILKINSON: That's right, Harvey O'Connor and all those people. Right. Corliss Lamont.

But in the west it was novel. The hearing was so unbelievable where the committee-- See, Al Wirin and I worked out a statement of what I was going to say. "As a matter of personal conscience and responsibility, I refuse to answer any questions of this committee. By your mandate and your practices, you violate the First Amendment. I have utmost respect for Congress, but you in this case have no right to exist. You should be abolished." That was the statement.

So I'm called up before them and they think this is just one more-- First of all, there are forty people called up, each one using the Fifth Amendment. Early on, or later on, none of them, like Zero Mostel who played games with them in a private hearing. This is very, very early on, usually within the first minute of questioning, somebody would claim on the basis of the Fifth Amendment. They would doll it up by saying, "I refuse to answer the questions on the grounds of the First Amendment, Fifth Amendment, the Sixth Amendment,

the Ninth Amendment, the Tenth Amendment." Or maybe they'd skip the Fifth and then come back to the Fifth. The question to me was, "Your name and address?"

"My name is Frank Wilkinson."

"Your address, please."

"As a matter of personal conscience and responsibility, I refuse to answer any questions of this...."

"Now, come on Mr. Wilkinson, could it possibly incriminate you to give us your address? Let's have your cooperation here." Then I would read the next line or two.

"Mr. Chair, I order the man be ordered and directed to answer the question."

"I order and direct you to answer." "You've been ordered and directed. Do you answer?"

"You should be abolished."

I kept finishing. They interrupt a five-line, six-line paragraph. I get stopped; I'd stop there. They'd give me another chance; I'd go on to another sentence till I finally got all the way through it. Then, after the next answer was, "My answer is my answer," they went through this thing that they couldn't believe it. They argued. Did he use the Fifth? Read back the record." Clyde [G.] Doyle noted

I'm wearing a hearing aid, comes down from the committee dias, looks in my ears, and shouts at me, "When we asked you if you used the Fifth Amendment, did you hear us?" and so on.

All right. That was such an unbelievable hearing that it was decided to print it up. I went to this very famous printer. (I think we mentioned this last time. What was it?)

TRELEVEN: Ward Ritchie?

WILKINSON: Ward Ritchie, who is known as a liberal guy. I didn't really know him, but I went to see him and asked if he would typeset and print this thing for me. He agreed to do it. Then 1,000 copies were made and mailed to people who I'd had some contact with around the country. So Izzy [Isidor F.] Stone, Carey McWilliams, Corliss Lamont, Harvey O'Connor, these people, were hearing about this and reading it. Not just reading a paper, the guy used the First Amendment when called before HUAC, but when you read it, it's just one of those unbelievable things. It'll glue you to your chair while you read the thing because it's so unbelievable.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so here's a West-East connection?

WILKINSON: Right. Up to that time I had done no organizing outside of California. I did organize

[opposition to] the hearings in San Francisco, repeatedly, as well as in L.A. We had a Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms of San Francisco, as well as one down here.

Then in May of '57, the Supreme Court came down with the Watkins case. The Watkins case is the first time that the Supreme Court--in the dicta, at least, Earl Warren's opinion--used language we'd never heard before from the Supreme Court. "Who can define the meaning of unAmerican?" and language of that kind. I. F. Stone at that time was following all these things very carefully nationally. I'd been back in '52, '54, '55, '56; I always met with ECLC people. In fact, I brought Bob Kenny, Dorothy Marshall, and other people on to the board of ECLC. They were trying to reach out. So we knew each other, but I'd never taken the stand. In '56 I took the stand. So Izzy Stone, knowing about the good organizing there, getting this in hand, reading Watkins v United States, decides on his own that the Supreme Court is now ready to take a stand to abolish HUAC. It's time to go to Congress. ECLC's got to start a campaign to abolish HUAC.

Clark Foreman was off vegetating in Europe, something like visiting civil-liberties-minded people in England during a long, long three month's stay. It

was just a nice travel jaunt for him. They were already fed up with him. So I get this phone call. TRELEVEN: Now, by the time you get the phone call, according to your [the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation's] files back [at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin] in Madison, you are not naive about the problems that ECLC has. Here's from a copy of the letter in your file from Russ Nixon to Foreman, February 19, 1957.

WILKINSON: God.

WILKINSON: Nixon's saying, "There is in L.A. a model for action against HUAC. That model is CCPAF and ECLC ought to adopt that model." Nixon goes on to say to Foreman, "ECLC now is functioning merely as a legal aid and as a limited educational organization rather than a movement organizing and mobilizing people in defense of civil liberties. ECLC should lead in the development of long-range concentrated programs to abolish HUAC. ECLC is now," according to Nixon, "a closed organization. There are rumors about a bad financial situation, low staff salaries, and that the organization is shrouded in secrecy."

WILKINSON: How did--? Who--? That letter was to-- Did Russ Nixon send a copy of that to me?

TRELEVEN: Yep, he sent a copy. You had to have read

it at the time. I went through this long quotation--

WILKINSON: I never heard of that letter before, I mean, recently.

TRELEVEN: --because this is some months before you make this decision and so you had to have some knowledge that ECLC was not functioning very well. You've just alluded to Foreman being off somewhere else doing something rather than--

WILKINSON: That's what I remember now, but I didn't-- With that letter now, I can conjure up feelings that ECLC was not doing very much. But ECLC was a place-- When I came to New York I was always invited to the board meetings. I think I may have been invited to join the ECLC board, I'm not sure. But I don't think I was pushing myself so much. I was trying to get Bob Kenny, and Dan Marshall, and Bob [Robert S.] Morris [Jr.], Phil Kerby-- You know, these liberals.

See, on the ECLC board there were supposedly no communists. I found there were communists there, but to me the liberals were not red-baiting. Unlike all the other people who were red-baiting, ECLC was a place that didn't red-bait. Here in L.A., the strength of the Citizens Committee were people like that, like Bob Morris, Bob Kenny, Phil and Betty Kerby, and so on, and I was trying to get them on that board to build this

relationship between them [ECLC and CCPAF]. Of course, Eason Monroe and I by this time are very, very close; had been close for five or six years. Interesting.

My own memory is that I get a phone call from Corliss Lamont--who I had met earlier--saying, "Izzy and Carey and some other people and I have been talking, and we think it's time to start a campaign to abolish HUAC. We thought with your experience out there in California"-- that way he would be thinking of this model that the Citizens Committee represented-- "you would be the right person to head this up. Would you be willing to come back here and do this?" I think I almost immediately said yes. It was a big dislocation of our family because we had three kids, no housing, no income, no money.

The Citizens Committee was pretty secure at that time because we'd had hearings in L.A. from '52 to '56. There was a certain format where Dorothy Marshall, George [M.] Cowell, Phil Kerby, Vic [Victor] Shapiro, and other people were in a position to carry on. To a certain extent, if we had another hearing in L.A. we'd do it the same way as we'd done it ten other times. I wasn't needed to be there. So to get an invitation to go national with this thing excited me. I said yes and Corliss indicated that they would look for housing for

me, and he would pay my transportation across the country.

By that time, I'd already worked up a petition to abolish HUAC with Meiklejohn and I said, "Well, this is great. I'll drive across the country and I'll carry Meiklejohn's petition with me, and sound out newspaper editors around the country." So I go into the Denver Post, where I meet the editors there. I go into the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, where I meet Irving Dilliard, who is on the board of that now.

TRELEVEN: On the board of--?

WILKINSON: First Amendment Foundation.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: He was the op-ed editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, one of the great journalists of all time.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: I didn't know what the salary-- My salary for the Citizens Committee was probably about seventy-five dollars a week. I never, never, never tried to boost my salary up. Jean was blacklisted and was doing some tutoring. But, you know, you could get by; in '57 you could get by on eighty, eighty-five dollars a week. We didn't know anything about staying at Corliss's place at Ossining [New York]. We came into New York

and--

TRELEVEN: Before you get to New York, in your files there's a letter from Foreman to you, June 18, 1957. You're going to be hired at a \$100 a week plus expenses. You'll work full time to put together an abolition campaign till January 1, 1958, and as Foreman put it in his letter, "and probably longer." So that was the understanding that you had.

WILKINSON: I never saw that letter. That must be a fascinating file back there.

TRELEVEN: Oh, well, there's boxes and boxes.

WILKINSON: Great stuff!

TRELEVEN: Well, it's a great record. Again, it's all documented in folders back in Madison. You and Jean and the kids left for New York in July of '57, and you're to begin on August 1.

WILKINSON: Well, there's one thing that's not in there. On the way East we were contacted by Phil [Philip] Sipster, or something like that, who was a lawyer for a brewery workers union. They were having a convention in Colorado. He wanted to meet with me. He was a real financial wheel to try to keep ECLC afloat. He wanted to meet with me.

TRELEVEN: A guy who is connected to the brewery workers--

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: --is financially important to ECLC?

WILKINSON: Right, right.

TRELEVEN: The brewery workers are not exactly a very--

WILKINSON: His name was Sipster and he was a major lawyer for the union. Lawyers, when they had contracts with unions, did pretty well. You know, they had stipends. They had retainers just like Leonard [B.] Boudin had a retainer from ECLC.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So Sipster supported ECLC. There's not a direct connection between that and his representing the brewery workers, is there?

WILKINSON: No. But I did remember that he represented the brewery workers [union]. Apparently his work in ECLC didn't make it hard for him to be a lawyer for the brewery workers, any of that.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: So he wants to meet. Somehow or other their convention was being held not at Denver but at Colorado Springs, a resort place. The family arrives there and we were to have lunch at this magnificent hotel in Colorado Springs. I remember a funny thing came out of that. When we left the kids were so impressed with the poshness of the whole thing. I used the word or Jean used the words--I had it a minute ago

and I've lost it already--"gracious living," or some silly word like that, and I remember Jeff [Jeffrey Wilkinson] never forgot that. He wanted more gracious living. [laughter]

But Phil met with me for one thing. He said, "Now, we're a little worried about your coming back there," about the money angle. He didn't say a \$100 a week.

TRELEVEN: Well, this is what Foreman indicated to you.

WILKINSON: Right, Foreman did. He said, "You know, there's other people to think of back here. You can't live on seventy-five dollars a week or eighty dollars a week. You've got to take more money." I said, "I just want enough to live on. I don't know what the housing will be like."

"Well, you've got to have more money than that," and "I insist that you accept a \$150 a week. Otherwise, you're going to be undercutting Foreman and the other people," who were probably salaried at up to two or three hundred--

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I see.

WILKINSON: --and I'm coming in doing good work for seventy-five. Sipster saw the danger in that and met with me for that one reason. "Do not reject an increase in salary. You must accept it," which is a

funny way to approach me. I was just in the happy position of saying, "Well, I've never tried to make money out of my work in civil liberties, and I just want to live on what I live on."

At any rate, we come on into New York.

Well, we went to places like Yellow Springs [Ohio], and we met people. We met editors. At Yellow Springs I went to visit the humanists society [Fellowship of Religious Humanists]. The idea was to get across the country by car and yet to make these stops where I would make appointments to see people and talk to them.

So we got to New York and we were-- A person that was sort of working with Corliss on the housing search was a woman by the name of Elinor [Kirstein]. She'd been married to a Ferry who was the publisher of the Nation at that time, and she lived on Clairmont Place right next to the Columbia [University], teachers college, a real nice place. We were to stay in her apartment a night or two.

I remember my first experience in New York was to park my car, double-parked or something, with all our bags in it while we went upstairs. When we came down our car had been broken into and all our clothing was taken. That was my opening night in New York.

Then Corliss had a secretary, I think whose name

was Mary, who was also doing work for Matthew Josephson. Either Corliss, the secretary, or Elinor Ferry said that, "We haven't found a place for you here, but Corliss is going to put you up in his place at Ossining and I'm the one to drive you up and show you how to get in there, and I have a key to get us in." So we went up to Ossining and this was this unbelievable experience. People coming out of our background, into New York, up to Ossining on the--what do they call it?--Strawberry Parkway, or whatever it's called: Beautiful, beautiful area. We go up there, we turn off a road, come into these estates, and here's this forty-acre estate with a great eleven-bedroom marble palace on top of it, two ponds, croquet, two clay tennis courts, "This is where you're to stay," and we're given the key and they turn around and go back into New York. Jean and the kids and I all loved this excitement of coming in there and we're suddenly in this Morgan-- What was it? Let's see, the Lamonts were J.P. Morgan, or what were they? What was that banking family? Anyway, I don't know what it was, but anyway it was forty acres of our own in that place, so we stayed there.

I left them there each morning and went by suburban train down the Hudson into New York. The

first word was a call from Izzy Stone: "I want you to come down to Washington immediately; I want you to talk to [James] Roosevelt and other congresspeople." Almost immediately I take a train down there. I carry the Meiklejohn petition. That's where this guy [Irving] Ferman of ACLU bumps into me.

TRELEVEN: Right, which you described.

WILKINSON: He'd already nailed me and calls up the FBI to say that Juanita Barbee--Juanita Terry--says she's a friend of Wilkinson, that sort of stuff. *[Her mother was a member of the Los Angeles Housing Authority Commission, its only black member.]

Then I came back to New York. And I mean the whole thing; we're going to move. I mean, I had unbelievable dreams, energies, drives. "We're going to start an abolition campaign? Well, first of all, we've got to have a big meeting, and I don't know anybody."

"Well, we've got a mailing list here."

"Let's have a big meeting." Before I left L.A. I'd called up Dalt [Dalton Trumbo]. I'd just helped to arrange something big for Dalt that spring. *[We arranged a dinner for the Wilson v Loew's lawsuit

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed sections during his review of the transcript.

against the motion picture studios, and had Trumbo and Henry Steele Commager as guest speakers. With 800 in attendance, it was our most successful fund-raiser.] He was Mr. Rich on the Oscar [Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences] Award. I said, "I want you to come back to New York. We're going to start an abolition campaign." He says, "Sure, I'll come."

On my own, I'd heard of Carnegie Hall and went somewhere with Edith Tiger. We rented Carnegie Hall in August. No one ever heard of it. You know, everybody's out of town; the humidity is 110. The family is living in luxury up in the cool of Ossining and I'm down in New York sweating it out.

Then we had to get an academician. I went to see Vern Countryman; he'd been kicked out of Yale [University] and was in private practice. He was not available; like so many others, he just couldn't believe that I had made this First Amendment challenge. But I wanted an academician there, somebody who would speak out about abolishing HUAC and defending the Supreme Court because the campaign against Earl Warren was rising.

TRELEVEN: That's right, "Impeach Earl Warren."

WILKINSON: There was a resolution going through Congress, a constitutional way of limiting the

jurisdiction of the Supreme Court so they could no longer render some of these opinions they were rendering at that time.

I knew Hugh [H.] Wilson by that time, I guess from earlier trips back there. Jean and I went up to Old Lyme [Rhode Island] to talk Hubie Wilson into speaking with Dalt Trumbo. Hubie was a great drinker. I remember that--and we get up there--I got off the road at Old Lyme, went to a liquor store, bought a half a gallon of gin and came into see him. We began drinking, and by midnight we were all diving off his dock in the nude, which was all strange to me and to Jean.

TRELEVEN: Did you sign him up? [laughter]

WILKINSON: I signed him up. I kept enough sobriety for him to say, I remember now, "Sure! Sure, when do you want me?" At that time I began worrying: would he be sober enough to make a good talk?

TRELEVEN: You were nude but you still had a pen in your hand to sign him up? [laughter]

WILKINSON: That's correct. I did sign Hubie up for it.

So we came back and put our program together. Dalton Trumbo, professor H.H. Wilson of Princeton [University] who'd been writing a lot of good stuff,

and Harvey O'Connor was to be moderator, M.C. or something like that. He was known by that time for his own First Amendment challenge. That was the middle of September, from August 7 to the middle of September it was just the right time. It just hit. We probably used ECLC's mailing list, which was not too big because they never kept people on the list who didn't pay money, and we probably got the lists from [National Guardian] and probably the Daily World. We certainly would have got them to support it, although there's some of the tricky deals now.

ECLC was claiming to be not anti-communist like ACLU was, and yet they would have no contact with communists. That's at the time that ECLC was attacked for being a communist front. Clark Foreman wrote this article in the Philadelphia Inquirer: "We're not a communist front. We have no communists." (I've told you that story.) I said, "How do you know they're not?"

"I know it."

"We've got eighty-five people and I don't know how you know they're not communists."

"I know it. I picked them."

"How do you know I'm not a communist?"

"Well, Frank, you used the First Amendment." That

was the beginning of my break with him.

Meanwhile, on my own I established liaison with the Communist Party in New York to coordinate the abolition campaign. It was just not something wrong; it was just something [needed] if you're going to win these battles. In L.A. I always worked with the Communist Party even though a lot of these people were not in the Communist Party. I worked with Dorothy [Ray] Healey, I worked with Frank Carlson. In New York, the Party established a guy who was a former Methodist minister as sort of the community relations guy for the Party. He said, "Meet me at a certain little coffee house over...."

TRELEVEN: Is he a public communist?

WILKINSON: He was a public communist.

TRELEVEN: It would be good to record it. We can fill it in later [Arnold Johnson].

WILKINSON: Anyway, he and I hit it off very well because he was very active in church work before he became a communist, and I understood that. We began meeting once a week at a restaurant where we'd talk about what was going on, or I was saying, "Well, what can the Party do to guarantee the success of this thing?"

But we did the same thing with the Guardian.

There weren't any other Left papers, I don't think. I don't even remember any contact with the Militant, if there was a Militant then. I don't remember. We certainly wouldn't have excluded them. I wouldn't have. The Party would have, but I wouldn't have. That Carnegie Hall meeting--I'm sure I've described it in the past--when we got there (there came the Soviet invasion of Hungary. It came in '56, I guess it was).

TRELEVEN: I was going to say '56. I'm pretty sure.

WILKINSON: There's lots of refugees out of Hungary in New York, and the FBI was working very closely with these characters. At Carnegie Hall that night were at least 100 Hungarian freedom fighters in front, cursing and spitting, and making it very hard for any of us to come in there. Of course, you had to go through that and then once the program started, somebody set a stink bomb off and we had to empty Carnegie Hall right in the middle of the talks. It was a rough night. But we filled the damned place and I felt very, very good.

*[We had successfully launched a HUAC abolition campaign, with Hubie making a brilliant and prescient talk that night, actually calling for a term limit for

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

the FBI directorship five years before the Church committee report. From that night forward, the FBI claimed that ECLC had not only called for the abolition of HUAC, but the destruction of the FBI!]

I remained at Corliss's place for three months. Then they got an apartment for me down in New York, which they paid for.

TRELEVEN: What was Russ Nixon's connection to all of this?

WILKINSON: Russ Nixon was the Washington representative of United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers Union.

TRELEVEN: UE?

WILKINSON: UE. UE had its main headquarters on Fifty-fifth Street right next to Saint Patricks Cathedral. Russ and Millie Hedrick, the secretary, ran the UE office. Russ was a brilliant guy. I think he had a Ph.D in something. He was well educated. He was a very good leftist, the correct guy for the UE, and he was a good liaison: he dressed like a real-- He was immaculate: his suits were expensive; his ties, his shirts, everything was very immaculate. He was this smooth guy on the hill as a lobbyist, and, obviously, on the ECLC board and was trying to encourage everything that I was trying to do. Little bit by bit

he was undercutting Clark Foreman. He never liked Clark Foreman. He'd like to get Clark Foreman kicked out if he could.

TRELEVEN: On the basis of maybe any discussion you had with Nixon or correspondence, did Nixon size up Foreman as being an anti-communist cold warrior?

WILKINSON: No, he sized up Foreman as being a dilettante and a guy who's never going to move anything. Not on his anti-communism. I don't remember ever talking to Russ about communism/anti-communism. Later, people like Barrows Dunham's wife, Alice Dunham, and Sylvia Crane became convinced that Russ Nixon was an FBI or CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] infiltrator within ECLC. To this day they think so. There's really hostility between them. But I didn't ever believe that. I found Russ very, very useful and very valuable and very committed. Millie Hedrick was the one that actually xeroxed off my I. F. Stone-Tony Lewis statement, and rushed it to the Supreme Court in time to meet that press conference when the decision came down, way up in '61. I liked Russ.

TRELEVEN: Now, had you-- Had you met Russ because of Bill [William B.] Elconin, or was it the other way around?

WILKINSON: The other way around. I'd have to look at

the timing. I think that Bill Elconin's role-- I don't know.

TRELEVEN: Well, my notes--

WILKINSON: I don't know whether UE was very much involved with the Citizens Committee or not. I think there probably were people like [Henry W.] Fiering--or somebody like that--on the board and came to our meetings. One or two of them may have been individually subpoenaed. [International Union of] Mine, Mill, [and Smelter Workers] and UE were about the same classification, both under severe attack and kicked out of the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] eight years earlier, ten years earlier. I don't know, but Elconin and Fiering--particularly Elconin--were people I got to know early on, either when I was still there or when I came back to L.A. and we worked together a lot. I had enormous respect for him as a labor organizer. Alice and Bill Elconin.

(It's amazing what you found in those files. I'm just thrilled with that. God, we could make this a much more accurate record if we had a few more datebooks of Jean's sitting around.)

TRELEVEN: I think the combination of this interview and that material is really going to be an indispensable resource.

WILKINSON: That letter from Russ Nixon on ECLC in February: that's at least four months before Watkins came down and before I heard from Corliss.

TRELEVEN: As I remember our tapes made some time ago, I think the same tape you listened to--we made a copy for you and you listened to it--I think you went into a fair amount of detail about the whole Foreman business, the deteriorating relationship between you and Foreman personally, and some other individuals as well.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: Having done that, I guess a general question is how successful do you think you were in improving ECLC during the period you were with ECLC?

WILKINSON: I just never thought in terms of my role as improving ECLC.

TRELEVEN: Well, let me put it a different way for you, Frank. My sense is that ECLC had severe organizational problems when you came to New York.

WILKINSON: That's right.

TRELEVEN: Maybe what I'm asking is when you left after your tenure there, was it sitting in a better position to really become the East coast arm for the abolition operation?

WILKINSON: We programmatically just grabbed the leadership from August of '57, through that big Bill of

Rights affair in December of '57, and on to the spring of '58. We put ECLC, nationally, way, way up high in terms of the organization that was working for the abolition of HUAC, saving the Supreme Court, and respected. You see, after the Carnegie Hall meeting that was really big news in liberal-Left circles because we pulled off this big, big meeting. It was so principled: Abolish HUAC, and Dalton Trumbo and H. H. Wilson packed Carnegie Hall. Big, big dealings. A real resurgence. "We're out of the Cold War. We're leaving McCarthyism behind."

Then the meeting on the Bill of Rights that year was the largest dinner they ever had. I was the dinner speaker/fund-raiser. They were building it around me. In fact, that was one of my earlier disenchantments with ECLC. I found that Edith Tiger and Clark were taking me around to meet individuals where I'd sit down with wealthy people and I'd tell them about my life and hoping to get money from them. We weren't organizing. I was just a fund-raiser. I didn't like that.

But at that Bill of Rights dinner, we raised twenty-five or twenty-six thousand dollars in a pitch. Very well attended; 1,000 people, probably, at the banquet. The pitch was made entirely that of: "From now on, we will do nationally what Los Angeles did in

Southern California. Wherever there's a HUAC hearing, we will go. We'll organize. We'll save the jobs of people. We'll build up opposition to the unAmerican activities committee, not in just one place, all over the country. Call ECLC. If HUAC comes to your town, call ECLC." That certainly built the image of ECLC because up to that time, ECLC--as correctly as Russ Nixon put it--was just nothing but doing legal work for the Left, which was really building the reputation of Leonard Boudin.

TRELEVEN: The lawyer.

WILKINSON: At a point where the bad stuff that ACLU had done in the early fifties was diminished--Rowland Waits and Mel [Melvin L.] Wulf were running the legal work in ACLU when I came back there and the red-baiting where ACLU wouldn't take a lawsuit because they wouldn't be associated--the need for an ECLC legal arm was diminishing. I mentioned the fact that I was meeting privately with the Communist Party and the Guardian people. I also began having private meetings with the ACLU, which was considered kind of a heresy within the ECLC office.

"What do you want to go talk to them for?"

"We want to get them involved. If we're going to have a hearing, we want ACLU to provide free lawyers

like we did in L.A. or San Francisco."

So I was going down to meet with them and I know that I was scaring the wits out of them because they were threatened by ECLC and this big Carnegie Hall meeting: "Why doesn't ACLU hold a meeting in Carnegie Hall? Why did ECLC have to hold a meeting in Carnegie Hall? Why isn't ACLU doing more about these HUAC hearings," and so on. My coming in and saying, "It's an emergency civil liberties committee. I'm only here on an emergency basis. ACLU is the organization to do this work. In L.A. we're doing it with them, and we want to see ACLU do it elsewhere." While I was dealing with people who were not only red-baiters, but probably--through Ferman--advising the FBI of everything I was doing, Alan Reitman particularly, I was absolutely principled and correct. I never wanted ECLC to do something that ACLU could do better. I wanted to liaison with them. When we got called to Gary, Indiana--

TRELEVEN: You recounted that earlier on, that whole episode.

WILKINSON: --the first thing there, and that led me into trouble with ECLC. They began feeling I was disloyal.

TRELEVEN: Because you were helping to build a local

ACLU.

WILKINSON: Right, right. First of all, I was working with communists and building ACLU. The need for the emergency thing was because ACLU was red-baiting communists, and not doing anything. I came back there and worked with communists where they were involved, treating them as human beings, and trying to get ACLU to clean up its act.

TRELEVEN: We'll need to turn the tape over.

MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE

Frank Wilkinson

Interviewed by Dale E. Treleven

VOLUME V

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Photograph: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Wilkinson, Carl Braden, and James A. Dombrowski at Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia, April 30, 1961, at a reception sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference the evening before Braden's and Wilkinson's surrender to federal authorities to begin serving prison sentences for their First Amendment defiance of the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities (HUAC). Courtesy of Frank Wilkinson.

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TAPE NUMBER: XXXIV, SIDE ONE

MAY 30, 1992

TRELEVEN: Back to the question: Was ECLC a better organization when you left it than when you arrived?

WILKINSON: By the time I left it, because of the fact that ECLC [National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee] did not really sincerely carry out, implement, the abolition campaign, but increasingly used it as fund-raising for its own little bureaucracy and was taking no steps in the areas where ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] was still not moving but still primarily a legal arm--which ACLU was quite capable of doing--I would say that close observers would have to hold that the hopes that we all had for ECLC for the summer, fall, spring of '57, '58, were diminishing rapidly. The rationale for ECLC was becoming less and less apparent. By the summer of '58, ACLU had no problems in taking my case to the [United States] Supreme Court without charge, no fund-raising, no red-baiting, where the ACLU itself privately was convinced that I was a communist but have never said so. I know enough about the people in there that they believe that. Certainly [Irving] Ferman was still there doing his work.

TRELEVEN: Well, what accounts for the shift--if you

can call it a shift--in ACLU?

WILKINSON: Well, let's look at it very objectively. The shift in ACLU was a parallel to the shift in the nation. There were many, many forces that were coming into play. By the late-fifties, more and more people were coming out and speaking out for views that were contrary to [Joseph R.] McCarthyism. Things were getting better.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, but the [Earl] Warren court was being attacked. The Russians had launched Sputnik, which proved that they were still a quote, "threat to world-wide peace," unquote. Those kinds of things were going on, too. [Fidel] Castro.

WILKINSON: Sure, it's a mixture. Castro came in in '59, '60. But even at the start of the Vietnam War, the election of [John F.] Kennedy offered certain hopes as compared to what it would have been under [Richard M.] Nixon. The election of Kennedy was a-- You know, I do not respect Kennedy. I don't think well of him. But I think the people felt that he stood for a better time, a better world, a sort of a young [Franklin D.] Roosevelt-type coming in. Those are the objective reasons for it.

But within ACLU, some new staff people were coming on. (Got to get the dates right here.)

Let me claim some credit for some of the work that some of us are doing. The work that the ACLU of Southern California was doing was having an enormous effect on the national organization. In my traveling about the country, trying to talk to and reach out to ACLU people in the country, here and there there were sparks of hope. ACLU began to take political actions and get away from just being a legal-action [organization] by the end of the early-sixties.

When the National Committee to Abolish HUAC was established in 1960, we deliberately did not set up chapters of a new organization. We didn't want to set up chapters of ECLC, and I didn't want to set up chapters of the National Committee to Abolish HUAC. We were trying to get other organizations like ACLU to do better. We were constantly pressing them to do political action and to do the things that they should have been doing, and they finally did do.

Now, the guy who was the ACLU director Larry [Laurence] Speiser in Washington in '65 was still a hangover from the old days. He was the one that would not work with us on getting a resolution introduced in '65 to abolish HUAC.

But Jack [John deJ.] Pemberton came in, replacing Patrick Murphy Malin, who was a real cold warrior, a

seriously negative, bad guy. When he went out, Pemberton came in and was ineffectual in a certain sense, but was actively willing to cooperate. Jack would fly from New York down to Washington to sit down with me and this ACLU director there just because he wanted good relationships with the Committee to Abolish HUAC. Jack Pemberton sat down with Tom [Thomas I.] Emerson, [Alexander] Meiklejohn, and me in '63 to help draft the Constitutional Authorities Petition. He didn't have much input to it, but I saw to it he was there. We did not have an ECLC person there. We had Meiklejohn and Emerson; they were the ones that were writing and drafting, thinking. But Pemberton was there to put his blessings on it, and he could always claim that "I sat in on the writing of the resolution." Pemberton was a very valuable guy.

In my own case in '61, Nanette Dembitz had come in as a volunteer counsel. Mel [Melvin L.] Wulf had been kicked out. Mel Wulf was sort of a negative personality, not so much a cold warrior but just a negative personality, was removed and Rowland Waits became general counsel. Rowland Waits, while he came out of the red-baiting era and was in organizations that did red-baiting, he himself was increasingly free of it.

Nanette Dembitz, the niece of Justice [Louis D.] Brandeis, helped write the briefs on my case. She was a wonderful, wonderful constitutional scholar that was free of red-baiting. She'd sit down with me and Rowland to work on my briefs, and there was no hesitation on her part. Here she'd come from a very distinguished family. She's meeting with a man that is the most controversial public, thought-of communist in the country, and she sits down and works carefully, did things, put her name on them.

Gradually, we began building these committees to support the abolition of HUAC. Wherever there was an ACLU affiliate, we tried to work through them, not something new. (I'm just speaking my mind there.) I think we contributed.

I started out with the objective national situation, international situation, which would help and you could bring in an equal number of contrary-- like Castro and like whatever else you have, Sputnik, Russia--

TRELEVEN: Well, maybe this will help. If we back up to '58, on April 12, according to your [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation] files [at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin] in Madison, you wrote a letter to [Reverend Aaron Allen] Heist. In

that letter you indicated that you were heartened that the ACLU was going to join in the program of the abolition of HUAC. That's already in April of '58. I guess I'm kind of--

WILKINSON: I wrote that from New York?

TRELEVEN: You wrote that from New York; this was April of '58, that early, and I guess what we're searching for here is what already is going on inside of ACLU that's beginning to cause this shift?

WILKINSON: The fact that you have done this research gets away from just strained memories and embroidered, embellished memories down to things. That brings out the fact that I had not been subpoenaed myself. I had not gone through Georgia.

TRELEVEN: Not yet, no.

WILKINSON: I was back from Gary [Indiana], and had been badly red-baited. ECLC after that would never let me go out to speak in another town without Edith Tiger with me to be sure I didn't mess with the communists, and I was constantly working to get ACLU to take a stand.

I know what it was. I got ACLU to agree to help with free lawyers in future hearings. As such, I was cutting the ground right out from underneath Leonard [B.] Boudin, who was demanding a \$1,000 a head. See,

we were providing all this money for them, organizing them, and then Leonard would take his thousand-dollar-a-head or two-thousand-dollar-a-head for representation. I was going to ACLU and saying, "We must not put any more people's money into lawyers on the HUAC fight. That's got to be donated." And the ACLU was willing to think that way.

When I went to Georgia, even though Alan Reitman may have tipped off Ferman that I was coming down, I said, "Who are our lawyers in Georgia that I can get to represent people down there, free?"

I'm sure that there were lots of little signs of working relationships. I'm trying to think of some of the other ACLU contacts that I might have been making in New York. Patrick Murphy Malin was awful. Awful. He was the guy that when he and I were invited to speak before the large Ohio River Valley Unitarian Conference in Cincinnati, or somewhere, in '59, I praised ACLU for the work, the support, making it possible for people of conscience to take a stand. He referred to: "We've taken the Wilkinson [versus U.S.] case," and he would not even smile or look. I was a case; apparently, it's like he was a holdover from the old ACLU days, coming in later in life to become the director but he still had those old ideas of not associating with the

communists, or people alleged to be communists.

TRELEVEN: Okay. By May of '58, you--in a letter to Dorothy Marshall--indicated that you were going to stay with ECLC until the end of August or the last session of Congress, whichever came later. You preferred that Dorothy not confide to anyone else the reasons for your leaving ECLC, but you preferred that the line be that you were loaned to ECLC for a year, the year was completed, and so you're going to come back to Los Angeles.

WILKINSON: Very interesting.

TRELEVEN: Why did you prefer to have that be the public reason for your leaving ECLC?

WILKINSON: Not having remembered the letter at all till you mentioned it now, I have to project what probably was in my thinking. I think it's in my style of work--just like I didn't want to fight ACLU, I wanted to try to bring them together, and I knew all the weaknesses in ACLU, but I wouldn't talk to people about it--that I didn't want to run down ECLC while I was still working for them. I mean, I had great differences, made it known, and resigned and left. I held on because of an annual contract. My contract was up in August and I was so concerned about carrying on the political work, correctly, that I agreed I'd stay

till the end of August, or at such time as Congress had adjourned because there was political work to be done every minute while Congress was in session. The moment Congress adjourns, you can collapse and there's no more problems in that area until January of '59. That's the only thing I can think of. There's no reason why I wouldn't-- By April, I knew-- I sat in the room in February where Corliss [Lamont] tried to fire Clark [Foreman], and then Edith [Tiger] told me that he'd spread a rumor that Corliss was having an affair, and Corliss was getting rid of Clark because Margaret, Corliss's first wife, said, "This man has to go." That sort of crap, you know; I knew all that stuff.

TRELEVEN: So it was getting personally very nasty.

WILKINSON: Very nasty. I probably would have shared that with Dorothy [Marshall] or with Heist, but I was not out to undercut-- First of all, Harvey O'Connor was still the chair, and he was a good guy. We're dealing with Harvey way up 200 miles in Rhode Island and he's not on the spot running the thing day by day. By at that time Russ Nixon, Hubie [Hugh H.] Wilson, [James] Imbrie, and a few others were asking me to keep track of the things that were going on so there'd be a chance to, with my leaving-- See, I was ready to resign from the ECLC board, everything, and they didn't want

me to do that. They wanted me to stay in there and fight to help them clean up from inside. They themselves hated to see me go. They understood why I was going. They wanted help to clean up. I'm right there in the office and I had day-by-day examples of what Clark was doing that were so bad, and they wanted that ammunition to help clean up ECLC from inside.

I guess that's the only way I can explain that letter to Dorothy.

TRELEVEN: Would it be fair to say that you recognized that ECLC, regardless of its confirmed problems, continued to be an important East coast ingredient of Operation Abolition?

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: No?

WILKINSON: I'd given up on them doing anything at all.

TRELEVEN: Really?

WILKINSON: I really had given up on them doing anything on that. I think that was scandal. \$26,000 raised to do it. Tried to do something in Boston. Clark said, "No, they're communists. If they want Harvey O'Connor's book, charge them for it. Ask them to send their money in advance. Don't have any truck with them."

I go to Gary and do this wonderful job, come back,

and I'm attacked on every side from having done a good job.

Then I remember going over--Harvey O'Connor got a subpoena in Newark in '58--and I was to go over there. I was working, trying to meet with people, deal with people. They were bringing me over to speak. It was never said, "Hereafter, Frank, Edith always goes with you," because I would have rebelled at that. But I could just see that it was happening. Somehow or other, Edith would go with me on these trips and in the role she was playing, I could just sense they wanted to know who I was talking to over there. "Who do you know there?" and so on.

The irony in all this thing, by the way--it's an unknown factor here--Edith Tiger was this very, very strange person. She complained bitterly to me about the anti-Semitism against her in the office by Clark. She felt she was not being appreciated, etcetera, etcetera--

TRELEVEN: Kind of a persecution complex?

WILKINSON: --and that ECLC was not doing all they should do. They agreed with me, I was the good guy. We needed more of you and what I did in Gary was fine, etcetra, etcetra.

But I'm inclined, increasingly, to believe what

her sister once told me. Her sister came clear in from the beach where she lived out in Brooklyn to have a meeting with me and said, "You've got to be careful in working with my sister. She is a pathological liar and she will hurt you down the road, one way or another." I didn't know what to make of that. I'm not sure to this day. For example, my knowledge that Corliss, with Clark, called people and warned about this affair, got Margaret upset. That's entirely from Edith. I think it may have been right, but I'm not sure. I believed it. I accepted it from her because it only made sense.

Edith was always the one that was trying to explain things to me, what's going on. She was always trying to almost protect me and to help me and to tell me what was going on. At the very time that she was secretly noting that I was jotting down notes on Clark's misconduct on index cards and putting them in my drawer, she was--I later learned--the one that came in the night before my departure and took out my index card notes and substituted blank cards.

I don't know where she was [coming from]. She was not a wholesome person.

TRELEVEN: Part of the reason I'm asking this is perhaps not about ECLC as an organization, but given the resources of an O'Connor, and given the resources

of a Lamont, you had some sense that their continued financial support would be important to Operation Abolition? No?

WILKINSON: We didn't dream of-- I was leaving New York disappointed: The campaign had failed. It was not until Georgia and my subpoena, where I got to know Aubrey [W.] Williams. Aubrey Williams sat down with me and told me stories about how bad Clark Foreman was, and said, "You've been doing the right thing. We've got to start a serious campaign to abolish HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities]. We have to establish a national committee to abolish HUAC. You're the guy for it and I'm going to put an umbrella over your head. I'll get Alec Meiklejohn, I'll get Harvey," and he knew all the players. "I'll do it." That was done at a stopover on the way home; we stopped off in Birmingham to see Aubrey. I went out ahead of Jean [Wilkinson] once and spoke at a major meeting in L.A. where Aubrey was the speaker. We were starting a campaign to abolish HUAC while I'm almost within days of my leaving there [ECLC].

Then the question is your question about the financial-support business. I did not expect a dime from Corliss Lamont on the new campaign. Aubrey was the brains there. No money, but the brains on it. We

decided that we ought to sit down with Corliss and tell him we like him, we respect him, and we were going to do this and we'd like him with us, but wouldn't want to go ahead if he didn't think it was right. If he felt we were cutting in on ECLC's program, we would hesitate to do it. We either wanted Corliss with us or to give us his go ahead that it's all right. Without flinching, Corliss said, "No problem at all. You go right ahead. We need this campaign. I will not be able to support you, but go-ahead." So the Harvey and Corliss eye-to-eye relationship was, "Well, fine. We didn't want to proceed, Corliss. You put so much into this thing. We did not want to proceed without consulting with you." It's done right. If Corliss had said, "Why are you doing this? I can do it," or something like that, we would have found a way of living whereby ECLC would have been the New York City arm of the abolition campaign. We would have done something there to protect it.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Looking at a couple other things in other parts of the country, I have a note here from February of '58. It's a reference to the quote, "Chicago-type Petition as opposed to the Meiklejohn Petition." Now, can you clarify what the Chicago-type petition was, and why it differed from the Meiklejohn

petition?

WILKINSON: Right. When I came east with Jean, came into Chicago, I didn't know Dick [Richard] Criley then, I don't think. Maybe I knew of him. I probably would have looked his organization up. The Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights was not really there; it was something called the Midwest Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, still, maybe something like that. But I was carrying this petition around, wanting to check it out with people, and I probably would have gone to the journalist out at Northwestern [University] that I knew of, very famous--

TRELEVEN: Havighurst?

WILKINSON: No, Havighurst is later. No, he's a famous professor of journalism at Northwestern [University], Curtis [D.] MacDougall. He was famous because he wrote the trilogy on the [Henry A.] Wallace campaign in '48. He ran on the Progressive Party ticket for senator in Illinois. I would have looked him up as a name. I'm trying to think of others I might have known. We had Dick; I'd have to refresh my memory of when he first got on. I know when I came in there to Chicago in '58, I didn't consult with Dick. I didn't stay with Dick. I came into town. I don't remember meeting Dick in '58; [meeting him] probably came in '59.

But on the way east in '57, I came in and was talking about our petition. They said, "Well, there's already a petition here," and I was very interested in it. It was developed by a prominent Catholic lay leader in Chicago whose name slips me now, and he had fifty names on it of prominent people in Chicago, calling for the abolition of HUAC. There was nothing wrong with the petition; the language on it was not as well-crafted as a Meiklejohn would craft it. Even the petition I was carrying for Meiklejohn as I crossed the country was not a clear abolition petition. The argument in the Meiklejohn petition crossing the country was based somewhat on the concept that compulsory testimony by HUAC violated the First Amendment. If HUAC were to ask you without a subpoena, or voluntarily, to discuss communism, that would be legal. But when they used the compulsory processes of a subpoena, that is where the violation occurs. There was some of that language in that Meiklejohn petition at that time.

TRELEVEN: That HUAC's against the law because it's overextending its constitutional prerogatives?

WILKINSON: It wasn't quite--

TRELEVEN: Something like that?

WILKINSON: The difference between the '57 and the '64

[petitions] is a great deal. But this man in Chicago was very well-respected, had a petition. I saw it, I picked it up, met him, and I said, "I'll pass it along and show it to other people. We can all talk about it." I relayed it to Meiklejohn so we could all think about it. We were not putting it down. It was just interesting to know that somebody else on their own was-- There was a parallel movement in the country.

TRELEVEN: But in Chicago you found the nucleus of an organization that would be-- If you're going to go national with an abolition campaign, this was clearly a piece of the nucleus, at least, that you could build on?

WILKINSON: Not that petition and not in '57.

TRELEVEN: No?

WILKINSON: Not in '58.

TRELEVEN: Not yet.

WILKINSON: It was not until '59 that I met Criley.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: It might have been at a hearing, or something, in Chicago. He might have brought me in to speak somewhere. The formal naming of the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights came almost identically with the establishment of the National Committee to Abolish HUAC. Dick Criley was with us in

New York when we founded the committee.

By the way, you mentioned Russ Nixon. When you read the HUAC files, they looked down the names of people who were present at the Taft Hotel and they named five or six people, identified communists. One was Dick Criley. One was [Howard] Melisch, I think, the Episcopalian priest. One was Russ Nixon. One was me. One was Harvey O'Connor. I'm almost sure that Dick was there. But very, very early on, we began using Chicago as the hub and the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights as the base, increasingly trying to let that be a base for the organizing in seven midwestern states. Out of Chicago we would organize a Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota-- TRELEVEN: Wisconsin, I suppose.

WILKINSON: --Wisconsin, maybe Missouri. We had received letters about the whole works in Chicago falling apart after Dick and Rachel Rosen DeGolia left and because of the lack of money; it almost is non-existent at this point. It's a great, great worry to me. *[The Chicago Committee by 1995 had come back to life with staff, serving again as the Midwest Regional

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

Office of the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation.]

TRELEVEN: Okay. Midwest, East, South--?

WILKINSON: Let me go back to Criley again.

TRELEVEN: Oh, okay. Sorry.

WILKINSON: Whenever it was that Criley did come into the picture, he was a critical factor. He had all the skills of a very, very good organizer. He was modest. He'd been called himself before HUAC. He'd been labelled a communist. He was playing back. He brought in an evangelical minister, Bill [William] Baird, to be the executive director and then [Robert J.] Havighurst, a colleague of Meiklejohn at the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin, to be the chair. Dick was some sort of an assistant, or secretary, keeping himself down so that the bullets couldn't hit him too easily. But he was able to convince all these liberals in Chicago that Dick Criley was critical to any successful movement in that area.

I early on found out that he was one of the best brains in terms of organizing and, particularly, in terms of political strategy. I'd give him an awful lot of credit for starting the thing when we first started, and for holding it together when I was in prison because there were tactical divisions in New York.

Sylvia Crane was going one way, the Russ Nixons were going another way, and Otto Nathan's going another way. Dick was sort of the guy that was trying to stop the disunity, and held it together.

TRELEVEN: Well, it probably goes without saying that when you were a student at UCLA, you were not acquainted with Dick Criley while he was a YCLer [Young Communist League member] at [University of California] Berkeley.

WILKINSON: I sure wasn't. My-- His brother, Ted [Theodore L.] Criley, had been an architect for the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles]. His aunt had been the leader of the League of Women Voters, with whom I worked in the housing authority. She was the one that provided low-rent housing in a duplex on Rodney Drive for Jean and me and the kids to live in. When she died, her estate gave the house to Ted and Richard Criley, with the understanding that one tenant, Frank Wilkinson, was to have the privilege of remaining indefinitely in this house at the same rent of fifty dollars a month. That was in her will. So Dick and Ted could never sell the house because the best unit in the house had rent so low that it knocked out any profitability on the property.

TRELEVEN: I think we have enough time for me to ask

you about SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund]. Were there potential abolition campaign contacts in the South?

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: This is going back now, maybe, to '58, '59.

WILKINSON: Yeah. It goes back to fifty-- Wait. The Bradens in '52, '53, when I first met them, came out here to California to organize. I tried to help set up a Braden defense committee here after they had bought and sold a house to a military man and his wife--they were black--in Louisville [Kentucky], and were charged with overthrowing the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

TRELEVEN: That's right.

WILKINSON: My invitation to come down to Atlanta to work--where nominally it came from Jim [James A.] Dombrowski, Dr. Dombrowski, who was the head of SCEF-- it was also planned by Carl and Anne Braden, who were working with Dombrowski at that time. In fact, Carl or Anne wrote the petition to black churches in Georgia to keep HUAC out of the South, which I helped to circulate.

Aubrey Williams had been--and was at that time-- the president of SCEF and the critical leader of SCEF in the South. From Birmingham, Alabama, the great New Dealer, and well-known champion of all good causes. He

was the white integrationist in the South. He had been called before the [James O.] Eastland [Internal Security] Committee--along with the Virginia Durr in 1953, when Eastland feared that the [United States] Supreme Court was going to come down with Brown v Board of Education, with [Hugo L.] Black writing it. So he subpoenaed Virginia Durr and Aubrey Williams because Virginia Durr was the sister-in-law of Hugo Black, and by labelling Black's sister-in-law a communist, he could discredit Black in the Supreme Court.

So Aubrey had a very bad experience there. Paul Crouch, a professional informant for the FBI and HUAC, named Aubrey, claiming he was one of the most important communists; that he was the "transmission belt of the Communist Party in the South; that he was so important he didn't have to pay dues, attend meetings, carry a card, but we all knew he was the transmission belt of the Party in the South."

Aubrey was violently anti-communist. He played a terrible role in the New Deal in getting communists kicked out of the National Youth Administration. He had his own vendetta going there against communists. But then he got hurt so badly that when Roosevelt had to take him out of one thing and put him into the Rural Electrification [Administration] program, Roosevelt

couldn't get him confirmed in the Senate because of the red-baiting against him.

As a result of this tragic attack, Aubrey was forced to leave the New Deal leadership and set up a small printing business in Montgomery [Alabama], doing the Sears Roebuck [and Company] catalogs, surviving. He was a very, very close friend of the famous department store owner in Chicago. What was that name? The big department store in Chicago.

TRELEVEN: Marshall Field.

WILKINSON: Marshall Field. Aubrey was very close to the Marshall Field people, and they funded his printing business in Alabama.

TRELEVEN: Okay. One quick question and then we'll quit for the day. Because both were friends of Eleanor Roosevelt, because they both had Chicago connections, did Aubrey Williams and Gilbert [A.] Harrison know one another?

WILKINSON: Did Aubrey Williams and Gilbert Harrison what?

TRELEVEN: Did they know one another?

WILKINSON: They met. They knew of each other, sure. But Aubrey, as I remember, never liked Gilbert. I don't know why. [laughter] I'm always defending Gilbert. Gilbert could walk all over me and I'd still

defend him. It's a blind spot because of such a wonderful youthful relationship with Jean and Gil and me, that even to this day if Gil were to call up and say he's in town, let's get together, I'd say "Wonderful, let's do it!"

TRELEVEN: I think that brings us full circle for today.

WILKINSON: All right.

TAPE NUMBER: XXXV, SIDE ONE

JUNE 13, 1992

TRELEVEN: It's June 13 and I'm back with Frank Wilkinson. What we're doing here is almost two levels of interview where we're constantly going back; at the same time we're trying to stay a bit contemporary, and so maybe the first question would be today is what have you been up to during the last two weeks?

WILKINSON: I've just returned from Kearney, Nebraska. Kearney is a small town--28,000--about a 150 miles from Omaha and Lincoln. It's an agricultural area. It has a small university. From my standpoint, it has a very important youth prison. Something totally unexpected, it is a place--just a few acres--where all the cranes from Alaska, Antarctica, and Siberia land on their way to Mexico, both going and coming. There's fields of wheat which are stubble at a certain time of the year, but lots of nutrients are there, and the Platte River runs through there, which is a mile wide and a foot deep. These giant cranes by the thousands land there, and people come from all over the country to observe. And there was a reception given for me at the home of a family on a little pond. There they built a second story onto their house where they can look out the

windows and watch the cranes come and go.

All right. That's my three minutes. [laughter]

TRELEVEN: So you went to Kearney just to watch the cranes. [laughter]

WILKINSON: I was brought there by Tom Keith, director of the Nebraska Bar Association's program of law-related education and by the school of education at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. I was brought in to speak before thirty-five high-school and middle-school teachers who were competitively selected from rural Nebraska to come in and get a seminar--which I presume they get some academic credit for--in which they are discussing the Bill of Rights. I was brought in to be the keynoter on the First Amendment *[to use our knowledge of the FBI's [Federal Bureau of Investigation] attack upon NCARL [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation] and me as a basis of warning all that we can lose our freedoms if we don't defend them for all.] So I talked with them for four hours one morning. The response was very favorable, and as has happened in the past, I will now come back in October and each of those teachers will bring me

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

into their own rural school where I will speak to all the high- and middle-school students in their area.

It's fascinating. There was something similar in Oklahoma last year, arranged for by Michael Reggio, Director of Oklahoma's Law-Related Education Program, where I spoke before 6,200 high- and middle-school students from all over the state, similar background [as in Nebraska], but a different slant on all this thing. When invited I always say to people I don't like to come just to make a talk to a morning session, but let me stay a day and fill in the time for me so I reach more people, and that's precisely what they did. One of the most interesting developments they did was to have me speak to an enlarged meeting of the Kearney Kiwanis Club. Being farm territory, their meetings are held at 6:30 in the morning and they have different kinds of members. There are farm members, there are the business members, there's the older members, so they had apparently three different clubs combined and the little Ramada Inn where they hold their meetings was jammed. Here I'm speaking before people who probably heard about a Standard Oil [Company] safari last week--or something else equally dull--and I'm brought in to speak on the FBI versus the First Amendment.

I did not know when I arrived in Kearney that Kearney is the home town of Judge William [S.] Sessions, who is the current director of the FBI. [laughter] So the turn out was very large because they wanted to hear what a man was going to say critical of Sessions, who's the one guy in Kearney with a national reputation as the head of the FBI. The end result is that I was severely attacked on a radio program for having hurt the reputation of Judge Sessions. At my own insistence, when I come back in October the community is going to make every effort to get Judge Sessions to come home and debate me in sort of a town meeting for all of Kearney.

TRELEVEN: Terrific.

WILKINSON: It's very, very interesting. In terms of what I talked about, the thing that they're asking is, "Well, what does Sessions do?" Because they can accept a negative report on what J. Edgar Hoover did and they can accept maybe some things that happened under [Ronald W.] Reagan, but "What did Sessions ever do that was wrong? He's a good man." I told them the story of the Library Awareness Program, the Reagan-FBI era program where librarians were asked to spy on what books certain people were reading, and that absolutely stopped that meeting. If you've ever been to a Kiwanis

club, it will say begin at a certain hour. It's usually one-hour total.

TRELEVEN: You start with the Pledge of Allegiance.

WILKINSON: Pledge of Allegiance, of course, and all of that patriotic material. When the hour of adjournment comes, which is 7:30, people rise and leave. I mean, if you run five minutes over, you're going to lose 10 percent of your audience and it's going to be very discomfoting. I paid note of the fact that the time had come to adjourn and said, "Let me just finish what I'm saying here before your questions. Let me finish it. Those of you that have to go, just please go ahead and go." No one left. I talked until 8:15 and no one left, just talking to them about how bad the FBI was under Sessions. (The Library Awareness Program, what it is, is something we should discuss in another tape without the details now.)

A second thing that was unusual, considering I'm going in there to talk to teachers, is that there is a youth development center. Many people have heard of Boys Town USA in Omaha, established by a Catholic priest some years ago.

By the way, I didn't realize it, but there's a very large Catholic population, particularly in the eastern part of the state. There's a major Catholic

university in Omaha or Lincoln.

TRELEVEN: Creighton [University]?

WILKINSON: Creighton, correct. I have spoken at Creighton in the past. My old FBI files show that when I came into Nebraska the FBI's efforts to try to block me out were very intense and partially successful; that would be back in the 1960s when it happened.

But this time I'm invited to speak at a youth development center--that's a fancy name for a juvenile prison--and I'd accepted it. I thought it would be great, I'd be happy to talk to them. Then, two weeks ago before I went there, the director of the University of Nebraska Education Department called me and said that the warden at the prison decided he did not want me to come. He said, "He feels you'll talk about these young people's rights and not enough about their responsibilities, and they already know enough about their rights. Don't come in with any more." I said, "Well, that's ridiculous." He said, "Well, do you want to call him?" I said, "Sure." So I called Kearney and got hold of a man by the name of Tim O'Day, a giant-guy superintendent--warden, or whatever you call them--of this prison. I could gather from the way it went that he'd already made up his mind to have me come, but he

was not going to let me off easy. So I had to go through all these points and I certainly always discussed responsibilities, not just rights. And he said, "Okay, you can come." I said, "Well, I hope that I won't let you down." Then this strange comment came. He said, "Well, you'll be all right here as long as you remember that this is Kearney, Nebraska, not Kearney." (It was a point in reference to my accent, so all the time I was there I was rehearsing. It's so tempting to say "Keerney" when you say K-E-A-R, instead of "KARney.")

At any rate, when I got there-- The university had a faculty luncheon for me in their Founders Hall, a very nicely arranged, catered-in meal and I met a lot of faculty people and some community leaders. That was running a little bit long because so much of the material we're talking about they'd never heard of before, and they wanted more. They said, "Well, you're going to be late for the prison." Some remark was said then, "Well, they have plenty of time; they can wait a few minutes." But the end result was while the prison is just a few--everything is a few feet away--I drove there. 175 inmates had been assembled in the chapel. Interestingly enough, a chapel on state property built by the most famous and most beloved Catholic cardinal

in Nebraska, who somehow managed to get funds from a number of religious groups to build a chapel. So it's supposedly non-denominational.

So I walk in there, still not clear what I'm going to say, never having met Mr. O'Day who is worried about my responsibilities, and he meets me at the prison. I have to go through sign-up and all these little rituals that you have to go through when entering a prison, and then we walked into the chapel. I still was trying to think, how do I suddenly go into what gear to talk about? You're talking to young people who are in serious trouble with the law--175 of them, ranging in age from thirteen to seventeen. A statistic I found fascinating, if you were doing this in any prison in California, where the population would be 80 percent black and Hispanic, is that this prison was 80 percent white Anglo-Saxon farm Nebraska youth. The largest next percentage was Indian [Native American], and then a very small minority of blacks and Hispanics, and maybe two Asians in the whole group. Anyhow, I do what I've learned to do--which may not seem possible when people hear my tapes--I try to get the thing opened up within ten minutes and get questions going within ten minutes. I find when you're talking to students, if you can lay a subject out generally and then within ten

minutes say, "Let's take your questions," so I did it that way. I expected a lot of restless, nervous young people who'd been-- The chapel was jammed. There was not a spare seat. There were some sitting on the floor. They'd been waiting, and it was humid. All the things were negative for good attention.

These questions came in and I can honestly, sincerely say I've never had better questions--more probing questions--regarding constitutional rights, regarding racism, regarding any subject you want to talk about than I had there. One question after the other. There was just hands everywhere and real, real interest. There was no inattention, no disturbance, no fidgeting, no looking at clocks, or anything like that at all. When I got to the point where I knew I was supposed to end, the warden was standing back at the rear of the room--and I said, "I think this is about where you intended for us to stop, wasn't it?" He said, "No, no, go ahead, go ahead, go ahead. In fact, I want to ask you a question. We all know about the Rodney [G.] King riot in L.A. Will you tell us what needs to be done to prevent another riot like that in Los Angeles, or anywhere else?"

I began by saying, "Well, first of all, I never use the word 'riot.' It was an uprising." Then I

proceeded to give my quick analysis of what I thought it was. I dealt with joblessness, to begin with, and I emphasized that 45 percent, plus or minus, of the young people--the age of the people in that room there, or up to twenty-five--are unemployed in the areas that we're talking about in Los Angeles. I dealt with racism. I dealt with my own racism, my own background, the subtleties of, say, a Simi Valley or Beverly Hills, and the blatant racism that is felt by others. So joblessness, racism, and then a heavy, heavy attack upon the police misconduct, all of which I'm saying with guards standing around watching these prisoners. I just went in heavily on that thing.

In the questions more and more and more came out until finally I was tired, and I had no microphone. This chapel is wonderfully acoustical because it had a sort of a dome-type effect and your voice could be heard anywhere in it. Nevertheless, I'm tired; I'd spoken three other times that day and here I am doing it more, and I'm projecting. So I ended and then the applause began. [tape recorder off]

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on.

WILKINSON: All right. Well, the applause, which you always expect to be polite at anything like this, at this thing went on, and on, and on, and on. Here's the

warden right there applauding and all these guards are applauding. Well, that is in the afternoon.

The next morning, I'm invited to go on the talk show of Kearney. When I say the talk show, it's just amazing how a radio program is heard by everybody in this small town, and they listen to it and they discuss it. It's part of the community life. I'm interviewed there by an average, run-of-the-mill interviewer, not particularly bright, hadn't done particularly much study about who I was, but it was okay.

TRELEVEN: Unlike me.

WILKINSON: Oh, come on. You could cut the record on that one. [laughter]

At any rate, then the call-in started. Well, the first call was from a guy that said, "I don't think we should have this kind of material coming into Kearney. This man has been used. He's being used by the communists. Any church he ever belonged to has been infiltrated by the communists," and he tried to go on further defending the FBI. I first started gently with him and then jumped hard on him for saying I was being used. "Nobody uses me and I don't appreciate that," that kind of a quick rejoinder--angry sort of a tone--and it went on a little further and then that was done.

The next caller called in and said, "Well, this

has been very interesting, and I must say, amusing," click, and he hangs up. I said, "You know, I wish you didn't hang up like that. You could ask a question, and this is not very amusing. Let me give you an example," and I dealt with the effort to assassinate me back in '64. It's hardly amusing, but I got that in.

Then came in a string of calls with everybody saying, "I can't speak for all the people in Kearney, but those two people who called you do not represent what we are like here and what we think like here. We really appreciate your being here and what you're trying to do," and so on.

Then a call came in: "This is Tim O'Day. I am the warden at the youth center." (I wonder what's going to happen now.) [laughter] He said, "I want to add my voice to what has been said here," this booming big fat guy's voice. "Mr. Wilkinson was invited by me to address the youth correctional center yesterday afternoon, and I cannot say more than simply this: that every word that Mr. Wilkinson said was a role model for what my boys want to be," and hangs up. [laughter]

I get back to L.A. yesterday morning and the head of the state education department said he got a call at his home from this same man who had been abusive, said the man was very abusive to his wife on the phone and

then to him, and asked for my address. He wants to turn us all over to the FBI and get Mr.--

TRELEVEN: Wonderful.

WILKINSON: --Sessions involved in the thing.

TRELEVEN: Great!

WILKINSON: At any rate, this and a meeting with some of the social meetings that you have. You're in town for twenty-four hours and by the time you leave, you've talked with teachers, you've talked to faculty, you've talked with the business leaders, the farmers, the young people at the prison, and whatever the radio audience is, and then you're on your way. It's just such a wonderful opportunity that I'm having.

The things have I just mentioned up to now have become so important in my life today. Back to Oklahoma: the result of my being in Oklahoma so many times--the last time I was brought in there they were bringing me back many, many too many times; they'd like me to spend six or eight days a month in Oklahoma, there are so many schools to be covered--I jokingly said, "My job is not just to save Oklahoma!" Talking to the head of the Cleveland Bar Association in Norman, Oklahoma, who was calling me and asking me to come in to speak one more day before the press association of Oklahoma, the social studies teachers of Oklahoma--all

wonderful opportunities, except too much time in one state, I recalled that Norman is where Anita [F.] Hill teaches law and lightly said, "Well, all right, I'll come, but on one condition. I want to have dinner with Anita Hill." There was a sort of a pause on the phone, sort of an "uhhh!" I could just tell this guy's very conservative reaction. He said, "Well, uh, yes, uh, all right. Yes. Certainly. I'll arrange that." So when I got there, they had arranged a private dinner party with the head of the bar association and his associate, their wives, Anita Hill, and we had dinner that night. As a result of that, Anita Hill is coming here to UCLA, and we're going to have a private luncheon with her, arranged by Carole Goldberg-Ambrose at the law school.

That was at night for early dinner. Two hours later I'm speaking before the bar association. The same guy I'd been talking to is introducing me to the bar association. Now I'm talking to the press association of Oklahoma. Supper and then I made a talk. Just before he introduces me, he takes me aside and said, "I want to tell you about that Anita Hill. I've got the lowdown on her." I'm just looking at him. No comment. He said, "I know a black judge. He told me everything." He said, "You know that story she

tells about pubic hair on the Coke [Coca-Cola] can?
Well, I know first-hand there were six people in the
room at the time he said that." So that made it all
right. He finishes that, and two minutes later the
guy's introducing me to the bar association of Tulsa.

TRELEVEN: Wow, wow, wow.

WILKINSON: Crazy things.

TRELEVEN: Well, I was hoping this story was going to
end that you had positively identified the two nasty
phone callers to the radio station as FBI informants
and that NCARL's [National Committee Against Repressive
Legislation] road would be paved with gold under Judge
[A. Wallace] Tashima's court order.

WILKINSON: We still--

TRELEVEN: We're not that far yet.

WILKINSON: I must say, at the Kiwanis Club back at
Kearney many of them bought our book, The FBI v. The
First Amendment, by Richard Criley. Somebody asked me
the question, "If I buy this book am I going to get on
the FBI's list?" This was a businessman. Everybody
sort of stopped and listened to that, so I then told
the story about how NCARL, First Amendment Foundation,
whatever we are, meetings that I'm involved in--
according to the court order--if the FBI interferes in
any way, there's monetary damages going to be paid

without litigation and the FBI agent who violates will go to jail for violating a court order. Then I pulled my usual little stunt when that comes up. I always quote my lawyers. "My lawyers asked me, 'Where are you going next week? Oh, you're going to Kearney? Well, wherever you are in Kearney, you ought to look over those people. I don't care what kind of audience it is, it may be business leaders, but look them over very carefully because some FBI agent may be there and has not got the message. If you spot one, Frank, overcome your pacifism, make a flying tackle, and bring home the bacon!'" They all roar with laughter at that thing. So I said, "I'm looking you all over carefully; there's \$19 million involved here." I'm not quite sure what to say beyond that.

TRELEVEN: [laughter] Well, since we're in the area of contemporary affairs and you mentioned UCLA, I'll take you back to the thirties when I say this, that the School of Social Work had its commencement ceremonies last week and one of the honorees was Celeste Strack Kaplan. How about that?

WILKINSON: Really?

TRELEVEN: Really. I don't know how widely this was publicized.

WILKINSON: What is she doing now?

TRELEVEN: As far as I know, she's--

WILKINSON: Is she in social work? Is it the School of Social Work?

TRELEVEN: She was honored by the School of Social Work.

WILKINSON: The dean there is somebody that I know.

TRELEVEN: Leonard Schneiderman?

WILKINSON: Yeah, I know him.

TRELEVEN: Who's retiring at the end of June, end of this month.

WILKINSON: Yes, right, right. See, Chauncey [A.] Alexander, who is the president of our First Amendment Foundation, is adjunct professor of social work at [California State University] at Long Beach with another dean down there, and, of course, Leonard is known nationally from his directorship of the School of Social Work. In fact, I was with Leonard--

TRELEVEN: Schneiderman.

WILKINSON: --Schneiderman. I was with him and his wife at a reception. The social workers give an annual award to the media who have been the best on social work issues, down at the Bank of America building in the Bunker Hill area two weeks ago.

Let me just pick up on Celeste Strack. May I?

TRELEVEN: We all know that she's one of the five--

WILKINSON: But how I knew her.

TRELEVEN: --students who was suspended--

WILKINSON: Right. I did it.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, right, which we covered many, many, many years ago on a previous tape, so we don't have to get into that.

WILKINSON: All right, in our tape. So we got it all.

TRELEVEN: The last contemporary thing I want to ask you about involves ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California]. You're on the ACLU board and it has to do with the incident during the insurrection that got international coverage, Reginald [O.] Denny, the truck driver, being pummeled. Since then four or five individuals have been arrested and the bail has been set very high for each of those individuals. In all of this--the Denny case, we might call it--what's been the discussion and the resolution in ACLU about how they're going to involve themselves with Denny, with the defendants, if at all?

WILKINSON: I have not talked about this directly with Ramona Ripston or Paul [L.] Hoffman, the general legal counsel, but what I would automatically assume would be the case is that ACLU would step in to challenge the size of the bail, at least that. That was just outrageous. These police officers that beat up Rodney

King were allowed self-recognizance, no bail, and these people who are being arrested now are just being-- I think the bail was set at \$250,000, up to a half a million, something like that. It was out of line, and I think that clearly is an example of a violation of the Eighth Amendment and I would expect the ACLU to step in to guarantee it. I don't know whether they've obtained private counsel or whether they have been assigned counsel by the court. But there's a lot of things about this. I think Ira Reiner, the [Los Angeles] district attorney's attitude here--up for election himself and in deep, deep trouble--having been the district attorney that prosecuted the police officers against Rodney King where the verdict came out for acquittal, he's moved very, very rapidly here and with lots of publicity, lots of press conferences, to indicate how they're going to get in and punish these people who attacked Mr. Denny. I think there's a real danger here of the speed with which one thing is happening--and the high bail--as compared with the very gentle approach that was taken with the officers who beat up Rodney King.

It's unfortunate, but it's a measure, I think, of the racism that is really involved in all these things that the police officers from the beginning were

treated very, very gently. Chief [Daryl F.] Gates said a few negative things about them, but mostly was quite positive about them. The fact that the [Los Angeles] District Attorney allowed the case to be moved to, of all places, Simi Valley--which is known in the San Fernando Valley area as the ultimate terminal for white flight from the Valley for people who want to get away from school integration, who move out to Simi Valley where they're free of the court-ordered integration in Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley--where many, many retired police, and fire, and other government personnel live. To allow the thing to be moved there, where there's almost no black population and very little minority population of any kind, without a real fight on this thing, you could almost have predicted you're going to get an acquittal, except that the Rodney King video was so absolutely horrible that everybody from the president to Mayor [Thomas] Bradley to everyone else had a feeling that you're going to get a guilty verdict.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, right. Well, we'll follow the ACLU position in the subsequent taping sessions.

WILKINSON: I'll know more about it when we meet again if there's something new to pick up.

TRELEVEN: Sure. Okay, we need to pause a minute.

[tape recorder off]

Okay, back on. Last time we were beginning to talk about SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund], but in listening to the tapes, I have kind of a broad followup question to begin to round out ECLC [Emergency Civil Liberties Committee], which became NECLC [National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee], and it also ties into how you began to answer my previous question. You mentioned the name Ramona Ripston and I know that by, I guess, the mid-sixties, Ramona had become the co-director of NECLC. The director, whose name I don't remember--

WILKINSON: It was her husband.

TRELEVEN: Henry--

WILKINSON: Henry, Henry--

TRELEVEN: Diceurno or something like that? It's not quite right. [DiSuvero]

WILKINSON: You're close.

TRELEVEN: Henry had succeeded Clark Foreman as director. Ramona was co-director. Does this mean that ECLC began to take a more progressive--if you can call it that--stance after you left? I know there was a lot of turmoil yet, but what I'm trying to get at is did they become more of an instrument in the Abolition Campaign as time went on in the sixties?

WILKINSON: I know that Ramona and Henry didn't stay long.

TRELEVEN: Oh.

WILKINSON: I've talked to Ramona. She knows my own judgments there, I think. But she did not comment too much to me on what her judgment was while working there. She dealt, apparently, with Corliss Lamont. Clark Foreman not only had resigned, but I think he may have died, either then or shortly after that, in retirement on some island in the Caribbean.

The interesting thing about it to me is that Edith Tiger, who was still the sort of associate director and very much an acting director under Clark and was quite influential in my problems there, was not selected to be the director until after Ramona and Henry had left, and then she became the director. Knowing Ramona as I do, I don't know why she and Henry would have taken the job because I think she was doing a job in New York in other civil liberties-related work. I can imagine, first of all, that there was no worry about fund-raising, that Corliss was funding it and he probably offered Ramona and Henry economic security for what they were going to do. Unusual, a man and wife as co-directors. Unusual. Probably had a lot of advantages. But it was merely an intermediate stage in Ramona

Ripston's jobs and job future and strength of leadership, because she certainly was prepared to take over any job in civil liberties by the time she came to Los Angeles, shortly after Eason Monroe's death.

Ramona has gone on to become the outstanding civil liberties organizational leader in the country. I say that over and above the actual nominal national leader of ACLU, Ira Glasser.

TRELEVEN: Again, some of the knowledge I have of this comes from the NCARL papers in [the State Historical Society of Wisconsin] Madison, notes I've taken from them. What I've found interesting is by somewhere in the neighborhood of '68, '69, Ripston had developed a proposed policy statement on abortion, which is fairly early in terms of the modern womens-rights movement in that direction. That was '68, '69 or so.

WILKINSON: Roe v Wade didn't come down till '73.

TRELEVEN: Yep.

WILKINSON: So there was no sure legal hope there for the freedom of choice, was there?

TRELEVEN: Nope.

WILKINSON: That doesn't surprise me at all. Ramona is always on the cutting edge. She's always out in front on issues. She rarely lags behind on any issue. She's rarely caught without a program on something that's

come up. She's usually involved in the program and helps to generate the community support for a program before some incident like a court decision comes down. She's always been an outstanding feminist, although I always have disagreed with her that she was willing to take money from the Playboy Foundation. That's a private joke between us.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: She said, "I would take money from the devil." I said, "Well, possibly as a woman you can afford to do that, but as a man who's struggling to try to work on his feminism, I don't have the same rights that you do as a woman.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Also in that context of ECLC, before we move on and going back to your wife Jean's calendars, July 12, 1958, "Braden party at Elinor's." Now, I guess this would have been Elinor Ferry.

WILKINSON: Elinor Ferry.

TRELEVEN: Ferry Kirstein? That ended up being her-- Tell me more about her.

WILKINSON: When I came back to begin work at ECLC, all my communications had been directly with Corliss Lamont, or with Philip Sipster, who was the brewery-worker lawyer who I mentioned--

TRELEVEN: --last time.

WILKINSON: --I met in Colorado.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: On the other hand, when I was coming close to New York, I was told to contact Elinor Ferry Kirstein. I think we came into New York with the family and all, and went right to the offices on Seventh Avenue at Thirty-fifth Street, Thirty-fourth Street, went upstairs very briefly, and then were told we would go up to Elinor Ferry's house. Then she or someone there--the secretary to Corliss Lamont--would direct us up to Ossining where we were to stay.

TRELEVEN: That's right, which you talked about last time.

WILKINSON: Right. But about Elinor Ferry: Kirstein I didn't ever know. I believe he [George Garland Kirstein] was an editor or publisher of the Nation, one of those major liberal publications. He apparently was a man of some means, and by the time I knew her I don't think they were married. I think she still had his name. She was a very, very strong leader within ECLC and she had all the positive reactions to the problems that ECLC had. She knew the inherent weaknesses in Clark and the inherent weaknesses and the strange relationship between Corliss and Clark, the old Harvard tie. She was very hopeful of having ECLC do big things

on the abolition of the unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities], was very supportive of that.

I was new to all the board. I got a feeling that she was a little bit of a gadfly in pressing other people to do something, but on the other hand, the people who completely agreed with her were people like I. [Isador] F. Stone, Carey McWilliams--a few people like that--H. [Hugh] H. Wilson, a professor at Princeton [University], Jamie [James] Imbrie, some of the religious leaders that were connected with the ECLC, who were also really excited about the campaign to abolish HUAC. The foot-dragging was being done by Leonard [B.] Boudin, the general counsel, who was primarily concerned with seeing ECLC become primarily a legal-action rather than a political-action organization.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: I have good memories of Elinor. She, by the way, was given the assignment of trying to find housing for Jean and me. I think when they couldn't find housing, she suggested to Corliss that he let us stay at Ossining. When we left Ossining, she was the one that located the housing for us, rented it somehow, got it available for us. She lived right next to

teachers college near Columbia University, and the place that we found to live in was on Broadway and La Salle, Broadway at about 103rd Street--a few blocks away--where they found an apartment in this public but middle-income public housing facility and where we remained for the balance of our time in New York.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I think I'll turn this over before I ask the next question.

TAPE NUMBER XXXV, SIDE TWO

JUNE 13, 1992

TRELEVEN: We're back on. Jean's diary, July 13, 1958: "Cliff Carpenter, Riverside Drive." What more do you want to tell me about Cliff [Clifford] Carpenter.

WILKINSON: I can't quite now remember what I might have said.

TRELEVEN: Well, he was an old L.A., UCLA acquaintance, he'd obviously gone to New York, and he's someone you obviously stayed in contact with.

WILKINSON: Right. Now, Cliff Carpenter-- Our friendship began in our junior year at Beverly Hills High School. He was even then quite clearly a thespian, a qualified, moved person. He was very active in drama. I'm sure I must have mentioned this, that when Beverly Hills High School decided to do a play, If I Were King, something of that kind--I think it was If I Were King, a typical high school play--that the lead woman, Nancy Ruff, was a good three inches taller than Cliff. Even with short heels and high heels for Cliff, he still was short compared to her. So Grace [R.] Barnes, who was the director of theater arts of Beverly Hills High School, asked me to try out for the role because I had the right height and the

right voice. I remember being given some lines to read and standing up on the Beverly Hills High School stage to read my lines to see how I might go. When I came to the French words and couldn't pronounce them correctly, I was quickly removed from the stage. That was the end of my acting career.

Anyway, Cliff had gone to New York by that time, and had already been blacklisted. He was not in the theater. He was doing most of his work in radio, and he was blacklisted. He played many, many character roles. To this day, Cliff has a voice that can take on a half a dozen unusual character roles and make it very real either on the legitimate stage or on radio. He was blacklisted. It was a very difficult period for him and his wife and their family. I was comparatively newly blacklisted. We were so few out of Beverly High that had ended up that way, or out of UCLA: Lloyd [V.] Bridges, my fraternity brother, "Bud" Bridges; Remy [Remington] Olmstead, the football player; Cliff Carpenter; and me.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: That's about all there were who were blacklisted, I think. So there was a special new tie with us. I don't remember talking much politics. I think our conversations all related to being

blacklisted. But that's typical of the security that was maintained between people who may have been communists, but even if you saw an old friend you just wouldn't say, "Are you a communist?" That just was not appropriate.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: That was verboten. It was just so dangerous to even ask a question like that. So things were more subtle and I assumed that Cliff was probably a communist and he probably assumed that I was probably a communist. That's purely assumption; I don't know to this day.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: I've seen Cliff a great deal in the past few years.

TRELEVEN: Still living around Columbia, or--?

WILKINSON: He owns the house that Edward R. Murrow maintained up at about an hour's train ride, up the Hudson in upstate New York. It's a beautiful, beautiful area where it is, several hundred acres and this very interesting house because Edward R. Murrow owned it and lived there, it has sort of a special symbolism.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: I've stayed there with Cliff often when

I've been back there. When we had the fiftieth reunion of the Class of '36, we saw each other again. Also at that affair was Betty Jo Bilger, who had been elected queen of the homecoming, I believe in 1934. It was unprecedented because Betty Jo Bilger did not belong to a sorority and politics were so completely controlled by the fraternities and sororities. That she was elected as the homecoming queen-- I was head of the homecoming affairs generally, the bonfire and otherwise. Then we had the ball. My own relationship with Jean at that time-- We were in sort of a Platonic relationship; we agreed that we'd go to the ball together unless one of us got another date. I decided I wanted to take Betty Jo Bilger instead of Jean, so she had to get another date and I went with Betty Jo Bilger. Sort of fun to be there with the queen of the ball. [laughter] She was a beautiful person. Here we get together fifty years later and she's still a very beautiful person. Cliff's wife, who had died of prolonged cancer somewhere in the early-eighties, was a widower and Betty Jo's husband had died, and they fell in love after fifty years--

TRELEVEN: Oh, my god.

WILKINSON: --and got married. Very interesting.

TRELEVEN: So Cliff is married to the former queen?

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: I'll be darned.

WILKINSON: It was a wedding down at Balboa Island, that very famous Lido Isle, or whatever it's called; it's the most affluent part of Balboa today. Donna [Childers Wilkinson] and I were invited to that, as was Bud Bridges and Dorothy, his wife. So it was sort of, again, a reunion of certain people. I never thought of the fact of the political ties. It was just the people who were back there fifty years later: Lloyd, me, and Cliff, people like that. Anyway--

TRELEVEN: Okay, well, getting back to Cliff, one more question: unlike you, a conservative Republican till your trip to the Holy Land--which we've talked about--unlike you, was Cliff developing progressive politics earlier than that, while he was in Beverly Hills, while he was at UCLA, or--?

WILKINSON: I never discussed it. I think that all those people that we could mention--Lloyd Bridges, Cliff--

TRELEVEN: Olmstead.

WILKINSON: --a lot of those people were always much more liberal than I was. After all, I had been the candidate for student body president representing the fraternities and sororities-combined candidate in order

to defeat the non-organization students. That's where I came from. Jean [Benson] who I later married, while a sorority person, belonged to a less politically active, controlling sorority, Delta Zeta, so the non-organization students selected Jean as their candidate with Gil [Gilbert A.] Harrison running her campaign. Jean was elected and I was defeated.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: Cliff and Lloyd were all involved in that period of time. I was still just zero in terms of my politics. Some good instincts in terms of racism, like my association with Jimmy [James E.] Lu Valle, and some good social instincts in terms of an eclectic religious outreach as chair of the student board of the [University] Religious Conference, which put me in a position where I was meeting with religious youth other than Methodists.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let's go back to the evening before again, July 12 at Elinor's--the Braden party--because this is my way of kind of getting into SCEF. Of course, you're looking at July 12, '58, and this is not too long before you end up in Atlanta. What was your relationship with Anne and Carl [Braden] in July of '58, immediately before this series of events began to take place with the HUAC hearing in Atlanta?

WILKINSON: Well, by '58, Anne and Carl had been through their own trials in Louisville where they were charged with overthrowing the Commonwealth of Kentucky in connection with the buying and reselling of a house to a black G.I. family in Louisville. That trial had taken place probably in '53, '54, maybe. Carl served eight months in prison and we tried to raise a \$40,000 bail, which was an astronomical figure at that time for bail.

The [Unites States] Supreme Court decision in the Nelson case did not come down till '56. In the Nelson case, which was a similar case where state sedition statutes were used against Carl and Anne in Kentucky--and six other people in Kentucky; it was eight people all together tried there--Steve Nelson was in Pennsylvania where the state sedition laws there were applied. When the Supreme Court--[Justice John M.] Harlan wrote the decision--it's very important to know that a conservative justice like Harlan was so good on some of these early civil liberties decisions including the Smith Act cases. But it really held that the federal sedition laws superseded state sedition laws. So where you have both in conflict, the Smith Act, or any other federal sedition law, was preeminent. Therefore, Steve Nelson was freed, and Carl, Anne, and

the other defendants were all freed as a result of that. So that brings us up to '56.

At that point, Carl and Anne were trying to figure out what to do with their lives, because out of this whole trial their work as journalists with the Louisville Courier was out of the question. Even though the editor of the Louisville Courier was somewhat of a liberal, there were no jobs available for them there. Dr. James [A.] Dombrowski, who was very actively the director of the Southern Conference Educational Fund, and before that its predecessor, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare--I guess something like that; Southern Conference for Human Welfare; that was the one that was started by Eleanor Roosevelt back in the earlier thirties and the name changed to SCEF later on--Jim was working out of New Orleans and doing a good job, but wanted new staff to reach out. He was looking to get Carl and Anne to come on, and SCEF itself had problems with the same thing that ACLU had had problems with at that time: being too radical.

Aubrey [W.] Williams, who later founded the Committee to Abolish HUAC with [Alexander] Meiklejohn and others, would be willing to work with Anne Braden, because Anne got away with her radicalism much better

than Carl did. Carl, as Aubrey described him to me, was a "bull in a china shop." He couldn't work with him. He'd just say all the wrong things at the wrong times. Anne Braden with her circumlocutory skill in debate could win over the devil for civil rights, given long enough through simply exhausting the opponent by talk.

TRELEVEN: You indicate the last time we taped that Aubrey Williams was strongly anti-communist.

WILKINSON: Very much so.

TRELEVEN: Did that have any bearing on how he felt about Anne and Carl, respectively?

WILKINSON: I think by that time--certainly somewhere between the mid-fifties and 1958, when Aubrey wanted to form a new committee to abolish HUAC and chose me as the director--Aubrey had gone through some change. He still was strongly anti-communist, but he himself had been so badly hurt in the forties when [Franklin D.] Roosevelt had tried to get him a job with the Rural Electrification [Administration] and he could not get confirmed. Then after he was called before the [James O.] Eastland committee in New Orleans in 1953, Aubrey had learned a lot about his loss of his First Amendment rights.

So I think his concern about the Bradens would

probably not be that they were communists, but it was more on the basis that Carl Braden was ineffective because he was a "bull in a china shop," where Anne Braden was effective. I think that most people at that time assumed that Carl and Anne were not communists. I think they probably were thought of as not communists. The way they got involved in this whole thing, by buying and selling a house to a black G.I., strengthened the position that they weren't communists. They were just decent white people who tried to help a black guy--Andrew Wade and his wife--get housing in Louisville. That would have steered people away from "are you or are you not a communist?"

The informant, Anita O'Hearne, would name Carl and Anne in the Louisville case. I never heard much more about her. She's just somebody that cropped up in a HUAC hearing. Like they would say that Anita Bell Schneider has identified Frank Wilkinson, Anita O'Hearne has identified Carl Braden and Anne Braden as communists. That sort of thing.

Then in their trial--particularly in Carl's trial--on the bombing of the Wade house and all those other things, the prosecution in Louisville contacted the unAmerican activities committee, who produced, I heard, twelve informants--people who'd never met Carl and Anne

and merely testified against them and anyone who owns this book--because the Louisville prosecutors had subpoenaed the entire library of the Bradens and put the library on trial. So these informants said, "Anybody who owns this book must be a communist," and that word communist is about the language that was used down there.

So I think Aubrey was growing. Jim really was much, much more flexible. Jim Dombrowski is sort of a saint. People often say that about Anne. I really think Anne has got her rough edges, but also is a saint. But Jim Dombrowski was just an unbelievable personality, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary. Then he worked in Black Mountain, he did some work with another project with Carl Braden before ECLC was started, and then he was really the founder of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, which was then red-baited to death and became SCEF.

Jim Dombrowski could live with Carl Braden very easily and could use Carl and Anne. He knew they wanted a family project here. They weren't going different directions. But he could use Anne's skills one way and Carl's skill another way. Aubrey just didn't want to be around Carl. Somehow or other, that was softened. By that time that Carl and Anne were

both hired working for SCEF, and so by this supper party--

TRELEVEN: July 13--

WILKINSON: --in 1958, they were both then fund-raisers for SCEF.

TRELEVEN: Okay, and this is primarily for the integration campaign?

WILKINSON: It was the Southern integration project.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: They were up in New York raising money for the work in the South.

TRELEVEN: Yes. Right.

WILKINSON: Jim Dombrowski was always an unbelievably skillful fund-raiser for SCEF. He knew individual wealthy New Yorkers and a certain amount of time was spent there. Carl and Anne actually had an office in New York. Their experience in their trial made them effective as fund-raisers, and Jim was using them in that way, to help raise money. Then when the HUAC subpoenas were issued in the middle of August--

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let me interrupt. I don't know if you can remember this, but would you have, on July 13, discussed with the Bradens the inevitability of these subpoenas that were going to be issued in Atlanta? Did you know at that time that these subpoenas--?

WILKINSON: No idea. Absolutely no idea.

TRELEVEN: No, no. What I'm getting at here is trying to fill in the background as to why it turned out that you and Carl took different tacks when you appeared before the committee. You mentioned this in past taping sessions, that it was the same hearing that resulted in both of you going to prison together, but there were some subtleties because of the way he answered the questions as opposed to your refusal to answer the question on the First.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: But that kind of strategizing about what would happen when you appeared before a committee was--

WILKINSON: None.

TRELEVEN: That was not taking place in July?

WILKINSON: Carl and Anne had never been called before a committee. I had been before the California state committee in '52 [Senate Fact-Finding Committee on UnAmerican Activities] and I'd been before the Congressional HUAC in 1956 in L.A.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Carl and Anne Braden had been involved in trials for overthrowing Kentucky, and they were touched by this thing. The knowledge that the committee was coming into the South was unknown to us in July of '58.

TRELEVEN: You didn't know that?

WILKINSON: No idea.

TRELEVEN: No idea at that time?

WILKINSON: I'd never been in the South. I never expected to go to the South in July of '58. They were working in the South.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so anything that ECLC was doing, anything that CCPAF [Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms] was doing, did not touch the South at all at that time?

WILKINSON: Correct, except that CCPAF honored Carl and Anne Braden, held meetings for them, did everything we could to educate. One of the great skills that Carl and Anne Braden had was that, as political organizers, they recognized the need to publicize a case, to build up a public support--never relying on the courts--for them. They were very good at that. That's why they came clear to Los Angeles to get support. When I met them that way, then I certainly tried to build public support for them.

By the way, when they came to L.A., there were some people in Los Angeles in the CCPAF who were asking, "Well, who are these people? What are their politics?" Some of the people in CCPAF, who probably were communists, didn't know whether Carl and Anne

Braden were communists or not. I think this is an important recall. If they had been communists in the South, it sort of made the trial and the overthrow of Kentucky case easier for people in Los Angeles to accept and support. But the fact that we didn't know whether they were communists, or what they were, was a factor. I had to argue with our own people that these are people that have been hurt and we've got to defend them.

Just like when the servicemen were denied honorary discharges from the army up in San Francisco. Dr. Peck and--I can't think of the name--it was the man who was the mayor here in Santa Monica here recently, a lawyer. He's a judge here now in town, in Santa Monica.

TRELEVEN: [David] Finkel.

WILKINSON: Finkel. Finkel and Peck and those people, they were attacked. So we organized a Servicemens Defense Committee to try to get honorary discharges. So somebody from the South comes in and wants help, they get it.

Beyond that, I think there was a subtle subtlety which I often had to battle within CCPAF that maybe Carl and Anne were Trotskyists, and if they were, that painted a totally different picture. A lot of

communists simply would not defend Trotskyists. It's like during World War II where the first Smith Act defendants were not communists; they were Trotskyists in Minnesota, and the Communist Party was (CPUSA) very, very slow to come to their defense because they were Trotskyists. There was that political enmity.

TRELEVEN: In fact, a die-hard Trotskyist would say that the communists really applauded when the government used the Smith Act against the Trotskyists.

WILKINSON: Right, because the Communist Party in World War II was supporting a no-strike pledge, anything to win the war. As soon as the Soviet Union was invaded, these hands-off policies in regard to the war in Europe--the phony war, people would call it, '39 to '41-- The communists were not supporting the war, were not supporting England, or France, or Roosevelt, or anyone else. In fact, they saw this as another typical thing that we all opposed out of World War I, where the big imperialist powers were fighting over something.

[Adolf] Hitler had not become that enemy. So they went along with the no-strike pledge. No, they probably would have supported the right to strike at that point. Then in June something of '41, when the Soviet Union was invaded, the communists made this switch-over to support the war. Then when Pearl Harbor came, the

communists really went all out to support the war.

The Trotskyists never deviated. They held on. You've got to support the right of labor to strike even in a war against Hitler, the same way that black people had the "Double V" campaign, victory in Europe and Japan and victory for civil rights. It was a "Double V," which is what the black leadership used. The communists wouldn't buy that. The Trotskyists did. Some of those were divisions.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: The Trotskyist position was much more principled in many respects than the communist position was.

TRELEVEN: So there's some lingering suspicion that the Bradens may be Trotskyists. [laughter]

WILKINSON: I'm digging this out of memory.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: I think there was some concern: "Who are they? What do we know about them?" The Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms was a very unusual thing. It came out to defend the victims of HUAC, and they did a wonderful job. While there were liberals in it--like Bob [Robert W.] Kenny, like Phil [Philip P.] Kerby, like Bob [Robert S.] Morris [Jr.], like David Grutman; I'm thinking of a number of people--

there was also another group within the Citizens Committee which were private, secret communists, no open communists. The first open communist that ever came on the board of CCPAF was when we began taking the class of-- Whenever you were subpoenaed by HUAC, you'd be in the class of April '54, for example, that was the day you got your subpoena. At the end of that hearing after we'd done all the organizing to develop opposition, we then asked that group of subpoenaists to name one person from their group to be on the Citizens Committee board. Dorothy [Ray] Healey was named to our board, as a selection of one group of subpoenaed people back at that point. Some of these people that I knew or presumed to be communists-- Again, it's amazing. To this day, people that I worked with very closely there which I presumed to be communists, I don't know. I mean, it just wasn't discussed. Carl Braden and I, who spent all of this time together from '53 through our prison sentences and then after that, never once did Carl ever tell me he was a communist and never once did I ever tell him that I was a communist. It was just some sort of a-- It's partly high principles and then, on the pragmatic side, if you don't need to tell somebody you're a communist, don't tell them because god knows where that person will be a year from now.

They may be fine now, but a year from now you may be on a different side and they'll say you're a communist and you will end up as a Smith Act victim.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I want to get back to Carl and Anne, but since you mentioned CCPAF, while you were in New York because of this frequent correspondence you had with Dorothy [N.] Marshall in particular--again, letters preserved in your files back in Madison--I know that there were some elements in CCPAF that were so strong they simply wanted to abolish the organization. The names I pick up in that regard are Vic [Victor] Shapiro and George [M.] Cowell. I guess the question is, here's CCPAF, which is ostensibly going to be the juggernaut for Operation Abolition--it's strong, it seems, on the West coast--yet within the organization there's this counter-effort to disband, is what one of these letters said from Dorothy. Now, how can this be?

WILKINSON: I was in New York for a year in the aborted campaign to abolish HUAC so I was not on the scene. I don't think I came back to L.A. for a year; in July of 1958 I came back with Aubrey Williams once. But there were no HUAC hearings to my knowledge in Los Angeles during '57, '58. Whenever there was a HUAC hearing, that pulled us together. The Citizens Committee had been brought to life to defend the victims of the

unAmerican activities committee. When there's no more victims, is there a need to have the committee? On the other hand, I, for one, was gradually moving from just the victims of HUAC, trying to launch the campaign to abolish HUAC and to repeal Title I of the Subversive Activities Control Board Act of 1950, which was the Nixon-initiated Registration Act and the only law HUAC ever got passed, and Title II, the Detention Centers Act. Dorothy Marshall, Vic Shapiro, George Cowell, some of those people, didn't want to deal with the next issue. They wanted to abolish HUAC, but they did not want to work on repealing legislation. So we had that kind of a debate between us.

TRELEVEN: Another name I get here is Louis Waldeck.

WILKINSON: Louis Waldeck, yeah.

TRELEVEN: Waldeck?

WILKINSON: That's right. He was-- Beyond this also was the question of financing the committee.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: A very small budget was involved there.

There was criticism of Dorothy Marshall because after [Aaron Allen] Heist's death, she became the chair.

Dorothy and Dan were always having severe financial problems and so it was decided to pay Dorothy a small salary, like I had when I was there. Fifty, seventy-

five dollars, what was it a month? I don't remember; a very small amount. Then George Cowell, the treasurer, would privately communicate with me that he questioned some of the petty-cash records in the office. He actually at one point said he was convinced that Dorothy Marshall took five dollars, ten dollars, or something, out of petty case for herself, or money in petty cash just disappeared. Silly, silly stuff.

TRELEVEN: So kind of personality stuff--

WILKINSON: Personality, and also George Cowell was a very successful businessman, oil-well driller in New Mexico. To some, the need for the committee was going away. Point of it is that I'm no longer there. What are we going to do? Is there a need for it? Eason Monroe had come on the scene as director in '51 or '52.

TRELEVEN: ACLU, yeah.

WILKINSON: ACLU was getting better and better. Is there really a need for the CCPAF? I was arguing that there was a need for it. When we go from defense of victims to the abolition of the committee we had to have that base in Los Angeles. That's long before I'd figured out where I was going to land. When I decided to leave ECLC and return to L.A., I presumed I would go back to work with the CCPAF, so I would have been concerned with not losing my own base of work when I

got back.

TRELEVEN: Sure, sure. So the--

WILKINSON: It was a very difficult period and I don't think the public knew much about it. I think there was probably a feeling of fatigue from the intense work that the CCPAF did from 1952 through '58. That's really an intense period there; really an awful lot of time and meetings and hours were spent. Now I've gone up to New York and I'm starting an abolition campaign. Why do we need a CCPAF? There are no more hearings in L.A., I don't think there were. There actually were more hearings; there was hearings in L.A. up to 1962. *[Although HUAC was far from dead, with major hearings to come in 1959 against 110 California school teachers; the San Francisco hearings in 1960; Los Angeles hearings again in 1962; and the final public hearings in Chicago in 1965.] But in the fifties they had slackened.

One of the major hearings of HUAC came in '59. This is very important. It was when HUAC is calling constant hearings, but everybody's rallying. We're at the hiatus of an attack and people kept saying, "Why do

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

we need to exist?" Yet, in '59, 110 California school teachers were labeled as part of a cancerous growth of communism. Hearings were set; seventy teachers' names appeared in the papers by their school, by their classes. Then HUAC drops the whole thing because they won the [Lloyd] Barenblatt case and they didn't need to be putting down communist teachers threats.

Then you had the San Francisco hearings in '60 where the film Operation Abolition came about, and suddenly the whole thing came to life again. As long as there was a hearing in sight, the rationale for keeping going was there. But it was very small and held together by a handful of liberals at the top, together with one representative from each HUAC hearing from 1953 forward.

TRELEVEN: Well, let's fill in a little timeline here. According to materials in Madison, you did spend much of January of '58 in L.A. You returned to New York via San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, St. Louis, Chicago, and Detroit to carry on the abolition program.

You and Dorothy Marshall had done fund-raising, of course, when you were out here. She wrote you a letter on February 12, complaining that Foreman had shocked CCPAF by keeping all the dollars raised in connection with your and Dorothy Marshall's work, kept it and took

it back to New York.

WILKINSON: That's very interesting that I just at this point, you know-- Now it comes back, but before you had looked at that file I'd forgotten the trip. I think Dorothy and I traveled together. It was a tour together.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: We were using Dorothy's Catholic contacts. She was making contact with Catholic leadership around the country--

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: --which is a whole new outreach that we were enjoying.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: And I think we pushed Clark Foreman into the field, to take a field trip, probably in fifty--

TRELEVEN: It looks like '58.

WILKINSON: Very early- '58.

TRELEVEN: It was in California, right.

WILKINSON: He came to California and a few other places.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: That wasn't a very great success. But Dorothy and I did do that trip.

TRELEVEN: In this intense period CCPAF seemed to be in

in March of '58, there is indicated that there is a group that feels that CCPAF should disband. You mentioned personalities. Was it an ideological conflict, too, in the sense that on one hand you've got an Al [Abraham Lincoln] Wirin, who really wants to press this issue of the First, versus other individuals that we might call the Fifth Amendment crowd who--?

Did that have any bearing on the conflict within CCPAF?

WILKINSON: I don't think so. I had been the only one who had used the First after the Hollywood Ten, in the L.A. area (although I believe Don Wheldin took a "special First" stand), and that was in '56. I so carefully tried to keep the First from being a divisive ideological difference with the people using the Fifth that no one even knew I was going to use the First except Al Wirin and a couple of other lawyers. I don't think that that would have been a factor. No, I don't think so. I think that would be a mistake.

TRELEVEN: Okay. It kind of squares with the record because Dorothy wrote to you that Ben Margolis was very supportive of carrying on CCPAF despite the fact that there had been these other individuals. Then it seems that by April things were getting smoothed out and the board was getting reconstituted, etcetera.

WILKINSON: I guess I've got to go back to Wisconsin

and read my files again.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, plan for about a four-month visit; it would probably take you that long to get through those. But I think it's helpful because it helps us to get this timeline established.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: But let's drag ourselves back to July 13. What happens after that in terms of the developments leading up to your going to Atlanta?

WILKINSON: By that time Carl and Anne Braden--

TRELEVEN: Okay, let me butt in once more and say you just told me that you kept yourself out of the South. Why the heck did you end up, therefore, in the South?

WILKINSON: I don't think I kept myself out of the South. On the way across the country when Jean and I came to New York, it seems to me that we went through Louisville to meet Carl and Anne in their own home territory. I think we did. We were stopping over; I met Irving Dilliard in St. Louis--

TRELEVEN: Yeah, you did mention that. That's right.

WILKINSON: --and somebody else at Yellow Springs [Ohio] with the Humanists [Fellowship of Religious].

TRELEVEN: Right, right.

WILKINSON: Somebody else in Chicago, the Catholic leader on the petition.

TRELEVEN: But you hadn't done really that much in the Deep South.

WILKINSON: None in the South. The whole civil rights movement-- When was it that; what month was it the woman [Rosa Parks] sat on the bus in Birmingham and Montgomery? When was that? Fifty-four? The Freedom Riders, which was very active, did not come till '58. No, no, no; it came in '61. In fact, when I went into prison people thought I was one of the Freedom Riders, people who came down from New York, from up there.

TRELEVEN: That's right, Jean--

WILKINSON: But I think the establishment of SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, did not come until '60, or '61.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: I think John [R.] Lewis became president in '60. Julian Bond became involved in '60. Going back a bit--

TRELEVEN: Okay. I think we'll have to come back to it after I change the tape.

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JUNE 13, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on. I think the context that I'm trying to put together here is what I might call the convergence of interests of CCPAF [Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms], ECLC [National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee], the abolition movement, SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference]. What is the point of convergence of the objectives and goals of these various organizations leading up to the subpoena in Atlanta?

WILKINSON: All right. Did we agree that Rosa Parks did her thing [on the bus] in--?

TRELEVEN: Fifty-five.

WILKINSON: Fifty-five.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: I think it's helpful here just to line up some dates, generally. Rosa Parks's role in '55 was in Montgomery, not in Atlanta, not anywhere else. The Freedom Riders did not come down till '60. SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] was not formed until '60. The Greensboro [North Carolina] student sit-in in a Woolworth's store--

TRELEVEN: Was not that early.

WILKINSON: --came in February of '60.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: The Bradens [Carl and Anne] were already working with [James A.] Dombrowski in '58. I had met Dombrowski for the first time in early '58.

TRELEVEN: In New York?

WILKINSON: In New York. Some of the other personalities, like C.T. Vivian, Wyatt Tee Walker, John [R.] Lewis, Julian Bond: I knew none of those people in Atlanta, in '58 when the subpoenas came.

TRELEVEN: You didn't know any of those people?

WILKINSON: That's right.

TRELEVEN: You'd met Dombrowski, though?

WILKINSON: Dombrowski and the Bradens.

TRELEVEN: And the Bradens.

WILKINSON: The only ones that I had met. There had been no HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] hearings in the South. [James O.] Eastland had gone after Aubrey [W. Williams] and Virginia [F.] Durr in New Orleans. The attack upon the cooperative settlement in Monteagle Mountain, Tennessee--

TRELEVEN: Okay, at Highlander [Folk School].

WILKINSON: Highlander. The director of Highlander--

TRELEVEN: Whose name will come to us in a minute [Myles Horton].

WILKINSON: --was attacked in the 1940s at a Louisiana state "little HUAC" hearing in New Orleans where the head of the Grundy Coal Company of Monteagle, who was also a preacher at the Church of Jesus Christ of Monteagle, testified that Myles Horton--

TRELEVEN: Got it.

WILKINSON: --tried to recruit him into the Communist Party. They asked if he visited there. They asked him to sign a card. "What kind of a card was it?"

"It was a pink card."

"What did the card say on it?"

"It asked me to join the Communist Party."

"Well, what did it say?"

"I can't rightly say 'cause my glasses was busted, but we all knew it was a Communist Party recruitment card." All those things had happened earlier, in the early forties.

TRELEVEN: Okay, the Highlander--

WILKINSON: But I want to emphasize the words "silent fifties," and deal with it not only in the South but nationally. In all of the work against the unAmerican activities committee which I was involved in from '53 forward, there was no student movement of any kind to support the thing, anywhere in the country. There was not even any movement against HUAC coming out of the

South at all, or anywhere else in the country, generally. It's only when HUAC hit that you organized. So when it hit L.A., we organized. When it hit San Francisco, we organized. At the time when the 110 school teachers were labelled a "cancerous growth of communism" by HUAC in '59, there wasn't one student protest about that. It was entirely up to the teachers to organize. All these fight-back things were made up of the families and friends of the subpoenaed people. There was no general fight-back nationally. That's why my going back to New York at I. [Isidor] F. Stone's idea to start a movement was quite unheard of when it came in '57.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Have you any liaison at all with the Quakers, with the Ban the Bomb people--

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: --who were somewhat visible.

WILKINSON: But their work was--

TRELEVEN: --channeled?

WILKINSON: --primarily channeled, and they're primarily in Philadelphia and surrounding areas. The peace movement as we think of it, other than WILPF, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; see, groups like Women Strike for Peace did not start until '60. There was no general peace movement in this

country.

My own study of the thing, both from the standpoint of civil liberties and civil rights and the work in the South, was started, of course, by Rosa Parks in '55. But even when I visited Aubrey Williams in Montgomery in '58, I think [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] was still preaching in Montgomery along with-- what's his name?--[Ralph] Abernethy.

TRELEVEN: Ralph Abernethy.

WILKINSON: The SCLC, I don't think, was founded--or maybe was just about to be founded--in '58. But Rosa Parks was the genuine hero in this thing. The people who organized that bus boycott, they were the real starters. But that came in '54, '55. It wasn't until February of '60 that the students sat down in the Woolworth's store in Greensboro and were arrested for trying to buy a cup of coffee. The [United States] Supreme Court decision had come down on school integration in '54, but all the southern states had a massive stonewalling led by Governor [S. Ernest] Vandiver of Georgia. But there was no movement of any kind to implement the court's decision in the South up until '60. None in Georgia when I was there in '58. Vandiver ran for governor, and in the campaign there was a word for it. The senators and governors of the

southern states got together and had a word for their massive opposition to any implementation of the Supreme Court decision in the South.

So we go back again. I think that we'll look around a long ways before you'll find much between '54 and '60. Very, very little.

With that kind of a searching background, I am in New York. Say I'm at a party with Carl and Anne Braden in New York in July of '58, and a month later I'm subpoenaed before HUAC in Georgia. I knew Carl and Anne Braden only from their own experience and was interested in the fact that they were going to work for SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund] at that point. I didn't meet Aubrey Williams at that point. When the HUAC hearings came--the subpoenas were issued in Atlanta in mid-August of '58--I think it was Carl and Anne Braden more than Jim Dombrowski who started an immediate fight-back. I think that part of that is due to the fact that that's the way the Bradens operated. Their greatest skill was they fought back and organized a fight-back.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Subpoenas are issued. Incidentally, what's sort of becoming clear is that it seems that HUAC provides the basis for a congealing force that creates a cohesion amongst these disparate elements in

a way. In terms of Carl and Anne organizing the fight-back, I take it that your services were solicited.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: Okay, tell me about that.

WILKINSON: All right. When the HUAC hearings came, Carl and Anne called me from Louisville where they had their own SCEF office in addition to the one that Dombrowski maintained in New Orleans, and told us that there was a HUAC hearing in Georgia. Wanting to get all the information from me--they looked upon me as the guy who knew all about HUAC--they had had no contact with HUAC at all, except as informants were brought in by the Kentucky prosecutors against them, but they didn't see that as a HUAC invasion. I was talking to them about the need for step-by-step organizing of a community opposition to the HUAC hearings, starting with the ministers. Carl and Anne agreed that they would write a petition. I sent them copies of the [Alexander] Meiklejohn petition and the earlier one from Chicago--two earlier ones of Meikeljohn's--as something to work from. That was all abolition. Carl and Anne said, "The South is not ready to consider abolition of this committee. They don't know anything about the committee, but they would understand a petition that said, 'Keep HUAC out of the South.'"

That petition was drafted by them and back and forth with me.

The argument was simply that three or four years after Brown [v Board of Education]--with Georgia and other southern states completely stonewalling implementing the Brown decision with no dialogue of any kind between black and white on any issue--and for HUAC to come down and subpoena civil rights leaders close by Dr. King, including one who was very, very close to his leadership--the one that the Kennedys often tried to get him to remove--it was as though HUAC was coming down to put a red label, an "unAmerican" label, on the whole civil rights movement. Carl and Anne caught that quickly, and I caught that quickly because we'd seen so much the way HUAC came in to put a red label on an issue wherever in the country, but never in the South.

TRELEVEN: Do you think it was a deliberate effort on the part of HUAC at that time to get out the red brush to thwart what might have been developing as a major effort to get whites and blacks together in behalf of integration?

WILKINSON: I doubt that the record would be seen that way. I think more likely it was the fact that of the nine members of HUAC, all of them except Tad [Francis E.] Walter of Pennsylvania, somebody from Michigan,

[Clyde G.] Doyle of California, six of them were southerners: [Edwin E.] Willis, [Albert] Watson of South Carolina. I can't remember the other names, but all were southerners. Politically, they're cleaning up communism in California, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Gary, Indiana, Boston, and Philadelphia: what are we going to do about the reds down here in the South?

TRELEVEN: Okay, sort of symbolized by Myles Horton and the Highlander bunch, perhaps, and their little spins?

WILKINSON: No, I think--

TRELEVEN: No.

WILKINSON: Myles was not subpoenaed, nor was anyone in Highlander subpoenaed. Even Jim Dombrowski was not subpoenaed. Aubrey Williams wasn't. Majeska Simpkins, the SCEF leader, was not subpoenaed. Only Carl and Anne were subpoenaed, I mean of the people that we know of. The hearing was called to investigate "communist propaganda in the South." In fact, at one of the hearings was a post office guy in Atlanta coming in with sacks of mail that came in from communist countries around the world, trying to indicate the extent to which Russia or Russian satellites were sending mail in to influence our country. The Atlanta post office was a place where the FBI [Federal Bureau

of Investigation] was intercepting mail so the guy could come into a hearing with a sack full of mail, put it on the table, "Here are letters going to these people all over the South."

The other part of it was communist propaganda activities in the South and in the textile industry. So there were a couple of people from North Carolina in textiles--unionists--who were called in. But Jack O'Dell, who today is the chief advisor to Jackson--

TRELEVEN: Jesse Jackson?

WILKINSON: --Jesse Jackson, particularly on foreign policy and everything. Jack O'Dell was then in New Orleans. He was subpoenaed. [Don] West, the folk singer, preacher--

TRELEVEN: From West Virginia.

WILKINSON: West Virginia. He was subpoenaed and Carl and Anne were subpoenaed. It was a very, very strange type of so many people. But Jack O'Dell was already close to King, and getting him in there as the real tie-in to going after King.

TRELEVEN: Leading up to the HUAC hearing? That early?

WILKINSON: I think we'd find that the SCLC was starting [to make] some waves. The Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, with Dr. King's father, with Dr. King [Jr.] coming in doing some preaching, was already

becoming a trouble spot. SCLC was probably started--
And the other minister with King, that I mentioned
before, they both came from Montgomery--

TRELEVEN: Abernethy, yeah.

WILKINSON: --and were working over there. But my
feeling is that the politicians on the committee were
fighting communism. They were not serious about it.
They're getting headlines everywhere. Why aren't we
doing anything in the South? So they get somebody from
North Carolina, somebody who's close to King--from
either King--in Montgomery or in Atlanta. I don't
think there was enough of a movement to go in, we'll
say, to Montgomery and subpoena Rosa Parks or this
Pullman car porter leader of Alabama to do it; they
didn't have enough data to go on. They picked Atlanta
as sort of a point to do it, and they called in people
from New Orleans and elsewhere to bring to the
hearings. They thought they'd get better press there
and they made a real effort at press relations.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Carl and Anne were back and forth a few
times on the phone. They write this petition. It was
back and forth with me a couple times to look at it. I
accepted the idea that it would not be an abolition
petition, but I sort of accepted it like, "I'm a

westerner, I'm a northerner; I don't understand the South. So maybe at this point all the South is ready to do is to keep HUAC out of the South." Then Carl and Anne and Jim Dombrowski collectively called me, called ECLC, and asked for somebody to come down and help. I brought it to Clark Foreman's attention because somehow or other it came to me and I brought it to Clark. Because he was directly related to the family that founded the [Atlanta] Constitution, I thought that it would be silly to have me go down there from California, who had never been in the South, to try to organize something and Clark should go down there. He refused. It was one of those things I've referred to before. He said, "It wouldn't make any sense to go down there. They're all communists and Jews."

TRELEVEN: Really? That's what he said at that time?

WILKINSON: Communists and Jews. That was Clark's word to me. You couldn't do anything. He was a Hull; the Hull family apparently was an uncle of Clark Foreman, and they had been founders of the Constitution. He said, "I'm not going to go down there. They haven't got a chance." He was, in fact, saying the people they subpoenaed could never be defended. A couple of the textile-related guys were from Chicago. They weren't really indigenous southern guys. That would be another

thing that Clark would see. Communist--

TRELEVEN: Outside agitators.

WILKINSON: --agitators from Chicago. What he thought about West, who is really an indigenous guy, and Jack O'Dell--how he handled that if he knew about it or he may not even have known Jack O'Dell for that matter.

So because of my religious work and my contact with churches, and my plans in the ministry and all that, Jim was the one that formally invited me to come down.

TRELEVEN: Okay, does Foreman as a director of ECLC give you permission to go as a representative of ECLC after he himself refuses to go?

WILKINSON: He refused and I was saying, "We raised \$25,000 in December to go anywhere that HUAC goes. We've just done our work in Gary, Indiana. We've done something here in Boston," here and here and here. About all Clark needed to be reminded of was our work in Gary, Indiana, because that's where I went in and worked, quote, "with communists" without knowing who I was working with.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, yeah.

WILKINSON: Clark at that point said, "If you want to go down, go down yourself, but I'm not going to pay for it." I said, "I thought we ought to go down." He

said, "Well, go on down."

TRELEVEN: But no ECLC money?

WILKINSON: No ECLC money.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Jim Dombrowski put up the money. Jim Dombrowski rented the hotel room. Jim Dombrowski did everything.

TRELEVEN: But you signed the hotel ledger as being with ECLC.

WILKINSON: ECLC, because I was working for ECLC at the time.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: I didn't have any other base.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Why did Dombrowski want you there?

WILKINSON: Because I had a reputation as an organizer, particularly in getting people together against HUAC, and particularly my work in religion. I was good at that; that was why he brought me down.

TRELEVEN: Okay. And this is in the context of the petition getting--

WILKINSON: Also, Carl and Anne would have told Jim.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Jim knew a lot himself, but we had only met briefly at a hotel in New York, I remember, earlier in '58. So he didn't really know me, but he knew about me

through Carl and Anne. In fact, I was supposed to meet Aubrey Williams at the hotel in Georgia the following day.

For a long time we thought the telephone calls at ECLC had been wiretapped or the letters had been opened. There was a telegram. I'm trying to figure out how the HUAC knew I was there. But I think the only way that-- It might have done that way; we still don't have any documents showing exactly what led them to me. But certainly by that time the FBI was following me everywhere, and they could have been wire-tapping. I was put on the COINTELPRO list in 1955. Three years before this, I'd been one in the ADEX list to be arrested if there was any national emergency.

So when I knew I was going down and talked to Jean [Benson Wilkinson] and the children I'd be going down to Georgia, I packed the bag in a hurry. I was supposed to be there early the next afternoon. I called the airlines for a ticket and I called the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] associate national director in the New York office, Alan Reitman. Typical move: "Who are ACLU lawyers in the South? I'm going down there and I want to be able to get lawyers for these people down there." Alan Reitman, whether he realized what he was doing or not, undoubtedly called

[Irving] Ferman because Alan Reitman was always one to butter up whoever the director was--whoever the powers were--that he knew everything that was going on. He undoubtedly called up Ferman in Washington and said, "Just talked with Wilkinson. He's on his way to Georgia. He'll be at the Atlanta Biltmore Hotel early tomorrow afternoon. He called me up asking for lawyers." Ferman at that time calls the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] quickly. The FBI sends a courier down so the moment I arrive there at the Biltmore Hotel, there's a subpoena waiting for me. *[This is my personal judgment as to how the FBI was awaiting my arrival. I have no documentary proof, however.]

TRELEVEN: Okay, by the time you got there the subpoena was there?

WILKINSON: A marshal served it on me. I checked into the desk. (All these hindsights are a real reflection.) The desk seemed to know all about my reservation quickly--room number so-and-so--which almost is to me a lead that my room was wire tapped by the time I got into it. I went up to the room with

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

somebody carrying my bags like they do in a hotel in Georgia, I go in, and close the door. I hadn't even opened my suitcase when there's a knock on the door, and here's this fifteen-foot tall marshal with a subpoena for me. "Are you Wilkinson?"

"Yes."

"I have a subpoena for you." I then brought him into my room and asked him, "How did you know I was here?" He said to me, "I know nothing about it. They called me from Washington yesterday saying you're on your way down here, they're sending a courier down with a subpoena for you, and I'd find you at the Atlanta Biltmore Hotel early this afternoon."

TRELEVEN: He told you that?

WILKINSON: What?

TRELEVEN: He told you that?

WILKINSON: The marshal told me that, yes. Unusual that he came back into the room and talked at all.

TRELEVEN: Did you--?

WILKINSON: I brought him into the room.

TRELEVEN: Before you left New York did you think there was a chance that you'd get a subpoena?

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: No, absolutely no chance?

WILKINSON: No idea whatsoever; no idea whatsoever.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: I had made my stand in '56 and the committee had walked away from me.

TRELEVEN: Okay. What would you have done in Atlanta had you not gotten a subpoena? What was your role to be?

WILKINSON: To take this petition and go from one religious black--all black--religious leader after another--some community, some black lawyers, but mostly religious leaders--to get them to sign this petition. We did that. Actually, Dombrowski was more effective at that than I was because he knew who the black religious leaders were in Atlanta. When we went into the Ebenezer Baptist Church for church services, I met Dr. King, Sr. and I met the chief usher, a lawyer, at the church. We sat down there and Dr. King, Sr. recognized us in the audience, and asked us to stand up to be recognized in the middle of a church service. But Jim had these contacts. Jim did some other things that were funny.

TRELEVEN: Like what?

WILKINSON: I just thought of a funny thing. Jim Dombrowski was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity. I'm a member of SAE [Sigma Alpha Epsilon]. The Sigma Chi fraternity had their monthly luncheon in Atlanta at the

time we were there, and Jim Dombrowski took me there to introduce me as a brother of SAE here in Atlanta. We talked a little bit about the HUAC hearing. Jim was just that way; he had these unbelievable contacts everywhere. These guys knew nothing about HUAC--probably didn't know the acronym--but it didn't probably sound very good to them. Jim was just fearless and he would use his old college ties to open doors. Everywhere we went, I went together with him.

Soon after I did get there, my job was tied down very directly to trying to get an ACLU lawyer that would sit with me. It was very few days from the time I arrived until the hearing took place and we had to get an ACLU lawyer who would sit beside me. (I've told this to the tape before.) The New York office would set up one appointment after another. Twelve times I went to see these lawyers and they'd say, "I'd love to, but I can't take the case," so many times. Then, just before going on the stand, I have no lawyer and we knew that the case would be thrown out, we'd never get to the Supreme Court. They would lose if I'd appeared without a lawyer. So I was told to answer the question, "Do you want a lawyer?"

"No." Then all the lawyers were sitting in the jury box, watching it.

TRELEVEN: A question is you mentioned the lawyer in Ebenezer Baptist.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: Was it within the realm of possibility that there was an ACLU-type of black lawyer in Atlanta at that time?

WILKINSON: No, no.

TRELEVEN: No.

WILKINSON: None. All my appointments were with white lawyers. Carl and Anne brought in C. Eubank Tucker from Kentucky, a bishop of the AME [African Methodist Episcopal] church from Louisville, Kentucky, and a lawyer, and then another man whose name has slipped me-- he now lives in Berkeley--was brought in as a second lawyer for him.

That's again Carl and Anne Braden operating. I mean, Leonard [B.] Boudin is taking the case, you know.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: ECLC grabbed hold of any case they could get; that's what they wanted. They were disappointed in me, so they're representing Carl.

TRELEVEN: Say that again. They disappointed you?

WILKINSON: They were disappointed in me for not letting them handle my case.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Jim Dombrowski turned to ECLC for help on Carl's case when he got this Anne and Carl--

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Because ECLC was involved, to some degree, in the original Braden case in Louisville. I think they worked on bail, or something.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so--

WILKINSON: But Carl and Anne said, "We can't have a white lawyer coming down here from New York to defend us. You've got to have local black lawyers." So that's where they were brought in. That was the story I mentioned before.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: The black lawyers couldn't come into the Dinkler Plaza Hotel, where we were meeting, because no blacks were allowed inside the Dinkler Plaza Hotel. So we had to bring them up the freight elevator.

TRELEVEN: Okay. You did not want Boudin.

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: Did you have contact with Al [Abraham Lincoln] Wirin?

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: Okay, what went on there?

WILKINSON: As soon as I got my subpoena, I immediately called Eason Monroe in L.A. I said, "I have another

subpoena and I'm here in Atlanta. Will ACLU from there want to take it, or can you get somebody in the national office?" I already knew Rowland Waits slightly and I knew the other guy, Mel [Melvin L.] Wulf, slightly, who were their lawyers. We're not dealing here with this other man who is the associate director over lawyers. Eason told me he and Al Wirin would get through to New York and get the national ACLU to take the case as their national case rather than a Southern California case. That was done quickly.

My first reaction was to build ACLU, get them to come out. Here's a highly controversial case. They don't know who I am, whether I'm a communist or not. My reputation out of '56 in L.A. was positive--I used the First Amendment--but negative in the sense that I'd never answered the question.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: So we got-- You see, I knew Rowland Waits, and Nanette Dembitz agreed to become my lawyer from New York. That was done very quickly.

TRELEVEN: They were in agreement that you were going to take the First? That was okay with them?

WILKINSON: That was the whole basis of it.

TRELEVEN: They had no problem?

WILKINSON: The national office wanted somebody.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: Not only Wirin and Eason, but the national office wanted somebody who would be a test case for them and rely on the First Amendment rather than on the Fifth Amendment.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: So there was no problem. What the conversations were between Eason, or Al Wirin, and Mel Wulf, or Rowland Waits and Nanette Dembitz, I don't know.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: All I know is that I was told almost immediately that the national ACLU would take my case. Then Boudin begins his wires and phone calls to me, saying that ECLC should take the case because I'm working for ECLC and they are ready to do it, and they would take it all the way to the Supreme Court, and that's one of the problems you'll have with ACLU.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Now, Carl apparently got different legal advice than you did.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: As you're getting ready to appear before the committee--I don't think I want a legal explanation--what was the basic difference between your strategies?

WILKINSON: I know it exactly. In Los Angeles, where

we concocted the purest possible First Amendment position where there would be no extraneous materials or questions raised but just refusing to answer questions of any kind--time of day, my address, anything--on the grounds that the committee's mandate and practices violated the First Amendment. A paragraph: that was the pure position, and that was one the ACLU wanted to take with me and I wanted to take again in Georgia.

Carl Braden felt it was important from a standpoint of public relations for him, as a southerner, to answer certain questions that weren't directly political.

TRELEVEN: But that's a trap, isn't it?

WILKINSON: It what?

TRELEVEN: Well, it turns out to be a trap, doesn't it?

WILKINSON: Right, except he intended to use the First Amendment. For example, the question to Carl was, "Did you hold a meeting in the Red Cross offices in Atlanta in 1957? Who at the Red Cross invited you there?" It was questions of that kind, Carl and Anne decided--or Anne didn't, Anne was excused--where the lawyers said, "Yes, you can answer that, of course." "Yes, it was a Red Cross office. What's it to you? I work with everybody."

"Did you know so-and-so?"

"Yes, yes, yes."

Then you get around to the communist question: "I refuse to answer on the First Amendment." So Carl was thinking of public relations.

My position would never be understood by a southern audience because they don't know anything about HUAC: "There's a member of a committee of Congress coming in asking a man his name and address and the man won't even tell his address." Probably in their eyes that made me really a communist, or something unusual, where Carl was willing to answer all kinds of questions except the basic question. He, all the way through, said, "My opinions are my own. I won't answer the question. First Amendment." But there was lots of dialogue. His hearing shows lots of dialogue back and forth.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Where when they'd ask me my name and my address, I gave them my name but my prepared refusal-to-answer statement as to my address. "Do you know the Citizens Committee?" I refused on the basis of my prepared statement.

"Is this your hotel reservation at the Atlanta Biltmore Hotel?"

"I refuse to answer."

"Do you need a lawyer?"

"No." *[To do otherwise might well have caused the United States Supreme Court to throw out the test case.] But I refused to answer anything except getting that little prepared paragraph into the record.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Because they had decided to go after me a second time, [Richard] Arens--who was the counsel still in Los Angeles and in Atlanta--prepared, oh, a two-page question that deals with throwbacks to L.A., Anita Bell Schneider, and da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da. "Now, Mr. Wilkinson, while you're under oath and before god, will you answer the question? What is your address?"

"I refuse to answer."

TRELEVEN: Okay. Was there any back and forth dialogue about trying to modify either your position when you went before the committee, or Carl's position when he went before the committee?

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: This was really you, each in your own way, taking a principled stand?

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

WILKINSON: In fact, the lawyers met together in the same room and were discussing positions. There was no question about Carl's position except that he was not going to answer a political question. Now, my lawyers would say, "You're a fool to say you met at the Red Cross, because the next question is, 'Who's the director of the Red Cross?' You answer that one. The next question is, 'Are there are any communists in the Red Cross.' Then you say, 'I refuse to answer.' You've waived your right. You're here discussing. You know the Red Cross, you know the director is so-and-so; now you won't answer a question regarding communist activities in the Red Cross. You've waived your right. You're now cited for contempt." That's the danger of what Carl and Anne were doing because you wave your right if you say, "Yes, I am a communist," then, obviously, who else is [comes next]. If you say you're not a communist, they produce the Anita Bell Schneiders who say you are, and then it's perjury, and so on.

TRELEVEN: But when you get this--

WILKINSON: I think Carl and Anne were, from the beginning, thinking public relations-wise. They were not interested in buying my critique of ECLC, what was wrong with them, and getting, therefore, ACLU into it. They wanted Boudin because Boudin is the best

constitutional lawyer in the country. They wanted a southerner. In the court room I sat down next to Bishop Tucker and immediately the press ran up and took a picture because there's a black and a white guy sitting together in the court room. That was the way it was, the tension. But Carl brings in his New York liberal, his Louisville Baptist, this other guy from Virginia--all southern black leaders--defending him. He had three lawyers. He probably had a fourth lawyer from Virginia. I wouldn't be surprised if the guy that handled their case at the University of Kentucky was also involved in it.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let me turn this over.

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JUNE 13, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, so the convergence comes about the HUAC hearing. You both end up taking the First Amendment. The hearing proceeds, in each of your cases, a little differently. In all of this, what was Dombrowski's attitude about the strategy in answering or not answering before HUAC?

WILKINSON: He accepted the First Amendment argument. Not many of us were thinking about it; it was probably new to him, but he understood it. He didn't oppose it. He understood the danger. I can't remember talking to him, but it would have appealed to Jim to not use the Fifth Amendment because of the bad view that the Fifth Amendment had, the guilt inference by using the Fifth. Jim never said that, but using the First--the pure position--is closer to Jim's own religious philosophy.

I remember something else now. There were two guys from Chicago who were called in.

TRELEVEN: These are the textile workers?

WILKINSON: Yeah. And I think one other person. They were represented by a Washington, D.C. law firm. (I can't think of the name now.) They later became very active in the Washington, D.C. headquarters to abolish

HUAC. But I believe that these lawyers probably were communists. These guys working in the textile industry that were subpoenaed were probably communists. The Party was responsible for getting lawyers down there for them. When I was saying, "I cannot get a lawyer in Atlanta," I meant an ACLU lawyer because this was an ACLU case.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: If you just needed a lawyer to sit beside you, this lawyer that was down there from Washington, D.C. could have done that. But I think the assumption was--and a very important one--that he had never handled a First Amendment case, and he's not an ACLU person. They wanted their own members to be the lawyers on this thing. So a decision was made: "Do you want a lawyer?" Say no, even though we did want one. We couldn't get one. But there was one there free if I'd asked for it.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So you and Carl are in contempt of Congress?

WILKINSON: The law firm consisted of David Rein and I can't think of his law partner--both men are now dead--but they were very fine, progressive lawyers who handled lots of difficult cases out of Washington, D.C.

Go ahead.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So you are both in contempt of Congress as it turns out.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: You, Carl, the attorneys--I guess--feel that the odds are fairly good that if it goes all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court you're going to get a favorable ruling.

WILKINSON: Get a favorable what?

TRELEVEN: A favorable ruling if it goes that far.

WILKINSON: No. We assumed we would not.

TRELEVEN: You did?

WILKINSON: From the beginning.

TRELEVEN: Despite the way the court had been deciding on certain things?

WILKINSON: Right. No, no. The court in the Watkins [v United States] case in '57 had used--[Earl] Warren had used--some dicta, not the holding, dicta saying, "Who can define the meaning of unAmerican?" Language like that was in the dicta. So the ACLU lawyers, I.F. Stone, and others felt the court was willing to begin to address this question.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: We don't have a majority, but it's time to bring a case before the court and confront them with a case. You'll not win. You'll lose. You'll get [Hugo

L.] Black and [William O.] Douglas--no one ever talked much about [William J.] Brennan [Jr.] then--and you conceivably might get Earl Warren, so two or three at the most is what you'll get. You might only get Black. We didn't know, but enough so that we thought there was a chance of certiorari. That's number one, with a dicta certiorari open to us, with Warren, Brennan, Douglas, and Black. You have to have those four votes to even get a hearing in the Supreme Court. Otherwise, if you don't get a grant of certiorari, you can't be heard.

But from the beginning in Los Angeles, and in Georgia, it was assumed that I would lose and go to jail. That was always in everybody's mind. There was no thought about winning. There was no surprise when the court decision came down 5-4 against us. The only surprise was that we got four votes, and that Potter Stewart made this unprecedented statement to the court before he read the opinion, saying that the majority wanted it understood that in passing judgement on this case, we are not passing judgement on the merits of the unAmerican activities committee. That was a surprise. That was the one where Anthony Lewis told me that he'd never heard anything like that in the court before.

TRELEVEN: So--

WILKINSON: Of course, if we'd had the document, the exculpatory information of the FBI that we now have--

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: --and if Potter Stewart and the majority had seen that, I would never have gone to jail.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, right. So you understood that you might be punished?

WILKINSON: Sure of it.

TRELEVEN: Carl understood he might be punished if you took this--?

WILKINSON: Sure of it.

TRELEVEN: There was no question about it?

WILKINSON: Absolutely no thought of walking away from this thing. We knew we would go to jail. It was a very clear act of civil disobedience, you might say, on the part of both of us. We never thought for one minute we'd win; neither did the ACLU national office. That's why it was so hard to get anybody to take this stand, why we worked--Al Wirin--from '53 to '58 in L.A. before each HUAC hearing trying to find somebody that would use the First. You'll go to jail, but it's needed. Would you take a stand?

TRELEVEN: Did you have any idea that you might get a sentence and that it would be stayed?

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: No. You really--

WILKINSON: We really fully expected it, and particularly when the committee cited us there. They'd already done that in L.A. and not done anything. But when the committee cites you, the next step is that it has to go before the Congress.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: When it went before the Congress for a vote, Carl picked up Representative [Robert N.C.] Nix, a black representative from Philadelphia. I did not get one single vote in Congress; it was 435-0.

TRELEVEN: No Jimmy [James] Roosevelt?

WILKINSON: No Jimmy Roosevelt. He probably was out of the House by that time. No, he wasn't. He was there still. Oh, yeah, he was very much there. Oh, my god, yes; he was giving us trouble up till '65. No Jimmy Roosevelt, no nothing. I think Nix did it simply because Carl and Anne in their own work--Nix probably knew nothing about HUAC--but they knew that Carl and Anne Braden had sold a house to a black G.I. in Louisville and were charged with a crime. Then they fought back. So Nix recognized white people doing the right things on civil rights, and he voted for them. My name was known to nobody.

TRELEVEN: Okay, I think next time we'll wend our way

up to the Supreme Court decision; we've talked a bit about that already. Then we'll get you incarcerated.

But let me finish today with one last question. Why was it said that Carl Braden was like a bull in a china shop, firstly? Secondly, as you got to know him, did you agree with that assessment?

WILKINSON: Let's take the last question first.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Yes! Carl was a tough guy. He was uncompromising in his conversation. If you disagreed with him, he would say right to your face what you were, what he thought about you. He was that way with everybody. It was a very admirable quality because you knew here's this guy who looked a little bit like John Brown--you know, white haired and all--and was just an absolutist on civil rights in the South. Anne Braden was going round, and round, and round talking until Carl would say, "Shut up!"

TRELEVEN: Really?

WILKINSON: Well, yes.

TRELEVEN: I mean, in public?

WILKINSON: Small public.

TRELEVEN: Small public.

WILKINSON: Carl was tired of Anne's talking. He'd just come to the point. "Hell, no, my opinions are my

business!" He'd get up in a meeting at Milwaukee, maybe where we're both being badgered in a Catholic school--or some sort of a school--I'm sure in Milwaukee.

TRELEVEN: Maybe Marquette [University]?

WILKINSON: Somewhere like that.

TRELEVEN: It could have been Marquette.

WILKINSON: The FBI had filled the room with students to heckle us. It was a dirty floor and they would go like that with their feet--a hundred people doing that--and just a roar of feet on a sandy wooden floor. And all kinds of smart cries being made. Carl gets up and said, "I'm not going to take any insult from a god-damned bunch of hoodlums here. Now, you cops back there in the corner: You're here to maintain order? I say pull these hoodlums out of here!"

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: That's Carl. I, more like what you know of me, and also Willard [E.] Uphaus--who often spoke together with us--were embarrassed by Carl. We would say, "If you would be a little quieter, I'd like to answer your question. Here's the answer. Here's why I don't answer." We were very much that way. Carl was, bang, head on. Always that way.

I think Carl and Anne did more to help me

understand my own racism than anyone else; that's the main thing I got out of it because they'd call me on it. Carl would call me if he saw anything in me that had a tinge of subtle racism. He'd call me on it, right cold.

Carl, from the beginning, thought the FBI did everything. He had no question that [J. Edgar] Hoover did everything. He did everything. He was responsible for the whole thing. He always argued that. When we were in prison, we argued and I said, "How do you know the FBI would do a thing like this?" He said, "I know, god damn it!"

TRELEVEN: You thought what, that he was being irrational, paranoid, and all of that?

WILKINSON: Yes, yes. Oh, I said, "You're paranoid." It was in South Carolina. It was an argument in our cell area during a thunderstorm. There was a lightning bolt, thunder just clapping, and I turned to Carl and I said, "I presume J. Edgar Hoover did that." He said, "You're god damn right!" [laughter]

When the inmates were saying-- We're trying to prove we're not revenue agents-- I said, "No, I'm not a revenue agent. I'm here on a First Amendment challenge of the [House] unAmerican activities committee." Carl would holler out, "Frank, shut up!"

And he would turn to this guy, "Naw, man, we're not--"
What's the word for a snitch? Informant, kind of.

TRELEVEN: Snitches you mean, or something--?

WILKINSON: No, but it was that idea [stoolies].

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: We're not that. Carl's strong word was heard, and people accepted it. My business about HUAC and the First Amendment and going to jail voluntarily? Forget it, no one listened to me. No one understood me.

TRELEVEN: But this has to do with his cultural understanding of these people.

WILKINSON: Carl was just a very, very loud, heavy-handed, adamant, uncompromising, hit-you-whenever-you-are: you could be a friend or a foe, you'd say the wrong thing, the hell with you. Bang!

TRELEVEN: Okay, so part of the negative impact could be that he could be his own worst enemy and, therefore, turn people off?

WILKINSON: Absolutely. Carl was always his own worst enemy and turned people off. I was always my own best friend and tried to win people over, and Anne was ten times better at it than I was.

TRELEVEN: Okay, let's leave it there for today.

WILKINSON: That's a happy conclusion, isn't it?

TRELEVEN: Great.

WILKINSON: Here we're condemning the dead when they're not here to fight for their rights.

TRELEVEN: Great. Okay, thank you.

TAPE NUMBER: XXXVII, SIDE ONE

JUNE 20, 1992

TRELEVEN: It's June 20. Back with Frank. We ended up last time by getting you through the Atlanta hearing; from there cited for contempt. You were at that point, I guess, on the verge of the whole appeal process up to the higher courts.

Meantime, I guess you returned to L.A. The last entries in Jean's [Benson Wilkinson] daybooks: September 10, 1958, you arrived in Glendale; on September 14 there's a notation that you are--or she is--house-hunting. Now, is this Jean doing this or were you back here in L.A. in September?

WILKINSON: That's '58?

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: I would have been back to Los Angeles at that time because after Atlanta, after the appearance before the committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities], I went back to New York and had a difficult wind-up experience with the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee [ECLC] and Clark Foreman. Jean and I then drove with the children back across the country, stopping in Montgomery to visit with Aubrey [W.] Williams, and coming on to L.A. We had stored our

furniture, whatever we had when we went away, so we had to find a house at that point. We did that together. As I recall, we found a place on Crescent Heights Boulevard near Olympic [Boulevard]; we would have rented that in September/October of '58.

The reason it's a little more clear to me is that it was the place that we rented where a year and a half later we were to be evicted after a bomb was set off in front of the front door. The neighborhood petitioned the landlord to evict us. That's a later period; it was a very hard time because it came in December of '60, shortly before the [United State Supreme] Court decision came down. Jean was alone with the kids, being evicted, had no income, and people were afraid to rent to us. There was quite a bit of newspaper coverage of the bombing, so it wasn't just one neighborhood, it was a name you wouldn't want to rent to. I don't need to go further. I think I've told you, maybe prior to this, what finally happened to that, but this is '60. What I remember about that is that a group of eleven, I think it was, ten, eleven, nineteen people (I was never to know who they were) while I was in New York and Washington, preparing to go to jail--the court decision came down at the end of February--came to Jean and said they had raised enough

money for us to buy a home. Dorothy [N.] Marshall agreed to be the real estate agent free on the thing, and I heard that Jean had found a duplex, on Redondo Beach Boulevard, where she'd be upstairs where we could not be injured by violence. Rental from the place below helped to cover the mortgage payments. So, suddenly, we became home owners out of the bombing. I still don't know who those people were.

TRELEVEN: The people who got the money together?

WILKINSON: Right. It's a very wonderful thing. I don't know what the amount was. I imagine it was \$10,000, \$20,000, something like that. It was a duplex, so even though that's 1960 it would have been considerable.

TRELEVEN: Quite a bit of money then.

WILKINSON: Quite a bit of money.

TRELEVEN: Sure. Now, you said that there was no income. Does this mean that both-- Well, let's take Jean first: Was Jean picking up any work at all?

WILKINSON: Jean was, I believe, still tutoring after school where schoolteachers who had known her before her blacklisting in '53, '52 would tell her--or tell families--of the availability of Jean and where Jean would meet children at four o'clock on through the evening to tutor them. I think she charged something

like five dollars an hour. That was her source of income. I don't remember now any other source of income she had.

I had been paid in New York by the ECLC. Coming back to L.A., I think the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms [CCPAF] picked up [my salary] again. As I remember, my income there was eighty-five, ninety dollars a week. Very, very little income.

This all happened so suddenly. In '56, when I made the stand, there was the question of who was going to support the family. I'd had a conflict with Ben Margolis, who argued that I was compelling the community to take care of my family, which angered me. It was a very unfair accusation. But then, here we're in '58 and the earlier conflict is forgotten about. The committee did not go to the Congress with the contempt citation in '57, so it dropped. Now we're in a new situation. I don't know just when it came. It was a farewell party in '60; it could have been even after the court decision came down, '61. I had a certain length of time to wind up my own personal affairs. The committee [CCPAF] had this public meeting at Aces Hall on Vermont [Avenue], in which the goal was to say good-bye to me and to raise some funds to take

care of the office while I was gone. It's one of those magical moments with one of the shortest pitches ever made. My own full salary for the year was raised in advance, and enough money left over to keep the committee going. So it's just three, four, five hundred people who suddenly gave a great deal of money. By hindsight, I remember a couple of names.

There was a man by the name of Forbes Sherry, who was a strange radical businessman, a welder who had welding machines he rented out to the shipyards. He worked in a miserable welding lot down in San Pedro. You'd think there was no income at all from the place by what it looked like. He came up that night and he gave me personally \$3,500.

TRELEVEN: My god.

WILKINSON: I didn't take it personally. We put it all back into the pot, I think, to be part of the total collection.

Then another man who I subsequently lost contact with, a real strong supporter, was Gelson of Gelson's markets--Bernie [Bernard] Gelson. Then he was very much turned on to our work and my stand, and I think he began giving a \$100 a month for the committee, which was a lot of money at that time. But mostly it was ten, fifteen, twenty-dollar contributions from a lot of

people, and many people pledging the money, so much monthly for the year that I'd be gone.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let me get the chronology straight on the conversion--or whatever the proper term is--of CCPAF into the organization that had that very long acronym, which I'll call the immediate predecessor to NCARL [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation], which I think took place in 1960. But did CCPAF cease to exist at the point the committee that Aubrey Williams chaired was set up or--

WILKINSON: There was a change in name in both the San Francisco CCPAF and the Los Angeles--Southern California--CCPAF. The national organization was now the National Committee to Abolish HUAC [NCAHUAC], in Los Angeles it was called Southern Californians to Abolish HUAC, and in Northern California it was Northern Californians to Abolish HUAC. That came about at about the same time the national organization was founded in '60. It was the understanding at the founding of the National Committee to Abolish HUAC that the annual budget would only be \$500--something unbelievable--on the basis that my minimum salary would be paid by the Southern California people and the national would pay for field work, printing, and educational work.

TRELEVEN: Five hundred dollars worth.

WILKINSON: Aubrey Williams then owned a large printing press in Alabama, where he printed up Sears and Roebuck catalogs, as I recall. He began turning out literature for us, a dollar a thousand for the most complicated large pieces of literature. We had a Thirteenth [Congressional District] Ohio Committee to Abolish HUAC, or Third [Congressional District] Illinois Committee to Abolish HUAC, or the Milwaukee Committee to Abolish HUAC, we had them all over the country like that. Aubrey insisted on setting up fifty congressional district committees before we would be allowed to have an office in Washington. That was his political judgment: he was sick and tired of national offices in Washington with no grass-roots base. So he insisted I build the base before we do anything in Washington, which is just exactly what we did.

But Aubrey made it very, very simple, so a \$500 budget was not so difficult because we had pieces of literature. Like we had a list of 600 prominent citizens on record, on something, or Eleanor Roosevelt would take a stand on something and we'd turn it into a good-looking piece of literature and print the name of that organization at the bottom of each page. If it was Oregon First [Congressional District], Wisconsin

Fourth [Congressional District], whatever it was, a separate address on each one. He'd make up 10,000 copies, pay the freight to get it to you, and charge us a dollar, or some ridiculous figure. Aubrey was just using his printing presses to make a movement.

On my traveling, all the honoraria of my traveling continued to pour in. The traveling related to abolish HUAC, before I went to jail and after I went to jail, was a good source of money. I always came home with hundreds and hundreds of dollars more than a trip would cost. So we had a budget all right. We weren't ever worried at that time.

But I think it's important that as we got the budget, my salary did not increase. I think my take-home pay was ninety-two dollars, something like that. Then we set up staff people. We had a New England regional office. We had a Washington state regional office, San Francisco regional office, Southern regional office.

TRELEVEN: Then you're working closely with Chicago by this time?

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: The Chicago Committee [to Defend the Bill of Rights].

WILKINSON: Yes, Chicago was the one place that was

really secure. Each of these places was staffed by people who, I think, were earning somewhere between forty and sixty-five dollars a week. It was more like the farm workers idea of people that were getting their expenses out of it; they couldn't really live on what we paid them.

That's an interesting story because at some point here, as our progress grew in this thing, it was a question of a guy coming out of Madison, Wisconsin, who got his doctoral degree in biochemistry. He had been living in the Bay Area where he got his undergraduate work, he made Phi Beta Kappa at Berkeley, I think, in biochemistry, and then [received] his doctoral degree in Madison. But because he had been living in Berkeley, he had gone across the bridge to the San Francisco HUAC hearings in '60, and got caught up in that.

When the HUAC film [Operation Abolition] came out, he was the only one in Wisconsin who could explain it. There was a lot of opposition to the film. The Birchers [John Birch Society members] were using it everywhere in the country, including Wisconsin, but they finally got to the point where the film was shown in the state capitol building for the legislators. Arnold Lockshin was there to tell the truth about the

film.

Another guy by the name of Burton White, who now lives in Oregon, was shown in the film leading songs and who they referred to as a radical leading songs from the old communist song book, something.

[laughter] It was so ridiculous. It just characterized him as being so evil. He was a graduate student in Berkeley in medieval studies. Everybody that knew him knew that he had no radical ideas at all until HUAC radicalized him by washing him down those steps. But he went around the country speaking on this for NCAHUAC.

After that experience, Lockshin graduated. Here he had a brilliant career writing many scientific papers, Phi Beta Kappa, all those things, and many opportunities, and he came to me and said he wanted to work to abolish HUAC, where can he work? We set him up in Boston, and in Boston he was the one that got the [National] Council of Catholic Bishops to take a stand against HUAC.

Am I going into detail you'd rather not hear?

TRELEVEN: Nope. Go ahead.

WILKINSON: Edwin [E.] Willis of Louisiana, I think, was the chair of the committee at that time--a prominent Catholic in a rural parish of Louisiana--and

he came out with these really wild statements about how good the committee's work was doing. I think he probably was chairing the committee in Atlanta where I was up. I think he could have been, probably was.

Anyway, Lockshin wanted to answer it, so he went before Monsignor O'Higgins, who was the secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and asked him if he would answer Willis, because Willis had appeared in a large Catholic archdiocese in Chicago with a two- or three-million-circulation newspaper. O'Higgins told Lockshin, yes, he'd do it. He said, "You'll have to draft it for me." So Arnold Lockshin went to Vern Countryman--a law professor of bankruptcy law at Harvard [University]--and got him to ghost write an article in the name of the Catholic Church against Willis. That appeared in Catholic papers around the country. Then Willis wrote a new article to condemn O'Higgins for his views, and [for] misusing the role of the church to condemn a Catholic layperson; the church had no business in this.

So O'Higgins calls up Lockshin later and said, "Quick, I've got to have an answer to Willis's new charges," so Vern wrote an answer to an answer. All this thing was printed in this large newspaper--five or six pages--in this Catholic archdiocesan paper in

Chicago. We reprinted it and called it, "Dialogue Between Catholic Bishops and HUAC's Willis."

Arnold was doing all this work while he could have stepped into any professorship anywhere in the country. In fact, I think he did some teaching at Harvard while he was living in Boston. But he just was driven to do these good things.

Then at about that time he called me up and said, "I think peace is the most important issue, so I want to leave HUAC." That's after about three years of this fantastically good work. So he went to work for Peace-something, a peace organization in Boston. It wasn't a mainstream peace organization; it was a more radical peace group--more militant, more radical, and more openly associating with communists in the peace movement in the New England area. He did that for about a year.

The next thing I knew, he called me up and said, "I'm leaving the peace movement. I've become a communist and Gus Hall has assigned me to be labor organizer for Ohio, so I'm moving to Cleveland." [laughter] So I visit him there in Ohio. He's in charge of heavy-industry organizing for the Communist Party [CPUSA] in Chicago, and he goes on up the ladder in the Communist Party programs. I never knew any of

the detail on it except when Dorothy [Ray] Healey and Ben Dobbs in Los Angeles were thorns in the side of Gus Hall.

Suddenly, we got word that Gus Hall was sending Arnold Lockshin to Southern California to take over and supervise the Communist Party because of the difficulties with Dorothy Healey. Arnold came in and was really, in the worst bureaucratic sense of a hardline Stalinist-communist here in L.A., just pushing people around.

My relationship with him continued friendly, but I just was fascinated with what was happening to him. His office was on the third floor of the same building where our Committee to Abolish HUAC's offices were--on the fifth floor at that time. Suddenly, he saw me in the elevator and he said, "I don't understand this at all. What they've done to me is unbelievable. I'm leaving the Party. I've been put out of the Party," or something like that. I said, "What? What do you mean?" He implied that Gus Hall didn't like him anymore.

So I went by his house near L.A. High [School] once to see him. His wife was there and very bitterly said they didn't want to see any of their old friends again, and I lost track of him. Then a year later he

turns up doing some scientific work in Texas. Somebody was trying to locate him and I called up his family. His father was a baker. It's very interesting. His father was a baker in Oakland or Richmond. Anyway, out of that comes this not only brilliant scientist, but at the age of twelve he was a concert pianist in the San Francisco Symphony [Orchestra]. That good. When he was in Boston we had friends where we lived in Brookline; I often stayed with a family by the name of Alper in Brookline, Benedict and Ethel Alper. They always put me up. Benedict Alper was supporting us because he was fired by the United Nations when he was in charge of a criminal-justice program for the United Nations in the late-forties, right after the United Nations was established, and was fired by [Harry S] Truman on allegations that he was a communist. So he was out, so he had a lot of sympathies for what we're trying to do.

But they had a grand piano, and Arnold needed--at the end of these days of sitting down with O'Higgins, or whatever it was--he needed a grand piano. He'd just go over there, sit down at that grand piano, and just play the most fantastically wonderful classical music. Then he'd suddenly say, "God, I'm hungry. I need a hamburger." He'd eat a hamburger and he'd go to sleep.

He was just a strange man.

Anyway, we lost track of him. Then five years ago, out of the blue roughly-- In fact it was during--

TRELEVEN: Wilkinson v FBI.

WILKINSON: Wilkinson v FBI, and the FBI had demanded to know all of our employees. That's what it was; I had to list where all our employees were. For example, the one fellow that took over after Lockshin gave up in Boston was a man who had a doctor's degree in history, went to Harvard law school, and graduated at the top of that. Then he came to San Diego as a professor; he's the one who authored the legal work on the Japanese American restitution case: Peter [H.] Irons.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: He took over after Arnold. So I had to find out, where's Peter Irons now? Where's this guy now? The FBI demanded the latest address of every employee, so I located this address down there. By this time I was dealing with the lawyers. I told them the story. But they weren't particularly eager to ask the FBI to go visit this Arnold Lockshin for whatever state of mind he might be in. But we gave them all the accurate information we had, we gave it to them, properly, legally. We didn't fudge.

About a year after that, we got word that Arnold

Lockshin had taken his wife and two children, given up his American citizenship, had gone to Russia, and had become a Soviet citizen. As far as I know, he's still in the Soviet Union. What has gone on during all this glasnost, perestroika, the change, I have no idea.

But it's just how one thing leads to another. We were hiring these people. Arnold was paid like forty-five dollars a week, and struggling. All of us were struggling. People were feeding us, you know; Arnold had friends who always gave him a free meal.

But we had these people around the country, and it was the basis of the power of the Committee to Abolish HUAC: suddenly we could produce thousands of names. We could produce an Eleanor Roosevelt. We could produce the head of the Catholic bishops talking against HUAC. Whatever we needed, we were able to produce and no one could ever understand how we did this thing on no budget.

TRELEVEN: Interesting you mentioned Lockshin in biochemistry at Wisconsin, because when I think of biochemistry I think of Karl Paul Link, Lisa Link, and Lisa's first cousin, Clarence Kailin.

WILKINSON: He may have been the one that recruited Arnold into the Party, I don't know.

TRELEVEN: Clarence?

WILKINSON: Clarence.

TRELEVEN: That may well be.

WILKINSON: That's a very--

TRELEVEN: But Lisa, who I think you--

WILKINSON: When I met this guy, he's just apple pie, wonderful bright guy. "I'll get my Ph.D. in May and then I'm through with academics. I want to work for the movement. I want to abolish HUAC." That was his attitude. How he got a car, how he got to Boston, how he found a house, how he did anything, I don't know. [laughter] We had no bills from him, but he raised sustainers there to not only pay his own salary, but to send us money.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let's go back to the time CCPAF was going to cease to exist, was going to fold into the national committee. Were there pros and cons expressed about doing that? Were there individuals who did not think it was a good idea?

WILKINSON: I think that the main thing at that time was a position I took that Dorothy Marshall didn't like. While I was in prison, the Supreme Court's decision came down on Title I of the Internal Security Act of 1950. It came down as a unanimous decision upholding it, in June of '61, while I was in prison, and I read this opinion in prison. I had known a

little bit about the passage of the act in 1950. Later on, I wrote an article for the Akron Law Review on the whole history of that. But in prison reading this--how the court had upheld this HUAC bill and how [Felix] Frankfurter, at one point in the decision (I'll never forget it) said, "It is not for the court to look behind the careful legislative findings of committees of Congress." They decided [on the basis of] seventeen hearings of Congress, which was the basis of the Internal Security Act of 1950, Title I; Title II is the [Hubert H.] Humphrey part dealing with the establishment of concentration camps, and I've looked up those seventeen. I recognized enough of them to see what they were about. They were all HUAC hearings where the most wild things were done. For example, a HUAC hearing in 1938 where the committee declared that Shirley Temple gave active comfort to the Communist Party. You know, at the age of seven she was the most premature communist this country ever produced. Other leading actors were claimed to be giving aid and comfort to communism, and Frankfurter upheld that.

So now that the law was formally upheld, and it was such a real danger, I felt that in our campaign to abolish HUAC we had to use the court's upholding of this only law that HUAC ever passed and work to repeal

it. Not give up the abolition campaign, but to repeal it. Dorothy Marshall wanted us to stay single-purpose: "We were founded to do one thing, that's to abolish the unAmerican activities committee; we're not going to go on and do something else beyond that." There were differences there between Dorothy and me. They weren't bitter; they were just differences. I don't think that Dorothy had any strong support for her position. It wasn't a real faction. We wanted to hang onto Dorothy because she was a strong Catholic leader in L.A., and the head of our committee. It made it very effective to have a Catholic leader, just like we had people like Phil [Philip P.] Kerby, and Betty [Elizabeth Poe] Kerby, and Bob [Robert S.] Morris [Jr.], and others on our board. We were a mixture of liberals and the victims of HUAC hearings, most of whom had been--or were--communists.

So I think we finessed it to a certain extent. The whole thing was then obviated, or whatever the word would be, when the Communist Party nationally, which had been doing very, very little to abolish HUAC--in fact, Gus Hall's position and their counsel's position, I fought with them on some of the terrible positions they took legally--suddenly decided that everybody in the country should now work to repeal the Internal

Security Act of 1950. That was the issue, and committees were to be set up all over the United States.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: I don't know what they called them, but it was a new name.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: So here we had abolition of HUAC committees all over the country, and Party parallels were being set up around the country just to repeal the law. We were saying, "You're not going to repeal that law easily. The first thing to do is to abolish the committee. We can do that. We have traction on that. We've already got eight, ten, twenty members of Congress doing that. That you can do, but you talk about the repeal of the HUAC law, you focus on that."

I know Dick [Richard] Criley and I were one time invited to a meeting in Michigan with Carl Winter, who was the head of the Communist Party in the midwest, in which Carl Winter had brought in people--communists from ten states--to set up these new committees. Dick and I were there to argue, not as communists but as people, Dick from the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights, whatever it was called then, and me from the National Committee to Abolish HUAC, that this

was bad tactics and that they would fail. It would be divisive. It would get people confused by having two committees doing something similar. We lost the argument. It was a very bitter experience for Carl Winter, who tried to treat Dick and me as though he knew we were communists, and that we should take the direction from New York on this thing.

I never took directions from the Party on anything. That was sort of the uniqueness of my Communist Party membership. I always did what I thought was right and on the issues of racism, HUAC, and stuff like that, I had built a base and the Party rarely bothered me and probably appreciated the fact that I was doing something, until they decided, "Now we're going to do something special." At that point-- I remember now that the Party several times tried to get me to consider helping to form a new national civil liberties defense organization. Because I'd been so skillful in organizing on the HUAC things, they wanted both my advice and my leadership on setting up this new thing. I argued strenuously against it. To me it was almost identical with the problem we had with the ECLC, the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee: they're continuing to do something, not an emergency, at a time when the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] could do

it, but ECLC was continuing. Here comes the Communist Party: they suddenly get turned on by civil liberties. They never understood the First Amendment issue; never did they grasp what I was talking about, the absolute thing. In fact, they were willing to write laws to outlaw the Nazi Party, or the Ku Klux Klan. You know, they had terrible positions on the First Amendment.

Anyhow, that all happened. (I'm straying a little bit from your earlier question, but they relate one to another.)

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: In L.A., for example, at the very time that we're struggling with keeping our own Citizens Committee going and having some quarrel with Dorothy Marshall about how much we're going to spend on the repeal of what they called the [Patrick A.] McCarran Act--it was the Internal Security Act of 1950, Title I--in L.A., former Congressperson Hugh DeLacy was here. There was a woman named Dorothy Forrest, who had been a Smith Act defendant in Colorado, married to Jim Forrest, and Jim Forrest and Dorothy broke up and Hugh DeLacy married Dorothy Forrest. So they were man and wife, and assigned by New York to head up one of these new committees in L.A. They would come to me: "Who do you know? What do we do? How do we do this?" They

had an office about three blocks north of us on Western Avenue at the time they were doing this thing.

Again, we didn't fight them. We just said, "You're off base. The only way to get at this thing is the traction we have on the HUAC. HUAC is going around the country doing these horrible things. Work on that. That ultimately will do it." They wouldn't listen. Because it was such a clear-cut Party front-- I mean, I'm using the word "front" not in an evil sense that the HUAC would have used it, but this organization was set up nationally from New York. People were called in: "This is what we're going to do, go back and get a better and broader organization." But they were established by, and controlled by, and organized by, and run by communists around the country.

TRELEVEN: A very centralized operation.

WILKINSON: Right, and it finally did fail. The unique thing about this fight is that we continued our correct path (I'm sounding bureaucratic here)--

TRELEVEN: The principled path.

WILKINSON: The principled path. We were organizing out of experience.

TRELEVEN: At the grass-roots level.

WILKINSON: At the grass-roots level, right. These organizations that were set up around the country: I

don't think we ever went out and tried to get communists officially to join it, but communists did come to meetings, did attend, did participate, and we didn't rule them out. When we established our first letterhead for the Committee to Abolish HUAC, in 1961, '62--after I was out of prison--Aubrey argued, "You can't just have my name and [Alexander] Meiklejohn and Bob [Robert W.] Kenny; in some of these offices we've set up, you've got to have other people on the letterhead." Aubrey was thinking organizationally; he thought of names of thirty or forty prominent Americans.

So Sylvia Crane and Aubrey drafted a letter urging people to become a member of the board of the National Committee to Abolish HUAC. We told them in the letter that our goal was to abolish HUAC, but beyond that we would not--we had some language; I probably still have a letter--"There will be no loyalty oaths. There will be no litmus tests for people on this board. We're not going to screen out people who may be communists," to that effect. At that time, ACLU had loyalty oaths, the ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] had loyalty oaths, the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] had loyalty oaths. We weren't going to do that. In effect, we're saying,

"Join us to abolish HUAC; in doing so just be prepared to know that you may find communists with you on that board." We mailed out to 600 people, hoping to get returned thirty or forty because it was such a clear threat to them. To our amazement, 550 accepted. In the first two years of our life, we had to pay five cents a--

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JUNE 20, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, back on. Since your answer has sort of led us back into the [Communist] Party, there's certainly a contemporary issue that has to do with evidence that various ways were found for funds from Moscow to be funneled into various organizations. What was your sense of the presence of money that originated in Moscow--if I can call it that--to support CCPAF, later to support the anti-HUAC campaign?

WILKINSON: Well, I never heard of--and didn't believe in--any money coming from the Soviet Union into our country for the support of the Communist Party, or any of the causes the Communist Party was interested in. If I'd heard what I now know, I would have, I'm sure, resigned from the party loudly, as loudly as I could, because I always thought of and believed that the American Communist Party was an American organization funded by American people. I thought that the talk of the Moscow gold was a smear by HUAC, the right-wing, and however you want to refer to it, that it was just a smear and there was absolutely nothing to it. Even at that time, I'm sure some of the people who alleged Moscow gold were working without fact. To my knowledge

it was not until recent revelations where we've learned that Gus Hall, for example, was receiving millions of dollars--or large sums of money--from Russia, and asking for it, getting it, signing receipts for it, and all these kind of things. Even two years ago, I was called on to defend the director of the National Council on American-Soviet Friendship, this Presbyterian minister who was charged with having taken cash from somebody and making two deposits to avoid some legal requirement. If you deposit more than \$10,000 in a bank account at a time, you have to report.

TRELEVEN: This is the fellow in New England?

WILKINSON: Yeah. Well, he was from New York, I think.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: I went out to defend him. I at no time-- this was two years ago--believed that the money he got was coming from anything except indigenous American sources. If I'd heard about it, I would have condemned it. I think it's not just a-- I don't know whether it's a principle issue or not. There's nothing in principle wrong with Russia giving money to whatever it wants to support around the world. But it was more of a pragmatic reaction I would have to it: that the best way to destroy the American Communist Party, or to keep

people from joining the Communist Party, or forcing them out of it, was to show somehow that the American Communist Party was an arm of the Soviet Union, and was getting money from there. On top of that, my two trips to the Soviet Union--one in '37, the other one in '72-- [showed that] the country over there is so poor. What you see is so poor that to think of an American communist, so generally middle-class people--not wealthy people but middle-class and enough wealth around supporting it--that it would be immoral to take money from Russia for something done here. It's the job of American communists to raise their own money, to be an indigenous American organization.

I feel that's the one real surprise that's come out of perestroika, glasnost, the information; that's the one thing I was totally unprepared for. Dorothy Healey has talked with Donna [Childers Wilkinson] about this from time to time, and I think that Dorothy had some suspicions herself about this, but certainly there were none that she shared with me that I can recall.

The one thing I do remember now. When you're in Russia, you can pick up the English-language Daily World or Daily Worker in Moscow or Leningrad. I understood that so many bundles of the paper were sent over there for that purpose. I remember saying, "Well,

they probably paid for that." But I was thinking about it: how would they get it over there? My attitude would almost be, "Well, we ought to have donated it to them rather than charging them for it."

Now, beyond that and related to this, is this. I somehow relished a role that many felt was totally unrealistic. But to me, it was trying to live the life of the theory of openness that I believed in. I don't know how many times I would call up the Communist Party here in Los Angeles and tell them that I wanted to sit down and give them a report on the progress on the abolition of the unAmerican activities committee. I'd go to their board meetings and I would speak and talk. In New York, on several occasions I consciously used the telephone--not secretly--to call up the Communist Party New York headquarters. Call information, get the Communist Party headquarters, and say, "This is Frank Wilkinson, Committee to Abolish HUAC. I'd like to talk to so-and-so." I'd make a date, go down there, and say, "I think it's important that you people know what we're doing in the abolition of HUAC. When can I appear before your board?" On several occasions, I walked in there to that address on Twenty-first Street, had an appointment, appeared before the board, made my pitches for the abolition of HUAC before them, just

like I would be talking to the NAACP, or the ACLU, or any other group. I wanted to treat communists like people. I didn't want to have sort of a red-baiting in my own mind. I wanted to be open about this thing. When the Communist Party used to hold conventions here in L.A.--the L.A. County convention--many of those conventions I asked to attend because I wanted to hear what was going on. I didn't want to be in the closet, a shadow somewhere, and to protect our movement so that would be if I attended, it was like I was an open member of the Communist Party--which I never was--and I would say, "I'd like to attend." Or they'd come and invite me; Ben Dobbs or other people would invite me. I said, "Yes, I'd like to come, but please give me a letter asking me to come as a public person." I wouldn't go unless I had a whole file of them, that probably the FBI has now, they're probably back [at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison] in Wisconsin, which were letters to the Communist Party. You'll find an invitation, invitation, invitation from the communists and a reply by me saying, "Yes, I'll be very happy to attend. I'll be there," and would be there as an observer.

That's not related to your money question, but it's just again my attitude. I think it is immoral and

politically stupid for the American Communist Party to have taken ten cents from Russia.

By the way, at the same time I'm saying that, I did not object when some American communist got sick-- or Paul Robeson had a child, or something--I didn't object to Americans going over there to get medical treatment. That didn't bother me because I knew the communists worked for even less money than I worked for, and if you're sick you need good medical treatment. Henry Winston lost his eyesight by lack of medical treatment while he was in the federal prison at the same time I was in the federal prison. So I saw no trouble with that at all. That is like a fraternal country providing something that they did have. They had good medical care and American communists not only couldn't afford it here but there's a danger that you wouldn't get it here. It would be treated in an irresponsible way by medical doctors who would not treat the patient the same way if they thought that patient was a communist.

TRELEVEN: Well, you may have told me this before, but in case you haven't, let me ask you this again. After the [Nikita S.] Khrushchev revelations, why did you still continue to stay with the Party? Many left at that time, in the aftermath.

WILKINSON: It's the same general area of questions. I'm sure I must be the only member of the American Communist Party who never sought--or ever read--the Khrushchev revelations. When they came out, it was disappointing, but didn't surprise me because I always thought there was a denial of freedom in Russia. We weren't trying to build a Russian system here; we're trying to build an American socialist, communist party. Lots of communists that I knew--some of the old-timers particularly--had almost this streets-paved-with-gold concept of the Soviet Union. You know, it was the ideal land.

My god, when I was there in '37, I was so appalled by the poverty that I saw and the backwardness of everything, including the military. I was there in '37. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in '41, I was one of the first to say that the Russians can't stand six weeks of this because I'd lived in Germany and I saw the power of the German army, and I lived in Russia and I saw the unbelievable poverty and inefficiency, and sloppiness: buildings where the bricks were falling apart, window glasses that had waves in them, cornices with the mortar breaking out. Just all kinds of inexperience and incompetence in the Soviet Union.

I think it's interesting that I didn't join the Party, I think, until late '42. It's important because I took a loyalty oath when I was working with Monsignor [Thomas J.] O'Dwyer. I also was working at the WPA [Work Projects Administration], which had sort of a research project where I was drawing some salary--just a little bit of salary--and they required a loyalty oath. I swore; took a loyalty oath that I am not a member of the Communist Party. I think that my own--

I mean, I liked what the Soviet Union was trying to do. I believed in socialism as I saw it, and I thought I did not see anti-Semitism over there. I saw good treatment of women, I thought, and I saw an effort to really stop religion from dividing people so horribly, the idea of a people being brought up without one side of the street wearing a long black coat and a beard with a yarmulke or a prayer box on your arm, and the other side of the street dressed differently. I thought those physical differences in religions led to the horrible pogroms I witnessed in Romania and Poland.

So I liked what I saw. But I just thought it was a very, very backward operation. They had so much to overcome. I kept saying to myself, "Just remember what this was like." I was there in '37, it started in '17. Twenty years ago 85 percent of the people here couldn't

read or write. It was very backward, all religious, and all these things. Look at the progress they've made, that they're trying to make. But when Hitler moved in, I said, "Forget it; it's gone. Nothing could stand up to the power of the Wehrmacht."

I am suggesting a little opportunism on my part, possibly. I didn't hold back in joining the Party for this very reason, that it couldn't stand up against Germany at all; that was not my reason for doing it. I wanted to be an individualist. I wanted independent thought, and to the people who were trying to get me to join the Party, I just said, "I believe in it all. I think it's great, but I want to be completely independent as an individualist mind. I just don't need the Communist Party to make me do what I'm going to try to do." Then, gradually, the influence on me of a couple of people--I'm sure we mentioned [them] before--had such a profound influence on my thinking that I did decide to join. But even then I didn't want to join until Jean had thought about it. If we're going to join the Party-- I didn't want to be in the Party and have my wife not in the Party. So I wouldn't have joined even then if Jean had not decided to join. So on her own, Jean made up her mind to join, so we joined together.

I don't know what I'm saying here, except that the timing is such that by '42 the--

TRELEVEN: United front?

WILKINSON: Well, no, that came later. By '42, the Soviet Union when the German army got right up to Moscow held back, held back, and at Leningrad: I just was thrilled with what this all meant. To me it deepened my respect for communism because with the terrible poverty there and the inefficiency, and the tremendously well-organized efficiency of the Germans, that they were standing up to it was a new argument in favor of the Soviet Union, because with all their weaknesses, the people were willing to fight for the right things. I observed that Stalin would talk about Mother Russia and some implications, almost, of a religious suggestion, for a get-together--all of us together; it wasn't really religious, it was nationalism--the communists certainly used every bit of cohesion to bring the people together to fight Hitler. That a little bit troubled me, maybe a little bit. I didn't want that. I'd rather like to think that they were together there because they'd seen enough of socialism, they were fighting anti-Semitism, they were against fascism, they'd sent people to Spain to fight Franco, and they had correctly criticized the phony war

from '39 to '41. I thought that was a phony war. That's when I became a conscientious objector when I registered for the draft.

(I hope I don't wander too far if these questions lead me to think out loud. I think it relates quite clearly, though; I think the responses are relevant.)

TRELEVEN: The revelations didn't bother you that much?

WILKINSON: Oh, I remember; that's right.

TRELEVEN: The revelations that Stalin--

WILKINSON: Let me just pull it right back in.

TRELEVEN: --was as much a tyrannical person as Adolf Hitler.

WILKINSON: No, I wouldn't have said that, no.

TRELEVEN: You wouldn't say that?

WILKINSON: No. I would have said that about Poland; to me Poland was like czarist Russia. The backwardness of the peasantry, the religion, and all these things, and the horrible poverty there. Now, Bessarabia, when you enter Romania, is another example of that area that was so backward. When you go from the Soviet Union into Poland, or into Bessarabia, the standard of living went down so fast between these two countries; the Soviet Union by comparison was making progress, doing things. I mean, I'd go to Leningrad, Moscow, Kharkov: just unbelievable out there in the plains of the

Ukraine, there's a whole plaza of twenty-story buildings, very modern-looking buildings. You get close and you find the brickwork isn't very good, or the glass wasn't very good, the cement's cracking. But that idea. It was just impressive. Then I came to the Dnepropestroi Dam, and saw this huge dam built under these really inexperienced, primitive labor conditions. I was very impressed with that.

At the same time, I could see that to make this progress you must have had to do--they thought--some pretty horrible things. In Moscow--I know I've told you this before--one of the real things that stays in my mind, my hotel was at one point and I would often walk from my hotel across a bridge and into the Red Square, we'll say, and on several occasions I saw Soviet soldiers leading scores--maybe hundreds--of prisoners tied together by rope, bedraggled, long hair, dirty, terrible looking things, walking them to wherever they were going. I saw this repression. I saw a gulag, you know, in a sense. I saw what the prisons must have been like, and it didn't bother me. It bothered me in the sense that I didn't like to see that, but it was a reminder of what they had to do to modernize, what they're trying to do with the backwardness where 85 percent of the people can't read or write, they're

religious, everything is backward--

I assumed that to build these collective farms, which I went through in great detail--you know, I visited collective farms, flew over collective farms, saw them--I tried to imagine what it would be like in America if they told every small farmer, "You've got to give up your land and we're going to be one big operation," the fight that would be resulting of that. I was impressed with collective farming, as far as your eye could see no farm houses, just these giant new combines which they had created and just working. It was so much more efficient to do that than every mile to have another farmhouse with his own machinery doing the same thing, the same thing. It was so inefficient in the United States as compared with there.

So I assumed that the revolution in Russia must have been very bloody, lots of people must have been killed, and a lot of czarist people held on there. Then the counter-revolution, and then the American white armies coming in from England and Germany and the United States, attacking, that they repressed in order to save the beginnings of socialism. I understood it. I didn't accept it or like it; I understood it. I often said, "In our country to build socialism, you don't have to do these things. You don't have to

repress. You don't have to give up your Bill of Rights. You don't have to give up the First Amendment because we're an educated people. We won't do this the same way."

I always assumed that American communism--American socialism--would be totally different than in Russia. I always thought that ours would be a much more humane. I didn't see any need in our country to kill people off in a revolution like they did over there. When I heard that Stalin had killed so many peasants, starved them, whatever he did, I thought the figures were probably exaggerated, but I thought there were probably an awful lot of people killed.

So getting back to the Khrushchev revelations, I was curious to read it. First of all, it wasn't readily available. I remember trying to find out where I could get it. I think a lot of it appeared in the New York Times; I think the Khrushchev things were reprinted in the New York Times, but I wasn't able to get hold of the New York Times. Even if I had got hold of it, I would have read it out of curiosity, but not out of shock. I was thinking so purely as an American--and not as a Russian--in my belief in communism.

TRELEVEN: But you must have known people who were so shocked that they left the Party?

WILKINSON: Oh, yes. I did, and I understand them leaving, but I said they were stupid. They thought that the streets were paved with gold over there. I saw it. It wasn't paved with gold. It was a very rudimentary, very crude, very repressive regime, I'm sure. I said that.

(I just thought of something else when you asked that question about reading about it.)

At any rate, I didn't avoid reading it; it just wasn't a big deal to me. The people who were making a big deal [of it] and dropping out of the Party to me was like the whole attitude that people had toward my work in civil liberties. You know, the high-handed attitude, the lack of democratic attitudes, trying to push. Anytime the Party tried to push me, I pushed back. I argued back, and I was left alone. Dorothy Healey would probably be the best one to write her judgment of what kind of a communist I was. She'd probably say, "Frank was never a communist. He never really left the Methodist Church," or something like that. Some mean crack like that. [laughter]

But I just felt that there were too many American communists who never really were American communists, but were always ideological Russian communists, and, therefore, their dreams are destroyed. My dreams could

never be destroyed because I never thought of myself as a Russian communist. It was that Russia was over there and this was over here. That would be my attitude toward it.

I think that the reason I finally did leave the Communist Party in '72, '73, whenever it was--twenty years ago now--is when the Communist Party tried to tell me that it was correct to outlaw the American Nazi Party, or the Ku Klux Klan, they were trying to violate the First Amendment. It was a debate that I had with Ben Margolis at what did they call it?--the New American Movement [NAM]--that I wrote a paper on where it's wrong to do this thing. You do not abolish the First Amendment. You allow ideas to grow in this country. When the Party began attacking me for taking these stands, and I'd read in the journal, Political Affairs, or something like that, a Gus Hall, or a Henry Winston, or somebody would have in there a statement saying that the Party could ill-afford to have in it people--using the word liberal as a bad, bad word--whose liberalism would allow creatures like the American Nazi Party, or the Ku Klux Klan, open advocates of genocide against the black people, against Jews, and defend that in the name of the Constitution, this kind of liberalism the Party's got to weed out.

Well, I left at that point because I could see that where I'd been given freedom to be the kind of a Methodist-communist that some people may have thought of me all their life, it reached the point where my beliefs of the First Amendment, my absolutism, and the influence of Meiklejohn on my life--for one--was so profound that I was ready to leave the Party. And I did leave.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I know. We may have covered this way back, five or six years ago--it's hard to remember--but did you leave before or after Dorothy? Do you recall the progression there? Well, Dorothy left, Ben left.

WILKINSON: I think they were ready to go out in '68. I think it was the--

TRELEVEN: Dorothy's public announcement over KPFK--

WILKINSON: I know, but I remember that. I think I was still in then. But her thing was over Czechoslovakia, and a book that had been written by this communist leader in the Bay Area who's no longer living, Al Richmond. He went over to Czechoslovakia, lived there and studied it, and came back and wrote a book [A Long View from the Left, published in 1972] critical of the invasion of Czechoslovakia and supporting the Prague Spring. Dorothy and Ben continued to support this guy's writing, and they resigned but then the Party

wouldn't allow them to resign. Even though Dorothy resigned, the Party formally held a meeting and expelled her. It was one of those crazy things. I resigned and two months later they'll be expelling you.

TRELEVEN: Okay, but did you leave after Dorothy?

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: After.

WILKINSON: Mine came on a specific thing--

TRELEVEN: But chronologically it occurred after Dorothy?

WILKINSON: It did not have to do with Czechoslovakia.

TRELEVEN: All right. I understand that.

WILKINSON: Again, it had to do with the First Amendment.

TRELEVEN: But wouldn't it also have had to do with Dorothy? Old friend?

WILKINSON: No, no, no. No, no.

TRELEVEN: No?

WILKINSON: No, not at all.

TRELEVEN: But in the sense that Dorothy had supported-- you've explained this before--your work, in effect as an independent communist, against the powers in New York and so on and so forth, and you were very close to Dorothy. I know your wife, Donna, has been close to Dorothy, too.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: But didn't that have some sort of influence on you when she left?

WILKINSON: Oh, yeah. I was really impressed with the fact that Ben and Dorothy were leaving. Ben I had not really known that well, but Dorothy leaving to me was a major, major loss. I think that Donna was trying to urge me to leave the Party. "Why are you staying in the Party? You don't believe in this stuff. Why are you still here?" I don't know the timing. It could have been a six-month period between the time Dorothy left and I left. I think I left in '73 and I think Dorothy left in '72, or something like that [July 9, 1973].

TRELEVEN: That sounds about right. I have to pause for a minute. [tape recorder off]

And in terms of Donna, how long did she stay in the Party after Dorothy left?

WILKINSON: Well, I think that she left almost simultaneously with that. Donna's experience in the Party is for her to tell. We got married in '66, and she had read herself into a socialist-Left position as an independent individual in Columbus, Ohio. This minister kept giving her books to read and she read The Power Elite; then somebody else said, "Well, here's a

critique of Power Elite by [Herbert] Aptheker." So she read that and said she liked Power Elite, which was by C. Wright Mills. Here's a critique of it; she came back saying, "I think Aptheker's right. Mills is wrong." The minister said, "Well, Donna, Aptheker's a communist." And Donna said, "Oh, I'm a communist. I think I'm a communist." That's long before I ever came on the scene.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Donna was that, herself. When she met me when I came through Columbus as a guy out of prison, touring the country establishing these [anti-] HUAC committees, I think that Donna assumed I was a communist. She liked that; she wanted to meet a real live communist. I remember when we were first interested in and excited by each other, we were riding somewhere to Cincinnati and she said, "Tell me, are you a communist?" I said, "Donna, people don't ask those questions." [laughter] She said, "I know, I know, but are you a communist?" I answered her. I said, "Yes." She said, "Oh, goodie!" That was her attitude, "Oh, goodie," you know? But from that day to this day, Donna never, never learned to control her mouth when it comes to asking people what their politics are. You know, I'm brought up in the Cold War fears where you

just didn't talk about another person or about yourself. You were very, very protective. We had a national security in our guts that was so deep from protection, and Donna has none of that. She just said, "Well, I just want to know. Are you a communist? Okay, don't answer. That's okay." That's the way Donna would handle it.

Then when we were getting married (I think this is an interesting story), I was in New York and Donna was in Ohio. Donna came into New York to see me, Dorothy Healey was staying in New York, and I wanted Dorothy to meet Donna. This is before Jean knew, or anything else, that we were about ready to break up. I wanted Dorothy to meet Donna because I liked Dorothy so much and I wanted to have her like Donna. And, also, Donna wanted to meet communists. I mean, she took her husband [John] to some forum up in Brooklyn just to hear Aptheker, sitting there in the forum bringing her successful lawyer-husband sitting there, going up to Aptheker, "Can we eat together afterwards? I want to get acquainted with you. I'm Donna Childers. I'm from Columbus, Ohio. This is my husband, Jack. Can we talk?" Poor Aptheker had probably never met [laughter] such a wide-eyed, open, idealistic person as Donna.

Anyway, I introduced them and Donna liked Dorothy,

and Dorothy liked Donna. I think Jean never quite forgave Dorothy because she was close with Dorothy, too, and that Dorothy kept that private, that I had introduced her to somebody that I was falling in love-- was in love--with.

When she came out here, one night we went to a meeting somewhere and came back. We're riding in a car, Donna, Dorothy Healey, and myself. We're pulling into the garage and Donna said, "What do you have to do to join the Communist Party? How do you get into the Party?" Dorothy said, "Well, give me a dollar and give me your name." She said, "Oh, good!" She opened her purse, handed Dorothy a dollar, and said, "I'm a communist." Dorothy said, "You're a communist." Donna was just ecstatic. She finally had become a communist. That was in '66. By six years later she's out.

Of course, this is where Arnold Lockshin gets in the picture again. When he was out here to hold down Dorothy Healey, there was a meeting of the Communist Party held somewhere, and everybody was to attend, it was like a compulsory meeting.

TRELEVEN: This is a meeting that Lockshin has called?

WILKINSON: Well, which the Party had called and Lockshin is sort of leading it.

TRELEVEN: The [Los Angeles] County Party?

WILKINSON: The county Party. It was maybe at the Embassy Auditorium, or somewhere, there was this meeting of the Party. Everybody's supposed to be there, and Donna's supposed to be there.

Well, that night at the [First] Unitarian Church someone else was speaking who Donna wanted to hear; maybe it was this guy who wrote the book on Czechoslovakia whose name slips us. So Donna decided to do both. She was curious. She wanted to meet the guy who was out of the Party--wanted to hear what he had to say--but then she also wanted to be a good communist and go to this meeting. Arnold Lockshin came to our house, and criticized Donna, "You should never, never, never have gone to that meeting. You should have gone directly to the main meeting," and just gave Donna hell. I sat there in my living room listening to this. This lovely guy who said, "I want to abolish HUAC," [laughter] got the Catholic bishops and all these things going, and now he's saying to my own wife, "Don't you ever do that." He was Gus Hall in person in my own home. I can see him sitting in our living room. There were several people there. He came to a Party meeting there and was criticizing Donna for doing it. Donna was so straight-forward: "Well, I was curious. I wanted to go and I wanted to know what was going to

happen. I was always going to go there. I didn't get there very late." That's just Donna. She's just irrepressible Donna. She's told to be somewhere and there's something exciting on the way there, she'll stop off and do both every time. No one's going to tell her she can't go somewhere. [laughter] That is the way it worked out.

But anyway, I know that Donna often tried to get me to leave the Party, at least it seemed like for months before I finally left, because Donna had reached the point where-- Well, Donna was really greatly influenced by Dorothy Healey, in contrast to myself. I was not going to leave the Party because Dorothy Healey left the Party, at all. Never.

TRELEVEN: The further context is the development of NAM [New American Movement] and DSA [Democratic Socialists of America].

WILKINSON: Right, right. Those things go in. I never joined NAM and I never joined DSA.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Never did. I was interested in them, but I just didn't.

TRELEVEN: And Ben [Dobbs] had gone Peace and Freedom [Party] and DSA?

WILKINSON: Yeah. Dorothy and Ben went the same

direction. They were very, very close, one after the other. Then came this Lockshin, who was the hatchet-man for Gus Hall.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Imagine him standing there and saying that and then, within a year after that, he meets you in the elevator and says, "You'll never believe what happened to me."

"Well, what's the matter?"

"You can't believe what happened to me." Then he just blew. He just dropped out of life. He moved out. We had no address for him. We couldn't reach him for years.

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're out of tape.

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JUNE 20, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, back on. We wandered a bit, but profitably so, not monetarily but historically. I want to go back to this period while your and Carl's [Braden] cases are wending their way through the courts. Why don't you describe for me the events leading up to your arrival in San Francisco for the HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] hearing?

WILKINSON: From when to when?

TRELEVEN: From when to when? Well, start with the basic question, which is a pretty easy one. Why did you go to San Francisco? We're talking about--

WILKINSON: The court decision came down February 28, I believe, 1961, and Carl and I are ordered to spend a year in prison.

TRELEVEN: But this was before then. This was the San Francisco--

WILKINSON: Oh, you're talking about two San Franciscos.

TRELEVEN: I'm talking about San Francisco, 1960, May of '60 when HUAC opened the hearings.

WILKINSON: I hear you. I follow you.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: But it's interesting that the two things do relate to each other because in '61, when I came to San Francisco to speak, is when the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] tried to ban me and 5,000 turned out.

TRELEVEN: Right, at [University of California] Berkeley.

WILKINSON: Berkeley.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: All right now.

TRELEVEN: Let's go--

WILKINSON: In '60 I had left ECLC [National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee]. I was waiting for trials and whatnot on my First Amendment challenge. I was carrying out the policy that we had started in CCPAF [Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms] but which I didn't succeed in getting ECLC to do--that whenever there was a HUAC hearing we went to that place to organize it. We got word that subpoenas had been issued in Northern California against a student, Archie [Brown], the longshore warehouseman, and two or three other people, and I went up there to organize opposition to the hearings. This was in May of 1960.

In May of 1959, I'd also organized opposition to a HUAC hearing in San Francisco and in Los Angeles when

110 California school teachers were called up before the committee. When the [Lloyd] Barenblatt case came down in '59, denying the right of claiming academic freedom for a reason of not answering questions which they feared would come out of the San Francisco hearing, HUAC thought Barenblatt was going to be against them. They wanted to prove the cancerous growth of communism. When Barenblatt came down and the committee won, they just canceled those hearings.

I cite this in regard to your question on '60 because here were 110 California school teachers. There wasn't one student that I know of that protested against those '59 hearings. It was all done among teachers' friends, the [California] State Federation of Teachers, California Teachers Association: we were getting those organizations to go on record. A couple of teachers, Florence [M.] Sloat and someone else, agreed to make test cases against the thing; then it was called off and we won the battle because they suddenly canceled.

In '60, this would be almost a year to the date afterwards in April, May. Actually, the hearings in San Francisco were May 10 of '60. They come after this time, not 110 but about five or six people. We approached it the same way. Only this time there were

hundreds and hundreds of students participating.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Yes?

TRELEVEN: What's the mechanism by which this connection was made with students? I mean, SLATE was--

WILKINSON: It was not done by me.

TRELEVEN: SLATE was in existence by that time.

WILKINSON: SLATE was in existence, and SLATE is the one that brought me up there in '61. But SLATE was--

TRELEVEN: That's '61.

WILKINSON: Sixty-one. That's when the five thousand-- If SLATE was in existence in '60, I don't know; I doubt it. I know it was in existence in '61; they're the ones that brought me up there.

But it was not done by me. I knew no students. I think I went over to Berkeley, I think I went down to Stanford [University], I may have gone to San Francisco State [College], anywhere I could find students to talk to and say, "There's a hearing going on. It's like the teachers last year and you ought to be there," something like that. But I didn't get any results.

TRELEVEN: In '60?

WILKINSON: In '60.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so you spoke on these campuses?

WILKINSON: I didn't speak on the campuses. I tried to

speaking on the campuses, but these were still in the silent fifties.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: I went to Harry Bridges, trying to get the longshore to put a bunch of people out to picket, and Harry Bridges said to me, "It's the kids' problem. Let them organize it." I went to the Board of Rabbis, I went to the Council of Churches, I went to the PTA [Parent-Teacher Association], I went anywhere I could to get some support for the thing. I was doing a lot of work with the press, talking about the abolition of HUAC campaign.

The day that the thing occurred I was in the Saint Francis Hotel having lunch with a reporter for the New York Times, when we heard over the radio that a "riot" quote, unquote, was taking place in city hall. We left and went back. I want to give you now what is my judgment: why did it happen? This is really important.

TRELEVEN: Okay, but leading up to it, except for encouraging individuals to go and protest--which in your judgment was falling on deaf ears in a way--

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: --that you had not personally planned to go to the hearings?

WILKINSON: I'd been at the hearings. I planned to go

there. I was there that morning and I was amazed to see several hundred students waiting in line at nine o'clock to get into the hearings.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: I then kept a luncheon date to talk about this with a reporter from the New York Times.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Now, you didn't have any trouble getting a seat at the hearings?

WILKINSON: Yes, I did.

TRELEVEN: You did?

WILKINSON: I could not get in.

TRELEVEN: You couldn't get in?

WILKINSON: I did get in, but not until after the students were washed down the street.

TRELEVEN: Okay, but that morning you did not get into the hearings?

WILKINSON: I did not. No one could get in except for the white cardholders, and the white cardholders were members of the John Birch Society and some of the churches, the very same churches that were used to protest me in '61.

Now the background, I think, is so basically important. Why were those 600 students in front of city hall in 1960, when we didn't have anybody opposing the teachers getting fired in '59?

TRELEVEN: You're claiming that leading up to the hearings that what you said seemed to fall on deaf ears.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: So where the heck did these people come from?

WILKINSON: All right. I've come to know, first of all, after the film--this is very interesting--after the film Operation Abolition was made and released in August of '60, I got a phone call from the students at Berkeley saying that HUAC had a film out. They're going to show it. "It features you, says that you organized the student riots in May, and we would like you to come up. We would like to meet the man who organized us." People I'd never heard of. So I went up there and three months after the fact I met the students who were involved.

The background to this is extremely important. We had a silent fifties. That has never been adequately emphasized. I know it because I organized demonstrations against HUAC from '53 through '60. Never any student participation. Never. In fact, the attendance of the hearings was made up of the friends of the subpoenaed people. There were ten different classes of people that went through HUAC--state or

federal HUAC--from '53 to '60, that I organized. Maybe fifteen.

In February, 1960, in Greensboro, North Carolina, five black students went into a Woolworth's store, sat down, and demanded a cup of coffee or a Coca Cola. Woolworth's denied them the right to get a Coke and called the police and arrested them. Within two weeks of that, the students in Berkeley that I later heard about closed down Woolworth's in Berkeley, California, with massive picket lines saying, "You're not going to sell anything to a Berkeley student until a black student in North Carolina can get a Coke out of your same stores. So make up your mind."

TRELEVEN: Okay. You had nothing to do with that?

WILKINSON: No. I'm just saying that this is what happened. I didn't even know it had taken place.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Did anyone you know in the Bay area participate in any way in the picketing of Woolworth's in Berkeley?

WILKINSON: None. I didn't know of it.

TRELEVEN: There's just no connection there?

WILKINSON: Maybe one of my kids could have been involved in it. [laughter] I heard about it after the fact.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: That's February.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: It's a very interesting thing. You have to realize that in Georgia in '58, when we had our hearing there where all the civil rights people were called up, the HUAC hearing room was empty. There were the ten lawyers from ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] who wouldn't sit with me, sitting in the jury box, and there were about twenty people in the whole federal court room. I walked in and sat down next to Carl's lawyer, a black lawyer, Bishop C. Eubank Tucker, and then the paper photographers ran up the aisle and took a picture of a black guy and white guy sitting together in a federal courtroom. No opposition. SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] had not started yet. The Freedom Riders did not come down till April and May of '61. I was thought to be a Freedom Rider when I went into the Fulton County jail. They'd never heard of HUAC, but had about the Freedom Riders because they were being beaten up. [John F.] Kennedy was just in office and was wavering on what to do about the problem.

The next thing that happened, though--back in Berkeley--is that Caryl Chessman was executed in April of '60.

TRELEVEN: After a long, long--

WILKINSON: After twelve years of so-and-so.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: For reasons we need to study. Thousands, I've heard hundreds--let's be safe--went to San Quentin, stood outside on an all-night vigil holding candles the night Chessman was executed. Now, here's a guy that didn't kill anybody, but he used red lights on his private car to intimidate couples sitting out in the hills necking, and then using a gun he'd tie up the man and rape the woman. He would never kill anybody, but he raped. He raped young college kids who were sitting in their parked cars, necking. Why were they there? What's the connection between Greensboro and Woolworth's and San Quentin? It's a very basic question.

On May the 10th in 1960, based upon subpoenas that came out May 1--just a matter of a couple weeks after Chessman's execution--they go after a single student who was a communist, his father, who was a communist, a guy whose name slips me who was a communist, Archie Brown, the warehouseman, who was a longshore guy who had actually got a ton of votes when he ran for the board of supervisors up there. My job was to organize opposition to that, and I never turned to students. I

mean, I remember like the day before that, somebody said there was a meeting down at Stanford and I said, "Well, maybe I can go down there and talk." I went down there and talked to somebody trying to get them out there because the way to fight these things is to have people there in that hearing room to oppose it.

I go to that hearing that morning, supposedly to go in and hear the hearing myself, and I arrive there to see a block long of students up and down that street, and a line up the city hall steps to where the hearing room was, out and down and out clear to the street. 600 people waiting in line to get in, 95 percent of them students.

For some reason that may contradict some of the emphasis I'm giving here, I contacted Jimmy [James] Roosevelt, who as my Congressperson knew we were trying to get him to take a stand to abolish HUAC in '60. He had not yet. He became our trouble. He never did introduce the right resolution.

TRELEVEN: Right, right.

WILKINSON: But he had written a speech called "The Dragon Slayers." It was a parody on HUAC that they're killing dragons. It was a wonderful speech. Aubrey [W.] Williams had taken the Roosevelt dragon-slayer speech and on his press in Montgomery produced 50,000

copies of it. Aubrey knew Jimmy. Aubrey was a great propagandist. So there's a wonderful Herblock [Herbert L. Block] cartoon showing Sherlock Holmes ferreting out some silly thing on subversives in America.

I arranged to have 10,000 copies of Jimmy Roosevelt's speech mailed to me. (As I think back now, it wasn't Aubrey. Jimmy Roosevelt himself shipped them to me, to an address in San Francisco.) I was there with the idea that there'd be this hearing. Maybe people would be out there and we ought to have some literature to hand out to people. I got those, stood in front, and got those things handed out. They were gone very quickly, every one of them. Aubrey then reprinted. That's what happened later. But Jimmy actually sent these things to me.

When I saw that I was very impressed. I didn't know anybody in line. I didn't know anyone to talk to. I didn't recognize the people carrying signs. I don't know what they got their signs from, "ABOLISH HUAC."

TRELEVEN: Okay. Was your oldest son [Jeffrey] at Berkeley by that time?

WILKINSON: Yes. I think.

TRELEVEN: You've never talked to him about this?

WILKINSON: Wait, wait, wait. Sixty, '60.

TRELEVEN: This is '60. He was born in '42.

WILKINSON: Yeah.

TRELEVEN: So he would have been--

WILKINSON: He may have been. I'm not sure he was up there. I doubt it.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: I think that the timing-- Forty-two, he would be eighteen, and he went back with us to New York in '57 and stayed on, I think, for awhile. He went to work for the National Guardian, or something like that. He was trying various jobs. I'm not sure of his arrival [time] in Berkeley.

TRELEVEN: Okay, but anyway--

WILKINSON: Anyway, I saw this crowd and I didn't even know about them being turned down at the door. I just thought of it as a big line waiting to get in there. So I never got in. I probably went up to the top to see if I could get in and had been turned down, or they told me to get in line. The students were demanding that first-come, first-served, and they'd been angered when they'd waited there from seven a.m. to get in, and down the hall comes 200 women with white cards taken from a private committee room down the hallway. These students see all these women come down, the doors were opened, white card, white card. They all go in and the students, standing outside waiting to get in, are

watching them go in, wondering what this is all about, and assuming they were going to get in. When the last woman went in and the students tried to follow, they said, "Sorry, it's filled up." Then the students began to complain, "First-come, first-served."

I heard about that. I may have seen it. I tried to get in. I didn't get in. Mostly I kept my date back at the Saint Francis [Hotel] to talk about our whole campaign to abolish HUAC.

Then I heard the radio. I grab a cab and go back there. When I arrived in front of the city hall, there's paddy wagons in front and there's police and firemen dragging students out of city hall--drenched wet--carrying them out putting them in paddy wagons. I came up to observe this, outside. Somebody like Archie Brown, who I knew-- See, I knew the subpoenaed people. There were five of them. Yes, I knew them. They were all being arrested out there in the street, and they said, "Get us a lawyer." I went up those wet steps. I went to the door, I knocked, and I said, "I need to see the lawyers inside." Whoever was there looked around-- I now know everybody knew who I was--and said, "Okay." I go inside. The hearing is going on. One seat is vacant and I sit down right next to the door, next to this bunch of ladies. One of them happened to be my

sister [Clara Marie (Betty) Evans], the president-elect of the Berkeley Womens City Club, one of the people with the white cards that came in. I sat down saying, "How did you get in?" Or, "What are you here about?" I didn't know she was even involved in it at all. We were sitting there waiting for this thing.

At this point [Richard] Arens, who was in the chair with his back turned to me--I never saw his face--had a guy on the stand and said, "In organizing these diabolical, godless riots, were you organized by, or did you consult with, that international communist agent who is sitting over there?" And he spun around in his chair and he pointed right at me.

Here's Betty. She's with the Berkeley Womens City Club. She's due to be the president. [laughter] That really wiped her out. She wanted to disown me, for sure.

Then something happened and there was a brief adjournment. The newspapers, television, all came over to me and wanted to interview me. So I stood up with a bunch of cameras around me. "Mr. Wilkinson, Mr. Arens has just identified you as an international communist agent. Have you anything to say?" I said, which I thought was brilliant--modesty lacking this morning--"Well, it's very flattering. I've been called a local

communist and a hard-core communist, but I've never before been called an international communist." Then I had this pet thing that I had been using since my own hearing in '58. I said, "However, until such time as the Supreme Court shall rule that hearings such as this violate the First Amendment and cannot continue, until such time as people cannot be asked, or answer, that question without economic sanctions, I will not answer that question." All right. I then remained in the hearing room on and off, got through to the lawyers, got--

TRELEVEN: Got through to who? The lawyers--?

WILKINSON: The liberal lawyers, the progressive lawyers, were all handling these five cases. I got over to them and I said, "They need lawyers. These kids are all arrested and they're down in jail."

TRELEVEN: I see, I see.

WILKINSON: Huh?

TRELEVEN: You go into the hearing room to connect with the--

WILKINSON: During this intermission I leave the television [reporters], I go over and say, "We've got to get lawyers down to the jail. There's a hundred kids down there locked up. Who can I get?" I was told names and I called people and helped to get lawyers

down there. I didn't go to the thing; I stayed there for the hearing. I came outside and watched more of what was happening. By that time the whole thing changed. I remember walking down those steps after I'd been in there, and out in front by this time there were 2,000 people standing in the streets in the square in front of city hall. City hall had put up loudspeaker systems so the people who had been denied entrance could hear it outside and not go cramming up the stairs to get in. I went into that crowd of people to watch this and I remember somebody saying to me, "You'd better get the hell out of here!" I'm looking around and I had the whole thing going up to that, and being let in when no one else could get in, and then coming out and the people observing me, and then I figured I was going to get busted right then and there, and I went clear across the city hall square and disappeared to keep from getting arrested.

Then the hearing went on, one more day of it, and most of what I know about were things that went on [as shown] in the film. I was outside. I saw Archie Brown and this other guy thrown physically out of the hearing room. We just watched them come tumbling out as they fought. But I wasn't in there to see that.

I come home and this film is released quickly, I

thought. Then a pamphlet comes out called "Communists Target Youth" by HUAC. It's J. Edgar Hoover, and Hoover focuses on me, saying, "the brains and energy," quote unquote, "behind the San Francisco riots was due to Frank Wilkinson, that international communist agent identified by the committee, who was called before the committee in Los Angeles in '56 and '58, and whose job it is to organize demonstrations against the committee." Something like 500,000 copies of that statement by Hoover--that little pamphlet--were printed and mailed out.

The film came out. The students called me. I go up and see the film for the first time. I had never seen any of the students. I didn't know one person who organized the demonstration, yet I'm officially labelled by J. Edgar Hoover as the guy who did it. Hoover quotes--this is very interesting--Hoover quotes that the authority on this statement comes from none other than Mickey Lima, top communist organizer for the San Francisco area. "Lima says 'Frank Wilkinson is the brains and energy behind the movement,'" not riots, but the movement to organize against HUAC.

How'd that happen? My son was then living with Margaret Lima, Mickey's daughter, and--

TRELEVEN: This was a little later.

WILKINSON: This was Tony [Anthony].

TRELEVEN: This was a little later.

WILKINSON: Well, no. Tony came up maybe in sixty-- Tony might have come up there to go to San Francisco State [College] quicker than Jeff [Jeffrey Wilkinson], because Tony was much more organized academically than Jeff was. Jeffrey was rebelling against a lot of things. For example, Tony came clear across the county to (see, now that shows it couldn't have been then; he's still a kid). He came to visit me in prison, with Jean, with Jo. Jeffrey never saw me, never wrote to me while I was in prison. He was sick and tired of being Frank Wilkinson's son, sick and tired of people saying, "How lucky you are to be Frank's son." That drove Jeffrey right up a wall, that he could never establish his own criteria.

But that's the story now. I think that winds it up. That film then became the organizing tool of the students. We helped to form BASCA HUAC--acronym--Bay Area Students Committee to Abolish HUAC. Aubrey, again with his printing presses, printed up tens of thousands of copies of BASCA HUAC's critique of the film, and we were trying to get more and more people to speak out on it. I did help to get a statement in the Christian Century to condemn the film, and in a few other places.

At the John Birch Society--I just say that like it was a fact; I think others undoubtedly used it--it was their main organizing tool. Hundreds and hundreds of copies were made available to Birch groups. They'd hold meetings, they'd show the film: "And this is what the communists are doing to our youth." "Communists Target Youth," they'd hand out that pamphlet, and they would sign people up into the Birch Society as a result of that. Meanwhile, with the film being shown around the country, people in Wisconsin, or Milwaukee, or Chicago, or anywhere, were asking for people to come and speak about the film, because the film was being shown and they didn't know the answers to it.

The film has twenty different areas where it's just flatly false. It shows Harry Bridges entering the hearing room just before the riots broke out. (I did get Harry there.) Actually, Bridges arrived a hour after the students had been washed out. They had him arriving just before. This whole thing is a conspiracy. They had Burton White, and this came as a communist song leader, people's songs, Burton White with his master's in antiquities at Berkeley, and so on.

So the Committee to Abolish HUAC paid Burt to leave graduate school for a semester to cross the

country, speaking with the film, to give the true story. Then guys like Arnold Lockshin, who just were there and nobody knew anything about him, comes out of a classroom at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and says, "I was there; I'll tell you about it," and tells the truth about the whole thing. All over the country the film was shown and we tried to get speakers there to tell the truth about it. We developed a lot of literature pointing out how wrong it was.

But, again, showing the change in ACLU now: ACLU in San Francisco, with a very bad executive director there, Bessing, who always did his best to squelch my work, got a new film made called Operation Correction. The film was Operation Abolition and the San Francisco affiliate of ACLU developed Operation Correction, where they show the film and all the way through it stops and Roosevelt--Jimmy Roosevelt--comes on to say, "Wrong; Harry Bridges did not arrive until twenty minutes after so-and-so. Wrong. So-and-so did this." It had a picture in the film that says that the students were ordered to be quiet, and you see a guy saying, "Quiet!" You see the firemen standing there with fire hoses not on. At that point so-and-so--whatever his name was--leaped over the barricades, grabbed a policeman's club, and hit him over the head,

whoever that guy was. At the very time that the HUAC film came out in the streets, it was so effective that when these students were tried in court in San Francisco--and this one guy was the primary suspect because he's the one that hit and injured a police officer--Life magazine, who'd been there in city hall covering this event, had a camera take a picture at the very moment you see the first water coming out of the fire hoses; the water's about one foot out, starting, trickling down, and in the foreground, leaning against a pillar in San Francisco, smoking his pipe, is the guy who had leaped over the barricades and struck the policeman. The judge was shown the Life magazine story and the whole group of students was acquitted, right then and there.

It became one of our best organizing tools. We used it everywhere. We had a couple of other films we used, too.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Then as you were going to various campuses, what was your sense of the heightened student awareness at these various campuses?

WILKINSON: Well, it was developing. I was not participating in it. I heard about it. I heard about the thing being shown in the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison, I heard this guy Lockshin had been there to

speaking, I heard about Dick [Richard] Criley's nephew [John Williams], who went around with the film speaking the truth about it. We offered sort of truth squads to go out and correct the story. There were so many people who saw that film that my voice, apparently, is remembered. I would have people on buses or in railroad stations come and say, "Are you Frank Wilkinson?"

"Yeah."

"I heard you. I remembered your voice on that film."

The night that I went up to see my sister. (Oh, I'm mixing up dates here.) Sometimes, my sister and brother were always confronted. The film was shown at the hospital to doctors. It was shown in churches everywhere. My brother just told me that fellow doctors at the hospital came to him and said, "Allan [B. Wilkinson], you've got to disown your brother or it's going to destroy your practice. We're not going to send you any more cases if you do not publicly disown your brother." My brother took a very strong, positive stand. My sister, Hildegarde, and Pete [Margrethe Petersen], her lifelong companion, came clear across the following year to visit me in prison at Thanksgiving.

It was a very useful weapon, but I don't remember speaking other than at our own meetings, where we would organize a meeting, we'd show the film, we'd explain it not only to students but to anyone we could get.

It was not until March of '61 that I got this phone call in L.A. from SLATE, saying that they wanted me to come up and speak to thirty-five students about the decision in my case in the [United States] Supreme Court, which had come down February 28. I was home then. I thought, "How neat." I had never spoken, that I can recall, to any student audiences up to that point.

TRELEVEN: Anywhere in the U.S.?

WILKINSON: Anywhere in the U.S.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Now, I have to take it back. Yeah. No, that's right, that's right.

The whole thing began when the New York Times gave this three-full-page coverage in the papers around the country. Suddenly, Carl Braden and I had a name established and that became the basis of inviting us: you're two guys going to jail for upholding the First Amendment against the unAmerican committee and are now convicted. So I was invited up there. Berkeley was my first talk, and that's where the 5,000 turned out.

After that the calls began to flood in. I had from February 28th until May 1st. I think it was very symbolic that Carl and I went to jail on May Day, 1961. Anyway, from that time on we were asked to speak. I spoke so many times in a period of--let's see--March first, April first, May first; there were only sixty days there. In those sixty days, I spoke all over L.A., the Bay Area, Boston, New York. Pete Seeger had a concert and 5,000 turned out. Several talks in Chicago, Northwestern [University], Madison, Milwaukee, (they had a thing at Milwaukee where a state senator debated me at a large public park on what it was all about), Princeton [University] (an unprecedented meeting at the private Whig-Clio Society), Johns Hopkins [University], University of Utah. I'd been working all through the midwest, I got clear into New York and I get a call from Colorado, so I fly back to University of Colorado to speak. *[One of the most important was our invitation to the Yale University Law School, where our case was chosen as the moot court argument that spring; we spoke before the entire law school and there was a dinner in our honor.]

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

I just remember reaching the point where I didn't really know what to say. I was not prepared to speak. I was using my little statement that Izzy [Isidor F.] Stone and Anthony Lewis had helped me write, which was used at the point the court decision came down. Carl was making these rambunctious statements, very well informed, very radical, very [laughter] Carl Bradenish, and I was just getting up there saying, "For every person silenced in jail by the committee a thousand new voices will be raised and many of these will be students." That's the thing I said in Wheeler Auditorium. But I was always wrapping myself up in my background. At Berkeley, when I spoke, I talked about being a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, all this crap.

Then I go down to Georgia and this wonderful thing happened at Morehouse College, where Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] had 200--maybe--black leaders gathered together as a farewell tribute to Carl and me where we spoke. King made this wonderful statement: "We will never achieve peaceable integration in the South until the unAmerican activities committee is abolished. These men are going to jail for us." That famous picture that I prize so much was taken at that point. Then we go to jail.

I was just so relieved to go to jail because I

didn't know what to say and I was speaking all over the country. I was just not a very proper spokesperson for the victim. Carl was not me. He was much too radical.

Enough.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Next time let's pick it up on May first at the Fulton County jail.

WILKINSON: That's a beautiful day. [laughter]

TRELEVEN: Okay.

TAPE NUMBER: XXXIX, SIDE ONE

JUNE 27, 1992

TRELEVEN: June 27, and I'm back with Frank Wilkinson. Several times what we've done here is to operate on two tracks, one the past and the other the present. Let's do that again today in terms of the present. We taped last Saturday and what's happened since then, in terms of your travels?

WILKINSON: The immediate thing that happened this last week which I'd like to discuss at the end, but it has to do with the fact that I have become acquainted with Professor Anita [F.] Hill from the University of Oklahoma, who was the person who testified on sexual harassment against [United States] Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: Thomas? Is that right?

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: I dislike the man so much I--

TRELEVEN: --forgot his name.

WILKINSON: --block out his name. But the fact that she was here in Los Angeles as our guest is something I'd like to mention at the end. I think the point to know about here is what, generally, has happened that

brings me into that kind of work in Oklahoma.

It goes back five years ago when the national education department, or whatever it's called [United States Department of Education], invited me to come to Wake Forest University at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where I spoke before fifty teachers competitively selected, one from each state, brought in to discuss civil liberties and civil rights. I was given two days with them to discuss our own focus, namely the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] versus the First Amendment. It was quite unusual to be in this position because these teachers who were brought in there have had no knowledge at all about this. There's really very little teaching of the Bill of Rights. This was before the bicentennial [year] of the Bill of Rights. Out of that the response was very favorable, and I was invited to come and speak then in Massachusetts for a similar group brought together at Harvard [University] Law School, and then two or three trips to Colorado, then to Oklahoma, then to Nebraska, and two weeks from now I'm in Arkansas, all doing the same thing.

It's funded now, not by the [United States] Department of Education but by the Javitts Foundation. What was the name of the man who was the czar of

education and then became the czar of the drug--?

TRELEVEN: William [J.] Bennett.

WILKINSON: Bennett. It always struck me as so amazing that William Bennett is responsible for sending a check to me for honoraria and travel to speak to teachers on the meaning of the Bill of Rights and the dangers of the FBI, in a southern university.

But it's been taken over, generally now, by what is called the Law-Related Education Program of the American Bar Association. They're encouraging bar associations all over the country to carry on special education programs for teachers of high- and middle-school students throughout the country. Some are doing more than others. Here in California very little is being done, but in some states a great deal.

Let me just deal with Oklahoma and just a mention of Nebraska. In Oklahoma, it began two years ago. I was brought in. In this case, thirty-five competitively selected teachers were brought in from all over Oklahoma for a three-day session where the [state] bar association sponsors it. I was one of the resource people and I told my own story, and the objective story regarding the FBI's violations both during the [Joseph R.] McCarthy years under J. Edgar Hoover and then currently under the [Ronald W.] Reagan-

[George H.W.] Bush guidelines. The response was just overwhelmingly sympathetic, friendly.

It was hard for me to try to think how I could relate because I had asked for the résumés of the teachers that I was going to be speaking before. I read them on the plane going to Oklahoma, and it was amazing that each teacher, on her own or his own, would say their name, then the name of their Baptist church, and then the school they were teaching at, and the grades they were teaching. This is a strange psychological problem I'm still trying to figure out. I was trying that night. I saw what I was going to face the next morning and I tried that night to think, "How can I relate to such religious people? Here I am an atheist and I've had such a complete rebellion against organized religion that all these people will come in as very, very fundamental[ist] Baptists."

TRELEVEN: Just a second. What I thought you were going to get at was, why would these people--like sheep--fill in the blanks in the first place?

WILKINSON: I'm not sure. I've learned more subsequently, that religion is just such a dominant part of their life. In Oklahoma, for example, you could not buy alcoholic beverages until recently. They had local option, many towns where you couldn't buy

liquor, and you couldn't go into a bar anywhere in Oklahoma until quite recently. That's part of it. Everybody belongs to a church. If you don't belong to a church, I don't think you could get by in Oklahoma. That's your social life, that's your thing.

At any rate, that night before, restless sleeping, and in the middle of the night [laughter] I woke up with an old Methodist hymn that I hadn't heard about or thought about in forty years: "He Leadeth Me, O Precious Light." I tried to go back to sleep. I'd wake up. I'd go all the way through this hymn to the end, trying to go back to sleep again. I wake up again. The next morning I'm suddenly before these teachers and I said, "You know, I'm not sure that I can relate at all to you people. You're all such religious people and I'm really not active in religion at all. I was brought up in a very wonderful Methodist background. But last night I had this dream of 'He Leadeth Me, O Precious Light.'" I said that I just couldn't get it out of my mind. "So I guess no matter how religious I think I am or not, once you're a Methodist, you're always a Methodist," something like that. Well, that just somehow opened their minds. They just accepted me just the way I stated it; I did not state it in any way to confuse them.

As a result of that, three months later I'm brought back to speak to each of their classes, to speak to students, and the classes deliberately are kept small. Sometimes two classes combined was the largest--sixty students; occasionally 100--but lots of them just small classes of high- and middle-school students. I talked about the very same thing I had talked to them [their teachers]: I talked about the FBI versus the First Amendment, my own experience, and what the FBI's doing today.

TRELEVEN: That's what you were doing this week?

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: At any rate, the summary of this is that last year, alone in Oklahoma, I now have spoken before 300, 400 high- and middle-school teachers throughout the state, and an actual count of 6,000 high- and middle-school students. Just a great number. One time I went in and I spoke forty-two times in six days. That much. *[By 1995 in Oklahoma alone, this involved 460 teachers and 14,000 high- and middle-school students.]

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

All right. There's a lot of background beyond that thing because I've been doing the same thing now in Nebraska and next week in Arkansas, and it's become such a dominant part of my field work that I'm trying to cut it back, saying, "I just can't put in this much time. I'm out to organize here on H.R. 50 to stop political spying by the FBI. I can't talk legislative action to high- and middle-school students." Although the last time I was there, in February, teachers asked me specifically, and then had their students debate the pros and cons of H.R. 50. They did it, not I. They did it on their own.

So this last time when I was going back in February, they were inviting me so many different places. I was speaking before the press association of Oklahoma, the social studies teachers of Oklahoma. Ponca City, Oklahoma, made me the guest of honor--a little town of 28,000--because a junior high school student there wrote a paper for Oklahoma History Week on "The Frank Wilkinson Story: The FBI versus the First Amendment." Very personal, very subjective, although I try my best to make it objective, or more objective. NBC [National Broadcasting Company] television, the "Today Show," came and brought a crew into this little town 200 miles from nowhere and filmed the thing.

That's an unusual experience.

Anyway, they've given me so many more new assignments that I said, "Look, I just can't put in that much time." They said, "Well, please just come in; we need you for this, this and this." I'm talking to the heads of bar associations. For example, I'm talking to the head of the Cleveland Bar Association in Norman, Oklahoma, and I just casually said, "All right, I'll come, but one condition: I want to have dinner with Anita Hill." I just said that. Well, this man-- ultimately a very conservative guy by the way (he later talked to me)--sort of paused. "Well, oh-- Well, sure. Yes, fine. Yes, we'll arrange that." So I came in and did all my work and then the president of the Cleveland Bar [Association] and deputy president go to a very fine restaurant in Norman, Oklahoma, and here's Anita Hill as my guest for dinner. We had that evening and got acquainted.

This has led to a lot of contact between Professor Hill and myself. This last time I was brought in, on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday--this gives you another example of how you have to think of this in terms of the Cold War and where I've been coming from, my pariah relationship--I'm brought in Sunday night to attend the opening banquet for eighty teachers this time, in which

the Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court is the speaker. In the middle of the speech he's going through the various civil liberties amendments and he points to me and here he says, "And here you have the First Amendment," pointing directly to me. I'm sitting at the dias with him.

The next morning Anita Hill spoke after I had urged the director of the Law-Related Education Program to invite her. This was really unbelievable. Eighty teachers there and I think they all thought they were going to hear a report on the Clarence Thomas [confirmation] hearings. Instead of that, she's assigned to talk on how do you teach sexual harassment to high- and middle-school students.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: She comes in and makes an absolutely marvelous academic presentation about how you do it. How do you define sexual harassment? How do you teach it? How to you try to get change? How do you get--? How do you alert--? At what age do you begin telling students about this thing? You all know your problems in your high school, even your junior highs; you know the graffiti on the walls. You know how obscene things are put in girls lockers, and things of this kind. She knew all about this. The teachers were just absolutely

alert to it.

Then the director of the Law-Related Education Program said, "Now I think we'll just have some general questions," which would have led immediately into the Clarence Thomas hearing. She said, "No, I brought with me a form, and I'd like to go through it. It's further definitions on sexual harassment." And she went right down through this thing, hanging on to the proper academic presentation. At the end these teachers were just sitting there living it up. I could know they were dying to know more about Clarence Thomas. Not a word about Thomas. At the end, very modestly and quietly, she said, "Thank you very much. I think that's our time," and applause began.

I watched other performers there, and they get applause. Well, the applause was soft, but it got louder. It kept going for ten seconds, and then a teacher in the middle of the room stood up, then another teacher. Spontaneous; it was just one of those things that happens till finally all eighty teachers were standing there applauding Anita Hill. Then there was a brief period where every teacher ran up and wanted their picture taken standing beside Anita Hill.

In that room there were eighty teachers. Oklahoma

has a very large black population. There were only three black teachers of the eighty. Oklahoma has even a larger Indian [Native American] population. There wasn't one single Indian present. I know these teachers now from my own contact with them; I don't know where they are politically, but they are just not ready for this thing. This was a cultural shock for them to meet her. I talked with many teachers and I'm to go back myself now in October: "What town are you from?" They'd give me the town. "Where is that?" They'd try to tell me. Well, nothing makes sense to me because it's 200 miles: If you go to Weatherford and go on down the road about forty miles, you'll come to this town. "How many people in your town?"

"Oh, about a thousand."

"How many students do you have?"

"Oh, there's 500 in the high school."

"Well, that means they're bussed in."

"Oh, yes, children are bussed from twenty-five miles around into our high school."

All right. Meanwhile, I've asked Anita Hill if she's going to be in L.A. sometime, wouldn't she come out and meet with the First Amendment Foundation people that are here. She said she'd be happy to. She'd read the book, The FBI v. The First Amendment by Richard

Criley, and increasingly we're talking back and forth and writing of more and more interest in it.

So then she told me, "I'm coming out to L.A. to speak to the National Black Health Foundation, UCLA group." In fact, I heard on the radio coming here this morning the comments on her talk before this black health banquet dinner--or whatever it was--yesterday. She said, "Yes, I could come in the day before." She arrived in Los Angeles Wednesday night--we spoke together a lot in Oklahoma; we'd both take planes back to L.A.--and I'd pick her up in an apartment on Wilshire Boulevard and bring her up to the UCLA law school [School of Law]. Carole Goldberg-Ambrose, the associate dean and secretary of the First Amendment Foundation, made the arrangements there. And from the beginning, I thought we should keep this thing very, very private and very, very informal, not a speech but a chance to meet her and talk with her. And so we just had our own board people there: it would be Ramona Ripston, who made a special trip back from New York to be there, the head of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California], and Carole, and Betty [Elizabeth] Poe Kerby and Phil [Philip P.] Kerby of the L.A. Times, and Chauncey [A.] Alexander, our chair, and a surgeon [Walter M. Kearns] from the

[San Fernando] Valley, who's our treasurer, a little group like that.

Then I began very carefully inviting a few people. I asked Joe Hicks, who's the new director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference-West, to come; he's an old friend of Donna's [Childers Wilkinson] and mine. He was thrilled to get the invitation. Then running through a few names-- Oh, Sheila [James] Kuehl, who is the new head of the California Womens Law Center, a very, very strong, powerful feminist law group that Carole mentioned. Then a professor of communications law, Geoffrey--

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Yeah, I know who you mean.

WILKINSON: Cowan.

TRELEVEN: Geoff Cowan. Yeah, I know him.

WILKINSON: He wanted to come. At this point, on my own, I called up Stanley [K.] Sheinbaum who was a [University of California] regent and the president of the [Los Angeles] Police Commission, who was up to his neck in the swearing in of Willie [L.] Williams this morning to replace [Daryl F.] Gates.

TRELEVEN: Gates, yeah.

WILKINSON: His secretary said, "He's going out."

"Well, just ask him if he'd like to have lunch with Anita Hill on Thursday." The secretary said it to

him as he's walking out of the door, and she came back and said, "He'd be thrilled to meet her."

So on Wednesday night, I get a call from Stanley Sheinbaum, who does not call me on any regular basis because of what his jobs are--and I think all of us have stayed away from him because he's president of the police commission. In fact, he didn't even show up to the ACLU garden party for the first time because he said it would be inappropriate in his position to be attending an ACLU function. He called me up Wednesday night, and said, "Frank, Betty can't come." (That's his wife.) "Would it be possible for me to bring Mark Fabiani, the deputy mayor?" I said, "Of course."

So Thursday morning, we gather there in the faculty lounge--and then into the faculty library--and twenty people sit around the table for two-and-a-half hours and visit with Anita Hill. She left just a profound, profound impact upon everybody who met her in terms of her scholarship, her intelligence, and her beauty, for that matter.

End of my story. Just one of the perquisites where I'm never paid. I don't have any pensions or health plans, whatever you want to call them, but who else gets to bring Anita Hill home for lunch in a case like this? It was a very, very good experience.

She also, at the luncheon, challenged Ramona Ripston directly on the ACLU's position on some First Amendment issues, namely in the cross-burning decision in Minnesota last week. Ramona found herself almost disassociating herself from the national ACLU's policy in order to be sure that it was okay.

That's much more of an introduction, but all of this is so interesting that my work-- I mean, if you go back over other things where I've been invited to speak in the last five years, where I joke about regaining my respectability or overcoming the real pariah role that I've always played, like right at this very time I lost the appeal in the Eleventh Circuit [Court of Appeals] on the coram nobis action to overturn my conviction, at the same time I'm doing this there. And I'm brought in to speak-- Oh, I know. At my meeting, the immediate past Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court asked at the banquet the night before if he could come and hear me speak. Sure enough, here's the chief justice coming in with these eighty teachers. I spoke for an hour-and-a-half in the morning, then there was a break, and then the questions for an hour-and-a-half in the afternoon. Lo and behold, he leaves and comes back for the afternoon question session.

And at the end of October now, in Nebraska, where

I spoke before the hometown Kiwanis Club--

TRELEVEN: Right, which you talked about.

WILKINSON: William [S.] Sessions, I talked about already. But I'm thinking before that, I'm the president's speaker at the annual meeting of the Nebraska Bar Association in October, so--

TRELEVEN: If you're lucky William Sessions will join you. [laughter]

WILKINSON: Right. You cannot make too much of this. It's just the fact that we have contradictions, I think, right now: the Cold War is gone and yet it's very much alive in so many places.

On the other hand, when the director of the Law-Related Education Program invited Anita Hill, he was called in by the executive director of the Oklahoma State Bar and was told to cancel the invitation; he didn't want the teachers exposed to Anita Hill, a law professor. The director said, "It's an irreversible invitation." The guy nearly lost his job. He may still lose his job for having brought Anita Hill to speak there. Yet, back when Anita Hill was introduced, I watched the head of the bar association during it. He just sat there, sort of grim, and as soon as she was introduced he left. He didn't want to hear what she had to say.

So you have those contradictions going on.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: The teachers there would be-- If the head of the Law-Related Education Program should be fired, or should be challenged, you'd have hundreds of high-school and middle-school teachers in the state coming to his defense. It would be a real issue because you just can't get away with overt racism in that state, even though there is so much racism there.

TRELEVEN: Listen, before we go back thirty years, I've got maybe two questions. One, what's the goal of the bar association in doing these things with teachers?

WILKINSON: It is to ensure that a new generation of students in their respective states have a better understanding of the entire Bill of Rights. The First Amendment gets the primary attendance, but they were talking about all of the amendments. The thing ran for eight days; I was there for the first three. It winds up tomorrow. Those teachers are still there, working from eight-thirty in the morning till five at night, and they bring in one speaker there--yesterday, it was on the death penalty--in Oklahoma, pros and cons on the death penalty. Everybody in Oklahoma loves the death penalty, I mean, you'd think from the surface reports, yet you have outstanding persons coming in to speak

against the death penalty. These teachers are taught how to develop classes where the students can debate pro and con on capital punishment. These will be eighth, ninth graders, as well as high school students.

It's just one of those things that probably evolves. It probably comes out of the bicentennial. It comes out of the two-hundredth anniversary of the founding of our country, the writing of the Constitution, then the Bill of Rights, so we get into a big momentum of celebrating our basic rules. Then the bar association just said, "Well, what should we be doing about it? Not just being lawyers, but we should be teaching. We should help teach kids."

So these young men and women leaders: in Arkansas it's a woman; Oklahoma and Nebraska it's a man; and Indiana is the next place after that I go to.

Teachers who the bar association went in and recruited out of their teaching jobs to come in and represent the bar association.

TRELEVEN: Okay. As you do this, is the remuneration enough so this helps NCARL [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation]?

WILKINSON: Well, it's interesting. When I get invited places by NCARL, and occasionally by the First Amendment Foundation-- From the very beginning I was

invited in from the First Amendment Foundation, so the remuneration goes there. They always pay my fare, all my expenses, and this week for two days I'll probably get \$500. When I was four days in Nebraska last month, it was \$900. When I go back in October, the bar association luncheon alone is \$500 and I'm there for eight days. Arkansas--they called me yesterday--and said, "What should we have for you in the way of money?" Yes, it helps that I continue taking the same attitude we've always taken: I make the point that I do not accept a penny of this money myself. I endorse it all back into the movement, so get as much as you can is my attitude.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: I think that the standard of living is so much lower in these states than it is in California that a \$500 fee is much closer to what a \$2,000 fee would be here in California, I think, for the same thing.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: Anita Hill is now occasionally getting \$10,000 for her speaking fees. In fact, while I was in Oklahoma this week, the board of regents and the state legislature had a major fight over, "Why should we be giving her a sabbatical"--where every teacher is

entitled to 50 percent salary for a year of sabbatical--
"when she is going to be getting \$10,000 every time she
speaks? Oklahoma shouldn't have to be paying her
something." They would never do it to anyone else
except to Anita Hill. In other words, "What are you
going to do on your sabbatical? You going to make any
money? You going to write a book and make money? You
going to make a lecture?" To her they challenged it.
Well, she fought back and she's going to get her
sabbatical.

The point is that the state legislature hates her.
There's a mixture. There's a mixed thing that I just
watched there while you get the rank-and-file teacher
applauding, then on their feet--they had no idea that
they'd ever be on their feet applauding a black woman
in this capacity--so many men in Oklahoma completely
support Clarence Thomas just because he's a man and
she's a black woman.

TRELEVEN: Well, it makes one appreciate having a
strong [University of California] Board of Regents like
in California where, all in all, there's not been a lot
of meddling from the legislature. The board is a
fairly independent body. I don't want to go overboard
in emphasizing that because there have been instances
where meddling has been attempted, and has sometimes

been somewhat influential.

I guess the last question--this will lead us into thirty years ago--has to do with one of the current U.S. Supreme Court decisions--which went by a 5-4 vote--which seemed to be surprising because there were five individuals on the court who seemed to be taking, on one hand, a rather liberal interpretation; on the other hand, conservative in the Jeffersonian context. My overall question is going to be when you read of that kind of vote, is that encouraging to you that maybe the court is a little more liberal than you had thought it might be?

WILKINSON: No, it does not. On the other hand, whenever you condemn--or judge--a court, calling it the "Reagan court," or "Rehnquist court," or "Bush court," whatever you want to, there always are areas where a court will divide. I think on the school prayer situation, I think that was in Rhode Island where a rabbi was brought in to give a non-denominational prayer, and the court turned it down: you can't do that, and going back and upheld and reaffirmed a--the former justice after Warren--decision on school prayer, which was in 1965 or '66.

TRELEVEN: [Warren E.] Burger.

WILKINSON: Burger court.

TRELEVEN: You do forget names of people that you don't like very well. [laughter]

WILKINSON: Burger is not one of my favorites. [Earl] Warren I'll never forget, you see?

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: Anyhow, but on that decision there's some very interesting breaks on that thing. A couple of the judges--three of the judges, I guess; it was a 6-3 decision--adamantly opposed the position. But you have people like [Arthur M.] Kennedy, who we thought was so conservative here from California, and Sandra [Day] O'Connor taking a position of that.

A more serious thing would be the one I've already mentioned, the decision involving the cross burning, and tying that in with the symbolic meaning of burning the flag, which the court also upheld. Let's not forget that; the court did uphold that. But the thing we have to do is to read carefully into why these conservatives are doing something. There's some language in the cross-burning [decision] that would seem to repudiate certain protections we have for discrimination against women and minorities. There's some language in there that might go the other direction in terms of, we'll say, these demonstrations today on pro-choice. There might be something there.

They're seemingly coming down on the side of school prayer, or on burning a cross as a First Amendment right--symbolic right--which could lead to something very negative in terms of something we all care about. Of course, cross burning should be upheld as a symbolic thing, you might say. I don't think that really is the issue. The issue is that you don't prosecute a guy for symbolically burning a cross. You prosecute him for trespassing on other people's property, endangering property, endangering life. That's what you prosecute on, not on the symbolic First Amendment right to burn a cross. I mean, the mere fact that they picked that issue is something to be concerned about.

But a more dangerous one that I think really goes to the heart of my concerns is that this last week--two weeks ago--the Supreme Court upheld the kidnapping law, which was written for the FBI in June of 1989, and allows the FBI or other agents of the government to go to friendly countries and kidnap people and bring them back here, contrary to extradition under the laws. The fact that that was upheld and is now the law of the land is really, really monstrous. It's shocking. It goes in the face of international law, treaty law, extradition law, you name it, and puts the United States in position as an outlaw nation. We claim the

right to go to your country, grab anybody off the streets, and bring them here at our desire. We don't even care whether we have an extradition treaty with you. That day if we don't want to wait for extradition, we're going to bring them in. That being upheld.

The fact of who was on that thing: you really get the hard-core people that are there, and it was all of them. Even Clarence Thomas came out in favor of kidnapping.

I talked to Anita Hill about that in Oklahoma on Monday when we were together. Here's a guy who struggled up from slavery where his people were kidnapped from Africa to be brought here as slaves, and 200 years later when he uses affirmative action to get onto the Supreme Court--working his way up--then he upholds kidnapping of another form. It shows great weaknesses.

I think my reaction on the courts is that the court is going wrong. Even where it goes right, it's important that we look closely at the fine print to see if they're not laying a little trap down the road where we'll lose something far more important than something symbolically called the right to burn a flag.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Supreme Court, February 27, 1961,

voted 5-4 in the cases of you and Carl. You bought a little more time by asking for a rehearing, according to Dick Criley's FBI v. The First Amendment, and I get the idea between February 27 and the time you had to be in Atlanta, which was May 1, that--

WILKINSON: Symbolically, again, May Day.

TRELEVEN: [laughter] --you were doing a little barnstorming around the country, both you and Carl appearing at gatherings and fund-raisers, I suppose. We know all of this because of the careful documentation kept by the FBI which you got your hands on, later.

Tell me about showing up at-- You go to Atlanta on May 1, and where do you go?

WILKINSON: Well, the end of all these wonderful speakings-- They were not fund-raisings, by the way, although funds were just pouring in at that time, which helped to guarantee that the National Committee to Abolish HUAC would survive while I was in jail. Mostly, it was just an outpouring, I think, of interest on the part of people generally, students in particular, in respect to a couple of guys who were voluntarily going to jail for the First Amendment challenge of the unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities]. Again, all these

large demonstrations came between the end of February and May Day, 1961.

We've got to go back, up until February the 15th, we'll say, of 1960: we had a totally silent generation from the Cold War of the forties through February of 1960, when these black students enter a Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina. So just a year later we have thousands and thousands of students turning out.

The last thing that I just wanted to mention again--I probably mentioned before--is for me that the most important emotionally--because I really wasn't prepared for all this speaking, I didn't find out why I was really in prison till I was in there, thanks to the reading regimen that Alexander Meiklejohn gave me--came when the last night Martin Luther King, Jr. had a reception in our honor at Morehouse College in Atlanta, and a large number of black clergy were there. Carl Braden and myself and Dr. James [A.] Dombrowski of SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund] were the only white people there. Dr. King addressed them and used this language which meant a lot to me as I'm going to jail that night, the next morning: "These men are going to jail for us. We'll never achieve peaceable integration in the South until the unAmerican

activities committee is abolished." Then he and Coretta [Scott] King took us to dinner, a private dinner; we just sat down to dinner at a private place, and then we went on to jail.

In entering the jail--

TRELEVEN: And this was the Fulton County jail, I guess.

WILKINSON: Fulton County jail. Actually, what you do is you go to the federal building to surrender. You're already told to appear at a certain time, a certain hour. You've lost all your appeals, and they had dragged on from the end of February till May 1. So you're now told to surrender on May 1. I think, probably, lawyers have some way of saying what time of day that should be done, 10 a.m. So we walk in there in street clothes, carrying a brief case, carrying books I wanted to read. Your life just instantly changes. You walk through the little wooden gate, we'll say, to go into the inner offices of the FBI--or the Justice Department--there, and your pockets are emptied. Your briefcase is taken away from you. You're walked right across the room, and something you thought was another door is a holding cell. You're sitting in a holding cell in the same federal building where you walked in voluntarily a few minutes before.

Like the prison doors literally close on you in a symbolic way the moment you surrender.

From there we're driven to the Fulton County jail. The whole treatment from the time you arrive there is just so repressive on you. Your life, your freedom, is so symbolically taken away from you: the way your arm is taken and you're directed; doors are opened and you don't walk through--there's a little push to help you through; you're fingerprinted; you're picture's taken; then you're marched down a corridor, this stainless steel Fulton County jail.

Carl and I, assuming we're together, are separated. He is taken to the right side to go into one holding tank of sixteen people, and I am in another thing on the other side, so we didn't even have that protection. You walk in there, the door is opened and I want to emphasize these clanging steel doors. I just can't get over it. In all the prisons I was in, the jarring impact on your senses of having these doors open with a clang and close with a clang. No one could sleep or say something when it was there. Fulton County was the most modern stainless-steel jail in the country, at that time.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let me turn the tape over.

TAPE NUMBER XXXIX, SIDE TWO

JUNE 27, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on.

WILKINSON: All right. You walk in there. I look at my new roommates. It was what would be called a drunk tank. Sixteen bunks, a small amount of walking space, and one metal table, not really a space for people to sit down except in their bunk, and yet you're in a group together. They're looking at you out of curiosity, and they're looking at you out of, "Who the hell are you?" I don't know what went on on Carl's side, but on my side I come in there wearing a-- I probably still had my suit. They hadn't taken my clothes away from me yet. These are people who have been locked up in a sunlightless room for six months or more in the holding tank. We're on the second floor and these men are all white. We later would learn that all the black inmates are taken to the first floor and they are in with all blacks. Completely segregated.

On the tables, I think deliberately arranged by the warden--I can't help but believe it; I never saw newspapers generally getting into the prisons while I was there--was the Atlanta Constitution, or some paper, with pictures of Carl Braden and me being embraced by

Dr. Martin Luther King. The headlines in those days were that Freedom Riders had been arrested in Alabama, many were beaten as they came in, and the police standing by allowing people to be beaten. It was a very, very angry situation. The concept of two guys coming in there for a First Amendment challenge of the unAmerican activities committee was beyond anyone's comprehension. They assumed we were Freedom Riders and we were being jailed because of it. We were friends of Dr. King, and that could not be a worse identification.

If I've mentioned this to you before stop me, because I'd only been in the room a few minutes and I sensed the hostility, and I went directly to this metal table and on the table--the only book in the room--was a Bible. I just, out of self protection, walked over and sat down, picked up the Bible, and began to read. I just sensed that any eye contact would be dangerous.

I don't know how many minutes it was, but very shortly after that this door clangs again, in comes the guard with this paper sack, and calls out my name as though he didn't know who I was. He'd just brought me in there. I take the paper sack. That was the first contact I had with these men. I had the sack, the guard leaves, the doors clang. Two of these sort of bigger, controlling guys--there's a real hierarchy

among inmates as to who is in charge, who gets the food first, and who gets everything best--they take the sack out of my hand. They open it up and in it was a book. In it was a rose bud, the top of a rose. I didn't know how this had happened until after I was out of prison, but a Quaker lady--

TRELEVEN: Was this Isabel Cerney?

WILKINSON: Yes. How did you remember? Is that in the record somehow?

TRELEVEN: Oh, I have my ways. [laughter]

WILKINSON: All right. [laughter] I'd forgotten her name. Isabel Cerney. I've always associated her with Northern California.

TRELEVEN: Well, her name popped up and I was going to ask you during this interview who she was because--

WILKINSON: Right. Well, she was a very devout Quaker and she was also very much a person under attack for her views, as somebody who was too Left, a mixture of being both a Quaker and too Left. I can't now quickly identify her beyond that, but it seems to me that she, herself, was called before HUAC at some point, probably in the Bay Area. Maybe she was one of the teachers that was called up. I can't quite remember.

Anyway, she'd come to the prison with a dozen roses and a book for me, entitled (whatever it was) the

writings of George Fox [A Collection of Several Books and Writings Given Forth by that Faithful Servant of God and His People: George Fox, the Younger], who was the seventeenth, eighteenth-century Quaker in England who was the founder of the Society of Friends, the Quaker movement. That's where we hear about the Quakers, people who were denied their freedom by the high Church of England, and they were being jailed for their religious views. The Quakers kept condemning on the rooftops the mistreatment of their brethren of the faith, the Quakers. So she thought I would like to read that because it was a comparable period: I'm being jailed for my views, the same as George Fox was.

Then they pull out this rose. What had happened, [is that] she'd come there and said, "Take these to Mr. Wilkinson, please." She asked to see me, and they said, "You can't see anybody here."

"But I'm his minister," or something that she created.

"I'm sorry, you cannot see him."

"Well, then, here, take this." She gave them a dozen roses and this book in a sack. She [later] said the man said, "You cannot take flowers to somebody in here." Then, at that point, she told me, she just took one rose of the dozen and ripped off the top--very

little stem and no leaf at all--and threw it in the sack, took the rest of the roses back to herself, and with the rose bud and the book in there said, "Now take that to this man." The man looked at the George Fox [book] and didn't know who the hell he was and brought it in to me.

But the moment that rose came out of that sack, there was something psychologically transfigured. It changed the whole situation toward me. It got their eyes off me and the Freedom Riders, and all that stuff. These guys had not seen sunlight for six months. Nothing living. They took this and held it in their hand. One guy picked up a tobacco can off the table, went over to the toilet and scooped it full of water, brought it back on the table, and then two of them managed to prop up that rose bud in that tobacco can. During the eleven days that we spent in that room, they kept that rose alive.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: Somehow or other, the possibility of attacks on me went away. There were no conversations. No, "Who are you?" or, "What are you in there for?" Nothing at all; there was just no communication.

This new Fulton County jail: when I was called out later to see a lawyer, [I could see that] it was done

to house so many hundreds of inmates economically. So it was like spokes on a chain. All the prison cells go out from the center and the center was where the main guards were. The distance between that main-guard place and the last cell block, where we were, could be a good hundred feet. But there were mirrors along, where they could somehow see trouble on either side flashing back to the center. If somebody had decided to beat me up, or gang rape me, or anything that they might have done--and gang raping certainly is a real possibility in those places--I would have had no chance at all. By the time the guards would have come there, whatever they were going to do to me would have been done, and I would have been severely hurt or killed by these guys. It's just that way.

The other thing about it is that soon after I was in there and this rose thing was over with, black inmates came along the outside corridor. There was a steel door here and then this is a concrete wall going down one side of it where the food is shoved in through a little hole in the wall. That's the way we got our food, shoved in, and that's where these hierarchically controlled inmates decided what the food is going to be, who's going to get it, and how much you're going to get. I was lowest, lowest man on the totem pole.

Whatever was left was what I got. They took all the choice themselves. I certainly never thought about complaining about anything.

On the other side, there were steel bars and going out to a corridor and the black inmates from the first floor were required to clean the corridor outside our cell block. I watched these white inmates in with me take human feces out of the toilet, throw them out on the corridor, and address the black inmates. You know, the language: I don't think I'd ever heard the word mother fucker before, and everything was a mother fucker. Everything was a mother fucker, mother fucker. Every word.

TRELEVEN: These were the white guys saying this?

WILKINSON: These are white guys addressing, "You black mother fucker, clean up that shit." You know? The guards are there to demand that they do clean up the excrement thrown out on the floor. I watched that, and that just paralyzed me because all I would have to do is to protest, "That's no way to talk to someone else," or, "You shouldn't do that," and believe me--

Then I got another knock on the door, it opened, and I'm called again. This time I'm called out. I don't know what it is. It turns out that one of Carl Braden's lawyers [Len Holt] (he lives in Berkeley now)

was a black lawyer from North Carolina. After we were in jail Carl's lawyer from New York, which was Leonard [E.] Boudin, and his lawyer from Kentucky, Bishop C. Eubank Tucker, they're far, far away, so they had this guy go in and check to see how we were doing.

He had come to the prison to visit us, and he described to us later what happened. They had never had an example where a black lawyer was legally entitled to talk to a white inmate. They had black-lawyer rooms on the first floor, white-lawyer rooms on the second floor, and they didn't mix up. There was a question: do they bring the black lawyer up? We're white inmates. We're supposed to be seen in the white interview room. Do they bring him up there, or do they bring the white inmates down to the black place? For very obviously class-related reasons, they brought Carl and me down to the black interview room and kept the black lawyer "in his place" among black lawyers on the first floor.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: We're in there and we don't know what's going on. Carl and I see each other for the first time. "How's it going?" Quick, you know; you don't even know what to say or talk about, "What are you being called out for?" We have a very short time, we

go down there, the door is opened, and we're pushed in to an interview room where it's all heavy screen mesh. (You can see a copy of that mesh in this book that Dick Criley wrote, The FBI v. The First Amendment.) We're in there not knowing what it is, and then up to the window comes this black lawyer who we recognize and know. But around outside are all these white guards watching. I mean, technically, you could have slipped something. There wasn't glass where you'd talk through a telephone; it was a mesh. We could have sent something through to him or he could have sent something through to us. They were just standing around watching every motion of everything that was done. We just sat there grimly, worried for ourselves and worried for him. What was going to happen? What was he there for? What's up?

He calmly said, "Everybody wanted to know how you guys are doing, so I've been sent to find out how's everything going here?" I don't know what we said, but it would have been very, very few words like, "We're all right," something like that. "Don't worry; we're all right," because everything that we've said is being heard by the power structure of the prison.

Then he smiles at us and he says, "Now, look guys, don't be so serious here. Give me a smile. People

want to know you're really all right." We didn't smile or anything. He touched his necktie and he had a hidden camera inside his necktie. With guards on all sides, he flashed a picture of us. We have it to this day. It's an unbelievable picture, a picture of us sitting inside that mesh room wondering what was going to happen.

Then we're back to our place. We remained there for eleven days, and it was really touch-and-go all that time.

TRELEVEN: Right. I have a few things here in my notes. I've read through your prison letters. That's where Cerney's name came up. In those letters you mentioned that you would turn off your hearing aid and read.

WILKINSON: In Atlanta?

TRELEVEN: In Atlanta.

WILKINSON: Huh. That's interesting. Reading. I had that book of Fox and I think they did let me have--

TRELEVEN: Okay, then on May 8, you had written that you had gotten some more books and also that Cerney was allowed to visit you.

WILKINSON: I never saw her to my knowledge. I have no recollection of her getting in there.

TRELEVEN: And by May 10 you had received some letters

from various people.

WILKINSON: I don't remember seeing Cerney. I presume Cerney's still living up in the Bay Area. I don't know. She was an older person than I was then. Who knows?

TRELEVEN: Anyway, you've told me over the years that it's distinctly advantageous at times for you to be able to turn off your hearing completely, and sleep or read.

WILKINSON: You know, I do this so instinctively now. At first, when I was in there, I wouldn't have done it but the noise of sixteen guys in a room much smaller than your living room--

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: --with bunks. You know, bunk, bunk, bunk and a table, and concrete, concrete, concrete, concrete, concrete and then here. Then the attack upon the other, black inmates outside; it was just jarring. Just like I even do today when I get on an airplane, I turn off my hearing aid so I can sleep or read while I'm crossing the country, and I did it there.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. We're looking at a living room that's about maybe 12 x 18 [feet], and you're saying it's smaller than that.

WILKINSON: Oh, yeah. This looks big compared to that.

You know, where do you sit? I remember sitting on the floor. See, you sit on your bunk, you sit on the concrete floor, or again, the hierarchical control about who gets to sit at that table. If there were two tables there, I can't remember. There were two toilets over there. You know, there was water. There was some sort of a cold-water spout where you could wash your hands, I guess you could. No showers or anything like that. The two toilets were without any seats on them, so you squatted on the toilet. You squat on the toilet with sixteen guys watching you, telling you to not fart, not stink, and all this stuff--"Flush it, goddamn you"--while you're trying to do it. It's a wonder you don't get horrible constipation.

TRELEVEN: Geez.

WILKINSON: But I would have learned to turn off my hearing aid. Of course later, when I was taken out of South Carolina and put in the solitary back at Lewisburg, I needed my hearing aid and I didn't have any batteries. I couldn't hear the commands when they opened the cell blocks. I knew you could get out then and go lock-step to the shower, or get food. I couldn't hear it, so I missed a number of these calls. I just didn't get out in time. Then they'd close it up again.

Books. That's interesting. I wonder what books there were. I think one of the earliest books I got was a book on the life of Eugene Debs [The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs] written by Ray Ginger.

TRELEVEN: I'll be darned.

WILKINSON: Somehow that got into that prison to me. I read that book, and I could hardly believe that they were letting me read these wild speeches that Debs would make about the ruling class and the working class. *[Some of Debs's writing was done in the penitentiary in Atlanta, a short distance from where Carl and I were incarcerated forty years later!] You know, his rhetoric was like Carl Braden's, not like mine; I never used that language. Carl always talked about the ruling class. Here I'm reading this thing and looking around wondering if [laughter] people know what I'm thinking about, you know. Yes, I think it was there in Fulton County, because I don't think they would even let the Harvard law professor's book on free speech in to me in South Carolina. They were very restrictive. But Ray Ginger's book got in there

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

early.

TRELEVEN: Okay. You're there about ten days. It kind of squares with your letters. In the late afternoon on one of those days--it's May 11th it looks like--the federal marshal picked up you and Carl. You indicated in your letter that you had hoped to be transferred to California. Did you really think that might be possible?

WILKINSON: This was a request being made to get near my family, yes. (I never thought about that till now.) Yes, there were real efforts being made to get Carl in a prison near Kentucky, and to get me near a prison in California. That would have made all the difference in the world in my life if I could have got out of the South, because I can't imagine any prisons in California that would be-- You know, it would be more like Lompoc, or somewhere where these bank and savings and loan [white-collar] robbers are [laughter] jailed. So there was that effort made.

Again, I'd forgotten about it. I hadn't mentioned it. These are helpful reminders to me. It's a good thing you had the letters to look at.

TRELEVEN: So the marshal comes to pick you up, but do you really know where you're going? Are you told where you're going before you actually get to the air force

base?

WILKINSON: I don't remember. I just remember the way they locked us up. They put on handcuffs, they put chains around our belt, and chains around our feet. They just treated us like we were going to run away, or something, and put us in the back seat of this car, with the guys in the front with some protective barrier. No handles on the doors so you couldn't get out of the back seat. We could very well have been told we were going to South Carolina. We probably would have even asked it. It was the suddenness of all these changes. For example, we were never told we would be in Fulton County jail for ten or eleven days; never told anything. We could have been moved out the next day or in two days, or we could have been in there for two months. The guys who were in there had been there for six months. Suddenly, the clanging doors open, your name is called out, and you're walked out. You get a minute to grab whatever gear you've got, then you go out to the other part of the prison where you're searched, chained, and walked out a door. People sign you out, and you're put in the hands of these two federal marshals.

TRELEVEN: What did your fellow white prisoners say to you as you were leaving?

WILKINSON: Not a word that I remember.

TRELEVEN: Really?

WILKINSON: There were no friendships.

TRELEVEN: No communications?

WILKINSON: No meaningful communication that I remember. I used to worry at night when I was sleeping that I might get hurt.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Sexually, I'd heard a good deal about sexual harassment of individual inmates, and certainly I was a perfect set-up there if somebody wanted to.

The only thing I really remember is a guy in the cell above me--or beneath--had an epileptic attack in the middle of the night. We all were awakened and I was out of my bunk. He was lying on the floor in a (what do you call it?) trembling [grand mal seizure], and we were holding onto his head to keep him from banging it on the floor. He was just hurting himself.

Then the thing that I had never heard of before: they began taking whatever cup they had, rattled it on the bars, shouting out, "Doctor boy, Doctor boy, Doctor boy." That was the expression they used to call the guards to come for medical help. It seemed like a long, long time before the door opened and somebody came in. This guy was still in convulsions. I was

holding his head myself, because in his convulsions he'd bang his head on anything, and he was just about killing himself. I'd never seen an epileptic convulsion like that where I didn't know what to do. I thought it may have been a heart attack or something. I'd never seen it. It took a long time. They finally got there and he was taken out. (That's funny that memory comes back.)

I don't remember an awful lot. I just remember that I felt so threatened in that Fulton County jail. I thought the smart thing to do was just to read and have as little eye contact as I could--and responding to any questions, you know. But they didn't ask me many questions. They weren't asking me, "Where do you come from? What's it all about? Are you a Freedom Rider?" They didn't ask those questions. We were so totally different in culture. These guys were what were stereotypes of Southern Georgia "rednecks."

TRELEVEN: "Crackers," or something like that?

WILKINSON: Right. They had been arrested for serious crimes, not federal crimes, state crimes, Atlanta crimes, and are in there for a long time. I know that they had not seen daylight, most of them, for six months. No one was taken out, no one was added while we were there. I was the last one in and it filled it

up.

No communication with Carl for eleven days. I didn't know where he was, even. I had a vision that I saw him go into a place across the way, but you couldn't call over there. There was a little food trap, this slit in the wall where they'd slip in plates of food. Apparently, some truck would go along and would serve it; whatever you got came in that way.

Again, the bureaucracy. It's just amazing how there was leadership there in that cell, and it wasn't elected leadership. It had to do with body strength, size, how old you were, and how tough you were. I remember one of the tough guys watching me eat and said, "You want this?" and he took a half of piece of bread off his plate and tossed it to me. I wasn't getting any bread that day, but he offered it to me. "Thank you." You know. [laughter]

TRELEVEN: Later, when you talked to Carl, was Carl a little more comfortable because these were the kind of people that Carl was more culturally acquainted with?

WILKINSON: Definitely. I think always. Not only there, but in South Carolina. Carl was always-- Well, Carl talked, you might say, the dialect, the language, the accents were his, and Carl never looked as bourgeois as I did. He was grossly overweight and he

didn't wear the kind of clothes I wore. He talked more. I don't think he was ever threatened. He was just another guy. I just remember that--I want to be sure I don't repeat myself--in driving from Atlanta to Greensboro--

TRELEVEN: Greenville?

WILKINSON: Greenville, South Carolina-- Understand, I'd never been through any of this area. It's all totally new to me. I had to urinate, and I told these guys. There was no food for us to eat.

TRELEVEN: Okay, this is in the vehicle going--

WILKINSON: In the vehicle. I said I had to go to the toilet, and they argued with me or something. Finally, in a very dirty little station with a hand-pump tank out front where you pump the gas in--in this farming area--they pull up and both the guys get out. You know, they do this police business, their guns, checking our chains to be sure they're okay. I'm allowed to struggle on my chains a few feet to get into the toilet. They come to the toilet door and I'm so tightly chained I cannot pull my fly down on my pants. I remember sort of a cynical vicious feeling I had toward these guys. I say, "Will you pull my fly down for me so I can urinate?" I felt like saying, "Will you hold it for me so I can urinate?" It was just that

crazy situation. That was just an example of how silly it was. They would not even release one of our hands to urinate. Here we are in there on a constitutional issue--First Amendment, voluntarily surrendered, everything that way--but we were treated as though we were the worst, most dangerous criminals who are going to flee at the first opportunity.

We finally get to this prison in Greenville and these guards take us right in to the control office where the warden's office was. They surrender us. They're responsible to get you from this place to that place. There's a certain point inside the Greenville area where you are transferred, where somebody else signs saying you're now in their possession. At that point, when those papers are signed, the chains are taken off, and then you're free. Then they leave and then you're there.

Everybody said, "Talk with the warden about what you're going to do in the prison." It's orientation, I guess you'd call it. There was a warden back of a table--or a desk, and a chair in front--and I just respectfully moved forward and was told to go in and sit down. So I went and sat down in that chair. Immediately, the warden looked up at me and said, "Get out of that chair. Don't sit down. I know all about

you. I don't want any teaching here. Get out of there!" That was my whole orientation. So from these guys to this other guy, this idea, "I don't want any teaching here," as though-- What-- Not asking the question, "What is your name?"

Of course, we now know that the FBI had literally checked out everybody at the prisons as to how dangerous we were, how we were to be watched, how our mail was to be opened. We have FBI statements showing they had a problem. They wanted to read every letter that came to us and that they didn't have any photocopying--what do you call it; there was no xeroxing in those days--

TRELEVEN: Oh, thermofax, or something like that.

WILKINSON: Something like that. They couldn't do it there, so our mail had to go, I think, back to the prison in Atlanta to be copied. It was a big concern on their part that everything we received and everything we wrote had to be double-checked.

Then I remember we became conscious of one of the inmates-- Oh, I know, the guy who was in charge of the mailroom at Greenville. I've never seen Greenville, by the way. I just came in and I [laughter] went right into this funny little--

TRELEVEN: Right. And this prison was adjacent to--

WILKINSON: --to an air force base.

TRELEVEN: --Donaldson Air Force Base?

WILKINSON: That's right.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: But that part was miles away. You could see planes taking off from quite a ways away. At any rate, the guy told us that our mail was being held up, and we were anxious to get certain mail. When our mail came in, apparently--when the post office brought it to Greenville--somebody, somewhere, took our letters, put them on a truck, the truck was driven back to Atlanta where they were copied, and hurriedly done so it wouldn't appear to us to be a long delay. Why they had to be so careful I don't know; I guess they were afraid of our legal contacts and legal right to things. This inmate was a Jewish guy in charge of the mailroom, and he wore a yarmulke and a prayer shawl on certain weekly holy days. We told him we needed a certain letter, and he puts on his yarmulke and puts on his prayer shawl, and carrying a Bible, a Torah, walks down the cell-block area, and, saying something religiously--like it was a prayer, or something--when no one was looking he'd open up the Torah, pull out two letters, throw them into our bed, and close it up, go on with his prayer, and then go back again. Of course, our job was

to get those letters out of sight immediately so that no one would ever get it.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: That way we got some letters that never got read by them.

TRELEVEN: I'll be darned.

WILKINSON: That was quite a thing; it was the first real contact we had when we found the inmate population--other than Fulton County jail--were so wonderful in terms of their respect for a fellow inmate. They hated the hacks. The guards were just hated.

TRELEVEN: Okay, and there were a lot of bootleggers there, if I recall from your letters.

WILKINSON: Yeah, they were all bootleggers and moonshiners. I think there were a couple other guys there for some other crime.

TRELEVEN: So they really hate the feds.

WILKINSON: They really hate the hacks.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: We never talked about guards. They were the hacks, unless there was a guard around you; then he was a guard. But the word of mouth-- I'm put into a cell with two moonshiners and bootleggers. There's three of us, again cramped; maybe it was three decks or

two decks and then one that way, tiny little thing here, and that was where I first was put. You had a lot of freedom after you got in there, but you walked out of your building to a place where you ate. Where you ate there was also a weight room where you could exercise. There was a shower in your building. You'd get out of your place and go to your shower, on your own. But lights-out and getting up were all very tightly controlled. Your bed had to be made up and folded, you know, like [in the] military: a wrinkle in your sheet on your bed was a demerit against you. We were given wax. They had this tile. What do you call this hard tile? Ceramic tile.

TRELEVEN: Ceramic.

WILKINSON: Something like that. (You may have them in the hallway out there. I don't know what it's called.) At any rate, we had to take off the old polish and put on fresh polish, and polish, polish. They'd come by and look under your bed. If there was any blemish, any dust--anything like that--it was always on you that way. You had a box where you were allowed to keep your gear, and the team of guards--three or four--checked my box. (I don't know about Carl's; he's down a ways.) It seemed like every time there was some reason for me to leave, I'd come back repeatedly and find three

guards in my cell with all of my gear laid out, all my books, all my letters, everything laid out. "Just stand back." They're looking for some--what do you call it when it's an illegal thing that you're--?

TRELEVEN: Contraband?

WILKINSON: Contraband, that's what they're looking for. They were looking for it. They would go through the books, you know. I had the Congressional Record sent to me, and they were going through that stuff looking for something.

There's a place you could buy cigarettes and candy, I guess. Well, cigarettes was the legal tender. If you wanted a favor, you gave a guy so many packs of cigarettes. So I always bought cartons of cigarettes so if you're in trouble you give a guy a pack and make friends with him. If you want something you do that.

But I know every time I went to chapel--Sunday evening religious service--I'd come back and inevitably there'd be three guards going through my things. Whenever I was going away unexpectedly they were doing that.

TRELEVEN: Why?

WILKINSON: It was just like they were going to find something. I mean, anyone who wanted to frame me--

TRELEVEN: It's J. Edgar looking for the smoking gun.

WILKINSON: Yeah. If somebody wanted to frame me, if they had put in any contraband into my box, I could have said, "I never saw it before; I don't know what it is." All they'd do is have to find that and I would have gone back not to the Fulton County, I'd have gone back to the Atlanta penitentiary and remained in the Atlanta penitentiary under the same kind of control that I [later] got up in [the] Lewisburg penitentiary.

TRELEVEN: Did you feel that your stuff was being checked more than other people's?

WILKINSON: Oh, completely.

TRELEVEN: Really?

WILKINSON: Everything. We knew that. That, again, you hear partly through inmates.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so through the prison grapevine.

WILKINSON: Right, right. Now, let me give you some positive expressions about the situation. By the way, what my job was: What to do with me? Here I am, in with 400 inmates. Carl and I are two of maybe four people with an education. The average inmate had a third-grade Piedmont education, by which I mean the rural areas of northern Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, where the schools were miles and miles away on dirt roads and they're just not educated. Forty of the 400 signed an X. Of all things, they

don't know what to do with me. They won't let me teach. I'm sent to the library--which is also a point where you got tested for your IQ and intelligence to decide where you go in the prison--where there is the most modern-looking projection equipment, and all the films for teaching reading and writing to adults. That thing was kept wrapped up in plastic. I was never allowed to open that; I was not allowed to teach the alphabet to one of these inmates. They'd come to me and asked me to write.

Carl and I wrote letters constantly for these guys. That was fascinating because of the way they would write--the language, you know--it's the most personal thing: "Dear Mommy," or, "Dear Mommy and Daddy," and what they would say. I had a hard time doing it because I simply, with the guy right next to me, and me holding the letter and the pen, could not understand what they were saying. They'd say they were from such-and-such a town. Greenville would not been Greenville but "Gre'vul", and "Spatnba, Spatnba." I said, "What's that? Where's Spatnba?" It turned out that "Spatnba" was Spartanburg.

So Carl did most of it because he understood the language. I struggled. I wanted to help. I wanted to write. I wanted to help these guys.

Enough.

TRELEVEN: Let's turn the tape over.

WILKINSON: Okay.

TAPE NUMBER: XL, SIDE ONE

JUNE 27, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on. From your letters a few items, little memory joggers for you: you found that this was an integrated facility with about one-third--you estimated--of the inmates being Negro.

WILKINSON: Did I use the word Negro?

TRELEVEN: Yes, you did. Well, that was the word at the time. You were spending some time typing out prisoner educational vocational analyses. You put that in quotes.

You began reading [Winston L. S.] Churchill's History of World War II. On behalf of a bootlegger you wrote a letter to a federal judge asking for his early release so he would be back home in time for the 1962 tobacco crop. By July 1st of '61 you had lost twenty-four pounds.

WILKINSON: I lost a total of fifty pounds during my prison sentence.

TRELEVEN: On the 8th of July, in the midst of hot and humid South Carolina, you finally got issued a second blanket, which became a camp joke.

WILKINSON: I was always frightfully cold. In fact, the only way I could stay warm enough was to put

newspapers underneath my blanket and my sheet to keep myself warm at night. There was always a problem: how to make up my bed without a wrinkle and still have newspapers underneath the blanket. Very cold.

TRELEVEN: Those are a few of the things.

WILKINSON: Well, they're interesting. Very, very interesting.

TRELEVEN: Why don't you come back to when you arranged to have the mail person secretly leave a letter for you. Where would you put the letter in order that it not be discovered during these searches? Maybe that went under your bed, too?

WILKINSON: You couldn't hide anything. I think there was such round-the-clock surveillance of me, and Carl too, that I think I would have buried the letter. I kept my other letters, and I would have put them in with the other letters just like a routine thing so that they wouldn't know that it was something different from the other letters. But we now know that every-- In fact, last year the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] sent me photocopies of every letter that I received and wrote while I was in prison. They have given them to me now.

TRELEVEN: Right, right.

WILKINSON: Which shows what they were doing. We had

some added problems on corresponding, I remember, when Carl's birthday and my birthday came about the same time.

TRELEVEN: This would be in August.

WILKINSON: In August. Somebody dreamed up an idea of having people write a letter to Carl and me. In other words, you have an approved correspondence list, but on a birthday anybody can send a card to an inmate. So there was a national letter-writing campaign that Carl and I never knew about. It infuriated the prison because they're supposed to deliver it. I don't know if they tried to photograph those. But mail call was [held in] sort of an out-of-the-buildings area where your name was called out and you got your mail. For two weeks' time, a guy came down from where the mail room was--where they were picked up and brought in--with a wheelbarrow stacked with letters and cards to me and Carl. You know, "Here you are, Wilkinson." You know, the other inmates couldn't understand: "How in the world could you have so many friends?" They didn't quite understand us. In a way it was a healthy thing because it gave the inmates the feeling that we were something unique and different.

Let's go back to the first thing you mentioned about the writing of evaluations, or something.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: The one job the warden did give me to do, which is contradictory to "there's no teaching here," I gave the Army Alpha Beta Intelligence [Test] examinations to all incoming inmates. It was my job to interview them, write up their backgrounds, and turn it over to the warden in order to him decide how they were going to be used. Carl was taken inside the warden's office to do something in there. He needed somebody who could typewrite. Just the fact of being able to type and write, you know, was amazing. So for months, every new inmate had to pass through me. You know, I am the dangerous guy, you might say, but every new inmate comes to me to be checked out, intelligence measurements, to get his background and recommend what work he should do in the prison.

That brings back memories, again, of the poverty of the area. These men could go out and do anything in the way of hard work you asked them to do, but you tell them that at two o'clock this afternoon you're to go to the education building and take an examination, that frightened these guys. They would come down there to me. It was like a classroom. They sat at a desk. As soon as they sat at a desk, the sweat would begin breaking out on these guys. I'd hand them a piece of

paper and a pencil, and the sweat literally would break out. The most common thing was that their glasses "was busted," and they couldn't see. Could they wait?

These guys never had glasses, but that was the claim they had. Guys that could only put an X. There were the most simple type of intelligence measurements, like squares, and cubes, and words mixed up. You're supposed to identify which is this, which is that. I remember saying at the time, "If you ask these guys to take a squirrel rifle and go out and pick the owl, or the brightest plumage on the highest branch of the tree, they could pick it out on that eyehole instantly." Excellent marksmen with a squirrel rifle, but you ask them to look at a piece of paper and say, "Which is the owl?" the sweat would break out and then they couldn't write. Their intelligence ratings were very, very hard to measure because we didn't have the equipment to do it right and it could not be done verbally, easily, and could not be done with writing at all. So it mostly was a matter of looking at something and tell us which square is higher? Which is the smaller? What your eye would see in terms of graphic images. But I remember doing that. And then I wrote these things up. I had to write them up.

I also had to write up all the library

acquisitions that came in. People dumped books on this poor little prison that no one would ever put into a [typical] library. The best thing in the library was its comic books. It's what people really wanted. Almost nobody came in there to take a book out.

The end story, which you may have already from me, is how Carl and I got put out of South Carolina when we went to the warden and got the library opened up so that inmates could get comic books. Let me tell that story at some point before we leave South Carolina, because that was the end of our experience there.

TRELEVEN: Well, you mentioned the education work and you indicated in a number of letters that you really sort of threw yourself into this getting prisoners involved in the educational work. It seems like maybe you were becoming too helpful for your own good? In that regard, in October--and this was a month before you were suddenly transferred--you had succeeded in getting more music appreciation-hour on the prison radio?

WILKINSON: That's right.

TRELEVEN: What was going on there?

WILKINSON: Well, they had an inmate-- You're in your bunk, and without your control music was piped in to the whole cell block. Me, with my hearing aid, I could

turn it off. But if you didn't have that, you had to hear it. The music that came in was the choice of this one guy. It was all country music, and not enough variety of it. I went somehow to somebody and got a committee to enlarge on the music selections so the inmates could ask for certain music and they would get it. Some of it would be religious hymns. They wanted more religious hymns and less country rock, or whatever it would have been called. I did work on that and I did get the music changed to a variety, not what I liked, but what they wanted. They had a choice. They could turn in to me the music they wanted, I turned it in to this other guy, and he would put it on.

There's another thing that I worked on. At night there was a room where you could watch television. One guy controlled the channels, what you got, and that was the only thing. You know, you might want this or that, but you didn't get that; it was only the guy who was in charge who had that right, that power. I worked on trying to get a greater variety.

The thing I immediately remember as the most popular television was--if I can remember her name-- Leslie-- It's a beautiful black woman.

TRELEVEN: Uggams?

WILKINSON: Uggams. Yes, Leslie Uggams. The white

inmates were turned off by her because she was black. The black inmates wanted her, and they would fight to get good seats in the television room the night Leslie Uggams was on. I was attracted to her as a woman and I loved to watch her. I fell in love with her like everyone else does. There's no women, but a certain woman you see on television that you fall in love with, you have fantasies with. I never forgot that. If anyone had tried to turn off Leslie Uggams, there would have been violence. Also, the way the thing would change. The room would fill with blacks and empty with whites. Those were the things that went on. Oh, gee.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Both you and Carl--in fact, Carl became the secretary for three months--got very involved in Alcoholics Anonymous [AA] meetings.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: What's behind that?

WILKINSON: That was fascinating. Here we are in prison under twenty-four-hour supervision by umpteen people for our alleged dangerous political ideas. The main social issue for so many of these inmates was that they were alcoholics. They were really scared stiff to get out because they knew if they would take another drink, they'd die. They felt fortunate to be in prison. Guys wanted to come to prison for a couple of

reasons. They wanted it to escape from the danger of alcohol, and, secondly, to have their teeth pulled because they all had terrible teeth. Everybody that got there asked, "When can I get my teeth pulled?" They had all their teeth pulled and then they would get some very, very bad--

TRELEVEN: --false teeth.

WILKINSON: --false teeth. The teeth were pulled by inmates--

TRELEVEN: Oh, my god.

WILKINSON: --and the other things were made by inmates. There were no dentists; sort of a dentist's helper.

But on this alcoholism: any activity in the prison, there was always a guard present--except at AA. At AA no guard was to be allowed in. Carl and I did not go in because, again, you had to be an alcoholic and we had no records of being alcoholic. If you had a record in your folder that you were an alcoholic, you went there. But it was a couple of hours in the evening.

TRELEVEN: Well, how did you manage to get into it, then?

WILKINSON: Well, they had the twelve-point-pledge, and they also had to keep minutes. They couldn't read the

pledge and they couldn't take the minutes. So both Carl and I were invited by them if we'd come in and read the pledge for them and take the minutes for them. Carl and I were both doing that work.

TRELEVEN: Okay, you were invited by the prisoners themselves?

WILKINSON: By the prisoners. Well, that required us to get authority from the prison to do that.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: So it was agreed to. I think they had no idea how dangerous that was, because we're suddenly in there with twenty-five to forty men, no guards around, to rap about anything. While most of it had to go with this unbelievable, spell-binding, night after night after night stories about how "I beat my wife, I beat my kids, and I know if I get out of here I'll die; I never will survive another drink. If you have one you can't stop it."

Then Bob Jones University sent in these fundamentalist ministers. Carl and I would introduce these Bob Jones fundamentalist Christians and they would come in and tell how they had been alcoholics. Everybody shared their story. If you've ever been to an AA program, men will tell the stories over and over and over again, you know, and after months, you're sure

[of] this guy's [story]: "Oh, boy, this is going to be that one," and he will go back through again reminding himself what he did.

Well, we were alone in there and you could tell by the worry of the guards: "Why are you in there? What's going on? What do you talk about?" Why they didn't wire tap it-- Maybe they did wire tap it and we didn't know it.

TRELEVEN: Okay, let me interrupt a minute. In your files are dittoed copies of Carl's minutes, copies that you kept of the minutes that he kept.

WILKINSON: Yeah?

TRELEVEN: I read the minutes, and everything is relating to the business of AA. That's the way the minutes were taken and copies sent to Mr. This, Mr. That, prison officials. Do you mean you talked about other things--

WILKINSON: Everything.

TRELEVEN: --that were not reflected in the minutes?

WILKINSON: There were no holds barred. It was the one free-speech place in the whole damn prison. When they came to me I never welcomed the idea because first of all, I was dying to get out and get a drink. I wanted a drink. [laughter] I said to these guys, you know, and I said to the prison officials, "I'm not going to

take the pledge myself. I'm not going to promise I won't take a drink. I assure you when I get out of here I'm going to drink, but if you need me of course I'll come in and help." So we did this.

I really learned to appreciate the meaning of AA, the fear that these guys had. Here they had families and everybody else outside and here they're in a prison. But when they were getting close to the time to go out, the fear. We would bring in these Bob Jones guys, and other people from the community who would come in, and they would promise them, "When you get out, here's a phone number. You call this number the moment you get to the gate and I'll come and pick you up." The guy says, "You've gotta, you've gotta; if I go two blocks I'll get a drink," because they all get five dollars worth of change, or something like that, and they're worried, just making people promise they'll be there.

By the way, there's another thing about AA. Women came in to speak to us about their alcoholism. So we had contact with women. The only time that you could be with a woman was inside this little room there. That was sort of-- [laughter]

TRELEVEN: A morale--

WILKINSON: I don't care what the hell they were

saying, at least you could sit there and you could look at a woman and hear a woman talk--and legally so--inside the prison.

TRELEVEN: A morale booster.

WILKINSON: There's another thing going on beyond that that comes to my mind now. There was one detail that went off to the [Donaldson] Air Force Base to serve food and cook food and wash dishes for the air force officers. Prison labor for the meals.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: These guys were always trying to get me on that detail. I was very skittish of it because it meant leaving the regular prison and going outside. I just had a sense that I-- I knew I was under constant watching by them for anything, and I was scared stiff. We were always threatened with going back to the wall, walk the wall. That is the scary thing: solitary confinement. But these guys would come back and say, "You ought to do it."

What we heard is that the wives of the hacks were allowed in the prison, and they would park their cars outside the place where the food was being prepared for the aircraft guys, and they'd give the inmate a package of cigarettes for sex.

TRELEVEN: My gosh.

WILKINSON: So these inmates were making love to the wives of the guards--the hacks there--and they would come back: "I got five packs tonight; I couldn't do it one more time." It was that sort of talk. This is going on right in the middle of the prison. So they were saying, "Come on, I'll get you on the detail."

[laughter] I could just imagine myself getting caught in the back seat of a hack's car with his wife.

[laughter] I'd go up for murder for that because I was known by all these guards as a dangerous guy. The fact that their wives-- These wives, by the way--

The hacks were such sick people. They were really miserable people. I've always felt that anyone who has the key to another person's freedom sooner or later becomes sick. It's a power that nobody should be given and it leads to these kind of problems. Yet they would come back and tell in detail, as we sit around in our cells, how such and such a hack's wife hates him. "But Jesus, is she good!" The talking about the pure sex with the guards' wives. Come back worn out, but with several packs of cigarettes, and that was the pay. The women would drive their cars--unbeknown to anyone else--back of the-- See, it was away from the prison. It was over two miles. So they could park their cars in back of the mess hall for the military, and these guys could

leave the dishwashing and come out for some quick sex.

TRELEVEN: Amazing.

WILKINSON: Oh, god. Oh, my god, it's so--

The other thing is about the church services. These guys were all devout religious guys. Also, they all wanted credits to get out. So we had prayer meetings on Wednesday, the Sunday morning service, and Sunday evening service. Again, because of my job in education, my job was to sit at the door and take down your number to show that you'd attended. Then I came back and that all got posted in the jacket of the inmate. He could show that he went to church three times a week for six months and he's up for probation, or whatever you call it.

TRELEVEN: Parole.

WILKINSON: Parole.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: He could show that he's behaved himself. He's attended church; he hadn't missed a church service in six months. Some guys, when they would duck out, would come to me privately and say, "Put my name in." So I'd add names to the list of guys who didn't go to the services.

One thing I did that got me in real trouble once: there were Catholic services. In that prison there

were about four Catholics out of 400--three or four-- and it would be announced over the loudspeaker system in the prison, "All Catholics for church service, get over to so-and-so; the bus is leaving for service." Well, that meant leaving the prison, going into town in your prison outfit, and going into a Catholic church for services. I went just once and got in line. I got on the bus and was driven to town where I could attend a Catholic service. You'd never find this in a letter because it was like admitting something horrible if I wrote it out.

To me it was like-- I mean, I could see town, I could see people. I sat down in a Catholic church with all that ceremony--which I didn't like at all--but at least I could see people, I could see children, I could see families. It was life.

Then back. As soon as the service is over, you're marched right out of the church right back into the prison bus and taken back to the prison.

The following week I tried it again because it was a break; it was a real break, a wonderful sense of freedom. I no sooner waited in line--I was just about to get on the prison bus--when the commander of the control system of the prison, a guy that was a little Napoleon--he was just a short guy and very military;

these were the guys that had the guns, had the control; they were in charge of security--came up to me just as I was getting in, "Get out of that bus. You're no Catholic and you know goddman well you aren't. Get out of there," and he sent me back sprawling toward the cell blocks. That really scared me. It was the roughness. It was not, "Are you a Catholic? I don't think you belong here," or that. Just, "Get out of there." Pulled me out of the car. Yanked me out. Shoved me. He had no response to this, and the guy doing it--the guy who's in charge--he's the very guy that handcuffed me later and shipped me north after the comic-book episode where we got the comic books opened to the inmates.

Other things that were hard there--

The good thing was their integration. We did not realize how different it was until we got up to Lewisburg, where we found real segregation in the northern prison. The Lewisburg penitentiary and the farm we went to, the farm that was a concentration camp.

TRELEVEN: Allenwood.

WILKINSON: Well, Allenwood was the name of the farm, but Allenwood was a 4,000 acre concentration camp established under the 1950 [Hubert H.] Humphrey Title

II of the Internal Security Act to establish concentration camps all over the country. Most people didn't realize that the law had passed over [Harry S] Truman's veto in 1950. So here in 1961, '62 we found ourselves maintaining a barbed wire around this huge area in central Pennsylvania with our warden saying that he could take care of 100,000 trouble-makers from just Philadelphia and Baltimore alone, here. His job was just to maintain this place. But going back again to--

TRELEVEN: Greenville.

WILKINSON: --Greenville. My mind slipped a little. I finished the church thing.

TRELEVEN: Well, you were beginning to talk about the integration.

WILKINSON: Oh, the integration, yeah. In South Carolina, integration was completely natural. Blacks and whites sat with each other because of friendships. There'd be a bootlegger and a moonshiner combination. They'd worked together outside and they did it inside. The moonshiner would often be a white dealing with a black bootlegger who would sell the beaded whiskey in the ghetto areas. So they worked together. So Carl and I had many, many, many wonderful conversations with black inmates, poor, poor black inmates. There were a

lot of poor, poor white inmates. There'd be tables of four or six. You could sit down and you could visit in no rush or hurry. The only thing they were guarding against in the mess hall was the sugar box. They had a hack. They wouldn't allow any inmate there. There'd be a hack standing at the sugar box to prevent an inmate from taking more than one spoon of sugar in his coffee. The guys who ran the mess hall got lots of it out and we were forever being offered whiskey made inside the kitchen of the prison; the inmates made whiskey out of the sugar they could steal. There was a guard there to be sure that you didn't take too much. You can never control an inmate population. They're completely free.

But we often said that if we could just get [James] Strom Thurmond in there for one weekend. See, the only place in South Carolina that was integrated was the prison. The only place. We said that if we could just get Strom Thurmond in there for one weekend, we could clean up his act. That's what we talked about. We joked about it with other inmates. There was never any problem of fighting between blacks and whites. It was a very good relationship and it came out of the whole poverty system in the Peidmont area that drove them to making whiskey and selling whiskey

because they couldn't scratch any tobacco out of that land that had been cleaned out of any nurturing chemicals for [raising] tobacco.

When I first got in there, I did a couple of stupid things. (Carl was always worried about my stupidity.) I remember that I was put in with these two men. I get in there, shake hands. "I'm Frank Wilkinson. I come from California. Who are you?" They wouldn't answer. First name and that's it. I said, "What are you guys in for?" No conversation. I tried for a month to communicate with these guys; I wanted to ask them questions. I wanted to talk with them; they would not talk with me.

After about a month--I think it was a full month; this would be around June first--I tried to talk about who we were, cautious questions being asked not of these two guys but others. One guy across the hallway in another cell-block room said, "Hey, man, are you a stool pigeon?" You see, these guys all thought we were [U.S. government] revenue agents. That's what we found out. Particularly me. Carl didn't look like a revenue agent. I apparently was the revenue agent sent in there as a plant to try to get information on them that would end their lives for good. "Are you a stool pigeon?" I said, "No, no, no, no. You don't

understand. I made a First Amendment challenge of the unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities]." Well, no one had ever heard of the First Amendment, never heard of the unAmerican activities committee. When this question came out and I started answering it, Carl was down two cells, and shouted out, "Shut up, Frank!" He said, "Hell no, man, we're not stools." Something about Carl saying that-- it just reverberated up and down the thing that we were not stool pigeons--Carl's affirmative statement stopped it. Suddenly, these guys became friendly, gave me their names, told me their home towns.

Then I'm trying to make it with them and stupidly ask one of these guys what is the best bonded whiskey. I thought I was really in with experts on whiskey-making. "What is the best bonded whiskey?" You know, "Is it Harper's or is it Old Grand Dad?" or that sort of stuff; I thought I would really get the truth on the liquor business. These guys just shouted me in their own language that no bonded whiskey is any good. "The only whiskey that's any good is the stuff we make; man, you get the right beads on our stuff and, man, you never tasted better whiskey in your life." Then these two guys got in a fight, literally a verbal fight--I thought they were going to fist fight--because the

older guy said that the old 1949 Dodge coil was better than the Ford or Chevrolet coil they used to steam their whiskey through. I accepted the beads. "Gee, when we get out, man, you come. I'll show you the best beads anywhere in South Carolina." Always beads. It's always white whiskey and it's apparently a certain bead--bubble--or something in it when you shake it.

They told how this guy's was better because he had a "crick" [creek] that was a long walk, carrying a hundred-pound sack of sugar for a mile up that steep trail to that crick was really hard to do. (Of course, I'm saying it now like I understood.) Many, many questions. "What was that word? What was that? You were totin'?" Carrying. I didn't know the words. Then they'd describe how they made it there and how this water here was much so better than the water you could get in the next county over.

I learned details when I was writing letters for these guys. They would tell how they had one pig a year that they always slaughtered for Thanksgiving or Christmas, and they'd describe fattening up this pig for months to get it ready for Christmas or Thanksgiving. Then they'd cook it and the whole family just ate, and ate, and ate like that was the only meat they would have. You know, [usually] it's just nothing

but beans and--

TRELEVEN: --grits?

WILKINSON: --grits. It's what they were living on. They had very few vegetables, or anything like that.

So I never did learn what's the best bonded whiskey. They described in detail to me how they had seen rats in the barrels of Harper's or Old Grand Dad, or something that had been made in town, they'd seen the rats themselves. "You'd never find any rats in our stuff." Then they would argue over what's the best charcoal or the best--

TRELEVEN: Best wood to make the charcoal.

WILKINSON: The wood to get a charcoal to get the right flavor, or something like that. So that was very, very interesting, these guys.

But it was such a relief when-- Things broke down entirely when, somehow or other, Carl's shouting out at me convinced them that we were not stool pigeons. Everybody assumed we were something. They never, never, never understood the First Amendment and never, never, never understood the unAmerican activities committee. They just became convinced--not by me but by Carl--that we were not stool pigeons, that we were not revenue agents.

Have we already got on the record how the comic

book thing got us busted and sent out?

TRELEVEN: Well, yeah, but leading into that, didn't it somehow become knowledge that there was more being discussed at these AA meetings than alcohol?

WILKINSON: I don't know.

TRELEVEN: That would not have been a contributing factor to--

WILKINSON: No, I don't know. We did talk about things. There were guards around everywhere, everywhere, except in AA meetings. We talked about political things. We talked about politics, anything. Wide open. There wasn't too much to learn. These people weren't voting people. They weren't political people. They probably didn't know who their congressperson was, or who their governor was, or senators were. They weren't knowledgeable at all.

 Their love of home, and family, and Mommy and Daddy. These grown men, "Dear Mommy, I miss you so much. I been a good boy, Mommy, and I'll be back to 'Spatnba' within a year," and you'd write that out for these guys and they'd thank you so much for writing it.

 Later on when I was at Lewisburg, the day before we were released, the guys who were serving lifetime prison sentences at Lewisburg came up to me--five of

them--and say, "You're leavin' tomorrow. Do you know Mr. Hiss?" I said, "Alger Hiss?"

"Yeah, that's right. Alger Hiss."

"Yeah, I know him."

"Oh. Will you give him a message from us? Tell him how much we miss him. You know, Mr. Hiss read to us every night and Mr. Hiss wrote letters for all of us to everybody, our families and our parole and all these people; would you please tell Mr. Hiss we miss him?"

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: That night we did get out and I finally came into the auditorium where 3,000 people had been waiting since eight o'clock with Pete Seeger and Willard Uphaus singing and speaking, the main thing I remembered was to say, "Oh, I'm supposed to remember one thing. If any of you know or see Alger Hiss, the inmates today asked me to be sure and give him their greetings because they miss him at Lewisburg. He wrote letters for them." By pure accident, Alger was in the middle of that auditorium, came up on the stage, and we had an embrace before that crowd. It was very, very, very moving.

TRELEVEN: Why don't we move on to the comic book the next time we get together, as well as some other questions I want to ask you about your communications

and things that were going on outside the prison in terms of the petition campaign.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: The effort to get early parole, some things like that.

WILKINSON: There's also, don't forget, the story of how the inmates arranged for me to have a conversation with Junius Scales in the Lewisburg penitentiary.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Junius Scales was the last communist to be jailed. That's a story I'll tell you next week.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, do that because that's something that I don't recall.

WILKINSON: That's where you get into the communication, like the way we got word out that we were going to be held until five o'clock, the way the inmates put together Junius and me inside the middle of Lewisburg penitentiary for a visit. The communication among inmates: there are the snitches; there's the warden's friends, very few of them. But the average inmate was wonderful. The integration in the South was wonderful. The lack of integration of high-school-age educated people in the prisons up north, that's where you find real racism and almost none in South Carolina.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Well, next time we'll go back to

Greenville and then we'll go to Lewisburg and pick it up with lots of snow and the old stone church that you used to walk to.

WILKINSON: My god!

TRELEVEN: Thanks, Frank.

TAPE NUMBER: XLI, SIDE ONE

JULY 4, 1992

TRELEVEN: It's July 4th.

WILKINSON: Hooray!

TRELEVEN: 1992.

WILKINSON: I've got my red, white and blue outfit on.

TRELEVEN: With or without fireworks in Santa Monica.

There are none this year.

WILKINSON: Really?

TRELEVEN: Nope, not even in the early morning hours.

WILKINSON: Why are they cutting them out? The
recession?

TRELEVEN: There are too many naughty young people who
threaten the well-being of good citizens, or some such.

WILKINSON: Really?

TRELEVEN: Maybe it's expensive, too.

WILKINSON: Very.

TRELEVEN: Everyone's running out of money.

We left off last time and you were in prison.
While you were there, there were also things going on
on the outside, which I take from the correspondence
that you were kept up to date on. One was an effort to
get parole for both you and Carl [Braden]. How good
did you think the chances were that you would get

parole?

WILKINSON: We heard entirely about this from the inside. We didn't know the detail until we got out. There was a serious--very serious--effort at getting what do they call it? Parole, or some other word.

TRELEVEN: Okay, well, first came parole and then came the petition for clemency--

WILKINSON: Clemency.

TRELEVEN: --which ultimately went to the White House. But I'm talking about the first.

WILKINSON: I don't think I know enough about the difference between the two, parole and clemency. Let me tell you that there were three different efforts being made simultaneously. One was done by a list of about 3,500 prominent religious, writers, and political people. I just looked it over. Even [Francois] Mitterand of France was a signer. That was prepared to go to [John F.] Kennedy. I don't know what it was, clemency or parole.

The second one was done by my wife, Jean [Benson Wilkinson], and others in our grass-roots communities in New York and Chicago, where they just had really thousands of signatures on it from people, not going after name people like the other one was.

The third one was done almost exclusively in the

South by Anne Braden and Jim [James A.] Dombrowski.

From where we were, inside, it was impressive. Carl and I were troubled about the language. We wanted to know what the language was going to be on all these things. We didn't want any language that would imply that we should be released because our crime was constitutional, or something minor. We didn't want to appear that we were accepting something and in any way backing down from the basic principle while we were in there. I think that we worried about that. We asked about it, but we were reassured that none of the language would be that way. We didn't need to worry.

We now have the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] files on all this--at least on the primary one--and the most prestigious one was going to Kennedy's pardons secretary, or whatever you call it. (That's another one: Pardon, parole, clemency; there's a third word I'm using.) At any rate, apparently they had an appointment with a pretty sensitive person in Kennedy's office who was believed likely to give us a fair hearing and a fair recommendation to Kennedy. The man who delivered it--his name slips me again--was secretary of the World Council of Churches. I think Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Luther King [Jr.]--it was a delegation of four or five--went to see Kennedy on it.

I know this man that carried it was secretary of the World Council of Churches and he delayed a trip to a conference in New Delhi, India, in order to keep this date. The FBI records reveal that the FBI was following all these very closely and disrupting wherever they could. When they found out who was going to have the appointment, they stepped in through their contacts inside the Kennedy administration, had the appointment taken away from this more sensitive person, and transferred to another person. As a result, the delegation did not see Kennedy. They got short shrift from whoever they did see, and the matter was turned down.

Let me carry on a minute more.

I'm just trying to evaluate what it would have meant if we could have been pardoned, paroled, clemency--or whatever the word is--from Kennedy. It probably would have been a tremendous shot in the arm for the abolition movement because even when Carl and I served our full term and got out, it was a big shot in the arm for the movement. In fact, we didn't do it for tactical reasons, but it worked out that way. I can imagine if Kennedy, within three or four months after we're in there, had released us, saying this was a gross miscarriage of constitutional rights, it would

have undoubtedly stepped up our campaign. Instead of taking fifteen years to abolish HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities], we might have been able to get the vote through Congress almost immediately, or much more quickly.

TRELEVEN: In September of '61, you wrote to Jean--or someone--that you had written a principled statement in behalf of getting parole, but you think that Anne and Carl saw prison as being a tactical maneuver. In other words, Carl and Anne's position, I take from an interpretation of this, was really not desiring to be paroled. Do you recall that?

WILKINSON: Oh, yes. There were differences between us. But I didn't want to be divided from them. I couldn't see the differences. Even to this day, I think that there'll be something about Carl and Anne which would say we're not going to leave this prison unless the government itself declares that it was a mistake and it does it that way. I thought we shouldn't leave if there was any implication that we'd been punished enough, let us out, that sort of an approach. But if a major effort was made by the outside people to get us out, that we ought to accept it because it would reflect progress. It would be a positive move to get us out if we didn't have to admit

any wrongdoing.

Yes, there were differences between Carl and me, and Carl and Anne and me, and sometimes between Carl and Anne. All the time when you just say that, I remember that when Carl was on trial, Anne was in Louisville with the children. On trial, Carl had this Bishop C. Eubank Tucker, Leonard [B.] Boudin, and one of the founding members of the National Lawyers Guild from Tallahassee--or a northern Florida town--a true southern white liberal. When they got to oral argument in Carl's case--our cases were separate--this guy got up and spoke as a southerner, saying, "Again, we see the long arm of Washington--the Yankees in the North--coming down to jail one of our white boys," that approach, claiming that Southerners should unite for Carl Braden because he's one of our own, like that. And the guy declared that, "Carl Braden is no communist," and so on. But I sat there in court wincing because I'd always been afraid that that kind of defense would be put up for me by ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], trying to imply that "to our knowledge Wilkinson is not a communist; therefore, give him a break. But I had met with Rowland Waits and Nanette Dembitz and the others, and I said, "I don't want one word here implying that I am not a communist.

I don't want that argued. That's not the issue. I want it to be pure." It was respected right to the end where Rowland Waits told me the night before, "If you will just allow me to say--or if you'll say in open court--tomorrow you are not now a communist or you've never been a communist"--or whatever it is, some denial--"I can assure you you'll never go to jail." And I said, "Thank you, Rowland. You've done your duty; you've told me," and we jokingly poured a tumbler full of bourbon and drank a toast.

TRELEVEN: Right, right.

WILKINSON: When this speech was broadcast throughout the South, Anne Braden heard it in Louisville on the radio. We were driving back, at the end of that day, from Atlanta to Highlander [Folk School], in Monteagle, Tennessee, and then on into Louisville. I think we stayed overnight at Highlander. There was a phone call waiting for us at Highlander for Carl, and I remember just a shouting contest over the phone. You could hear Anne Braden's voice so loud over the phone, and Carl shouting back at her: "Carl, how dare you let them say you're not a communist?" Carl said, "God damn it, I didn't say I was not a communist. You can't trust these crazy lawyers."

"But you should have stood up there in open court,

Carl, and said, 'That's a lie. I never said this.'

Back and forth, angry, about the thing. So they had their own differences.

But I'm glad there's a record there. I don't know what I mean by a principled statement. I think that Carl and Anne and I all agreed at the end. Of course, the issue was shortly thereafter moot because the FBI stepped in and killed it. I think there's very good reason that if the right guy--the one we don't know the name of right now--had handled this thing and gone to Kennedy and said this, we would have been released. I know Junius Scales, the North Carolina communist that was in prison with us there, did get a release from a five-year sentence by Kennedy. But I believe it had to do with an ADA [Americans for Democratic Action]-type of lawyer approach where a certain declaration was made. "He's not a communist. He's against the communists," and so on. Something was done privately. But Kennedy did release him.

But I think the only new information that's not here in the record from my letters [is that] we did not know that the FBI had directly intervened and changed appointment secretaries for President Kennedy.

TRELEVEN: Right, which is written up in Dick [Richard] Criley's book [The FBI v. The First Amendment].

WILKINSON: Oh, I had forgotten that.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Footnoted to various FBI documents.

WILKINSON: I'd forgotten that.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Just to get the time line straight, parole was denied in late-September of '61, no reason being given. You expressed relief, almost, in your letter: despite the fact that prison wasn't easy, the parole board decision would ensure unity between you and Carl. That's the way you expressed it. Then shortly after that--

WILKINSON: I was so anxious to maintain unity with Carl and Anne because I wasn't in agreement with them on everything. Their personalities are different on things like this. They could very well have, when they first heard about it, without investigating it, put a damper on the efforts outside saying, "Don't you dare try to get me out of here on parole," or whatever it would be, some language like that. "I'm here because I belong here, because I stood up for what I believe in. Don't you dare do it." People outside, well-meaning people, could have had this thing squelched. In their minds, "What's wrong with these guys? Do they want to stay in there or do they want to get out? Obviously, we wanted to get out. We didn't want to be in there. But I think I would have been sensitive to trying to

find language that would have thanked the people outside for their efforts and hoping they'll be successful. At the same time, don't let the language appear that we're conceding any guilt at all. Carl and Anne would not approach it that way. They'd just come out and say, "Hell no, don't do it; don't touch it," without an effort to straighten it out.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Then shortly after that, in early October, Sylvia Crane was coming to visit and discuss the joint national petition to President Kennedy. So the effort to get parole came first, then the national petition followed that, and I think there was also an effort later to see if you could get released through an appeal petition so you could get clemency for Christmas. In other words, you'd be out by Christmas. But none of those--

WILKINSON: Let me just make comment on Sylvia Crane here for the record.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: She was, from the beginning, one of the key behind-the-scenes figures in the establishment of the National Committee to Abolish HUAC. She worked effectively with Aubrey [W.] Williams, Clarence [E.] Pickett, Jamie [James] Imbrie, and [Alexander] Meiklejohn to build this thing. She was able to get

these prominent citizens, prominent religious leaders, prominent this, that, and the other thing to join this thing. She worked tirelessly on it. I think at that time she was working on the final academic parts of her doctoral degree in history at Columbia [University] under Henry Steele Commager. She put in so much time on our clemency efforts that she couldn't finish her work and she never did get her Ph.D., and it related directly to her drive to help us. So that was very, very positive on her part.

The other part [is that] she herself by personality irritated the rank-and-file people in New York particularly, was very divisive, and would tell them, "I'm doing this, don't you do that. No, you should be doing that. I'm doing this. I know so-and-so. I know so-and-so. Rabbi so-and-so will do this. Dean Miller and I know--" You know, that business. I just shuddered in prison that the ego needs almost, you could say, of Sylvia Crane were divisive to equally well-intended people who were doing the grass-roots work, and with whom Jean was working too, and Anne was working, too. Sylvia did more than probably anyone else to draw some of the prestigious leadership behind us, yet at the same time she left wounds in the rank and file which Dorothy [N.] Marshall, Dick Criley, and

others tried to heal. It almost broke up the National Committee to Abolish HUAC while we were in prison.

TRELEVEN: Well, not only that, but by the end of September you had received a telegram from Aubrey Williams that he would have to step down as the leader of the committee because of his ill health.

WILKINSON: Because of what?

TRELEVEN: Ill health.

WILKINSON: He did? That was in what year? What time?

TRELEVEN: That was September of '61.

WILKINSON: Oh, wow.

TRELEVEN: So that's going on as well.

WILKINSON: See, that was '61. My relationship with Aubrey began in '58 when, actually on the way home after the hearing in Atlanta, going back to New York and leaving ECLC [National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee]. Jean and the kids and I drove home together, stopping off in Montgomery to get acquainted with Aubrey. Then I brought Aubrey on to L.A. where there was a major meeting where he spoke. Then out of this thing came the abolition campaign in which a lot of work was done between '58 until the committee was formally established in October of '60. Aubrey's health problems--you're reminding me--came in late '61.

TRELEVEN: That's right. As I say, in a letter you

wrote on September 27, '61, you indicated that you had received a telegram from him which said he would have to step down because of his health.

WILKINSON: What was the date of that?

TRELEVEN: September 27, '61.

WILKINSON: See, that shows how serious Aubrey's illness was. On the other hand, it's a reminder of how much he continued to do because his letters--not telegrams but letters--continued to reach me regularly. In fact, he and Anita Williams came and tried to visit and then finally were told that we were no longer at the prison in South Carolina. Then Aubrey checked it all out and found out this crazy story how we'd been charged for spying for Russia inside the prison, over this--of all things--opening the library for comic books. But it was very, very alarming to me and also very hurtful. I really respected Aubrey and loved him.

We had such a mixture of great leaders.

Meiklejohn would draw a certain type of First Amendment scholarship. Clarence Pickett would draw a certain kind of religious pacifist, social-action type of leadership. Aubrey was the down-to-earth, practical politician, the New Dealer, the close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt's, Harry Hopkins's right-hand man, the man

that right-- Well, I'll tell you, in '60, before I went to prison, he would play a major role in Lyndon [B.] Johnson's campaign to be the presidential candidate, here in Los Angeles. In fact, I was with him in his hotel room when he was working on the Lyndon Johnson campaign. He had a lot of words. He was the one that got Eleanor Roosevelt to sign on this statement about HUAC being the agency of weakness and folly. So his loss was a real threat to our movement, although without him I'm not sure that Meiklejohn and Imbrie and Pickett could have carried on.

On the other hand, it was also a tragic loss because this guy meant so much to the movement that when I did get out of prison, I went to New York for this big rally which they [the FBI] tried to keep me from getting to. I was due then to go to Chicago for another rally the very next day. But I flew down to Atlanta and literally chartered a plane. (It sounds expensive these days, but it was a short hop from Atlanta over to Montgomery.) I think it was something like thirty-five, forty dollars which was a lot of money at that time. But I wanted to see Aubrey because I had the feeling that Aubrey was dying and I wanted to talk to him before he died. I wanted to give him appreciation and moral support. I did see him there,

then I went on up to Chicago. But like Mark Twain, reports on his death were exaggerated.

TRELEVEN: That's right.

WILKINSON: In '61, he's telling us, "I've got to resign." He continued to chair meetings of the Committee to Abolish HUAC in '62 and '63. Finally, at his persuasion, Harvey O'Connor stepped in to take the place with Aubrey remaining on standby. But even then, Aubrey and Jim [James] Forman and I spoke together at American University--Leonard Gymnasium--the one that was broken up by the Lincoln Rockwell Nazi group.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: That was Aubrey's very last talk.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: It seems to me that was in very early of '64 or very late in '63. Aubrey died--

TRELEVEN: Sixty-five, I think.

WILKINSON: --in April '65.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Yeah, you were at American University on October 10, '63, according to Dick Criley's book.

WILKINSON: Oh, I see. So Aubrey didn't really pass on until '65. It's just another one of those reminders.

By the way, it's interesting to note, I used to come and see Aubrey in his death bed, both in Montgomery and in Washington, where he had an apartment. He had been

so basically responsible for the hiring of Lyndon Johnson as the head of the NYA [National Youth Administration] of Texas--and everything else that Johnson did--that Lady Bird and Lyndon Johnson came to see Aubrey in his death bed in Washington, but they came up the back stairs and came in through the kitchen because they didn't want the public to know that they were seeing Aubrey Williams, because by that time Aubrey was leading the campaign to abolish HUAC. He had failed to get confirmed as head of Rural Electrification [Administration] under [Franklin D.] Roosevelt, and so on. He was a pariah.

When Aubrey died I went to his funeral--Aubrey was hurt by this distance that Lyndon and Lady Bird wanted to keep from him; he was really hurt by it--and the scenery just hit the tops when we went to this funeral and the largest bouquet spread, a big, big thing at the funeral, was from Lyndon and Lady Bird. But they didn't attend the funeral. They were a few blocks away in Washington. When we held this big effort to honor Aubrey before his death at a luncheon in his honor, where many members of Congress came--and the FBI was all over that, we now know, trying to tell people they should not attend this luncheon; I'm sure that Johnson was very familiar with the fact that the FBI was

telling him to keep away from Aubrey Williams because he's tied up with Frank Wilkinson and these other communists, whatever they would say to him--Johnson played it cool, hip. His debt to Aubrey for his whole political career began when he was picked out of a San Marcos school in Texas, where he was a teacher, to head up the NYA of Texas as a young man. Johnson may have never gone anywhere if Aubrey hadn't given him his start.

TRELEVEN: I guess in terms of the period of your imprisonment, I know that there's Dorothy here in Los Angeles, there's Anne working out of Louisville, and they're all doing positive things, but would it be accurate to say that the person who really held it together while you were in prison was Dick Criley?

WILKINSON: Yes. Definitely! Dick was in an unbelievable position where you have Sylvia Crane, everybody hating her. Really, this woman (I shouldn't say this woman), this person could make enemies like no one, yet she did very, very good things. Then Dorothy Marshall was not only the head of the Citizens Committee [to Preserve American Freedoms] in L.A.--and she was holding it together there--but she was not strong enough to step into the New York thing. Then you had Otto Nathan, who was the Einstein estate

executor, who was the chair of the New York Committee to Abolish HUAC. Then you had undercover FBI plants within our committee that Dick Criley has now discovered. The active leaders of our Committee to Abolish HUAC in some of the districts in the New York metropolitan area were FBI informants. Otto Nathan had an ego as large as Sylvia Crane's; they literally wouldn't sit down with each other. Then there was a dispute between them over the role of the UE [United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America] guy, Russ Nixon. Russ Nixon was really important to our work; the UE was. I mean, when Izzy [Isidor F.] Stone--

TRELEVEN: Was the dispute over Nixon's closeness to the [Communist] Party [CPUSA]?

WILKINSON: No, it was the other way. I never did know what Russ Nixon's connections were, if any, with the Party. The FBI says he was a communist, but what does that mean? No, it stemmed from a personal grudge between Sylvia and Russ Nixon and it could have been a highly personal thing that we don't know about, but it was joined by Alice and Barrows Dunham in Philadelphia, who were old-time friends of Sylvia's and liked Sylvia, and also who knew Russ. These things go back years before I knew any of these people. (I [eventually]

knew all of them.) But they were convinced that Russ was a CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] or FBI plant within our movement, and they said so. You come to a meeting and they say, "I won't sit in this room with Russ Nixon. He is an FBI agent." Wild talk like that.

Well, into all this thing comes Dick Criley out of Chicago, who was called before the [House] committee or the Senate committee three different times, the real rank-and-file operator with a real base in Chicago where he, with his known Communist Party membership in Chicago, which I don't think he ever denied, was able to develop these top leaders in the Chicago Theological Seminary and other places to build their committee. So Dick did have a base and he'd come in and try to hold these people together. The people didn't want to be held together, and the FBI agent provocateur did everything he could to undercut Dick and to fan the flames from Sylvia over Russ Nixon. These things were very, very divisive. I think Dick has used some figure saying that that six months' period took so many years off his life as he tried to bring these people together.

I think Dick did get credit for it. Even on Sylvia's getting all these big names--by the way--together, which she did a great deal of the work on,

when they wanted it published--it was 3,000 words to be typeset, published, and put out--Dick was the one who did all the leg work, got all that stuff done, got it printed, got it paid for, got it ready to present to the president, and so on. No appreciation for him. A great financial cost for our little Chicago committee for him to have to come into New York so often. As we see now, an impossible situation to begin with: Otto Nathan, Sylvia Crane, and then your FBI agent provocateurs, and trying to resolve this thing. I do believe it would have fallen without Dick. He's the only one that could hold it together.

When I got out--

TRELEVEN: Let me interrupt a minute. How aware of this were you in prison, that this was going on? Was Dick on your correspondence list as one who could send letters to you, or--

WILKINSON: I don't think so. I was hearing about it, probably from Jean. Anne Braden and Jean also were trying to hold it together, and they were neutralized. They'd have a big rally in New York where Jean and Anne would be the speakers.

TRELEVEN: Right. October of '61, in fact.

WILKINSON: Right, and that was a unifying force. They didn't get involved in this in-fighting. When I did

get out--

TRELEVEN: Let me interrupt again. Sorry. Then I'll let you get out. The FBI would later claim that in terms of the engines to abolish HUAC, in order for those engines to keep running, you were orchestrating this from prison. Is that true or false?

WILKINSON: It sure would have been true in terms of not their language, but everything I was writing out to anyone I could to say, "Stop this in-fighting. The enemy is the unAmerican activities committee. We've got to abolish it. Please work together. Find some way to work together. Don't try to meet together if some of you can't sit down together, but hold the thing together."

It was so frustrating in prison because I was limited to whom I could write to and when Sylvia came to visit us in prison, that to me was a real worry because she's just that kind of an operator; she had the money, you know; she was married to John Crane, who was the heir of the Crane Plumbing Company of Chicago. She had this big house up at Woods Hole where she entertained all of these Nobel laureate scientists. She had strings everywhere. She could just grab a plane, go down to South Carolina, go to the gates [having gotten] a letter from Rowland Waits or

somebody, saying that she was there on legal business, whatever it would be. She knew how to operate, and she'd get in there to see us. I think both Carl and I knew that what that would mean is she would go back to these conflict situations and say, "Frank has told me to tell you that he wants me to be the leader here, or me to do this." You know, contrary to what we were saying, "God, you're doing great work, Sylvia, it's wonderful. But hold it together." But we were afraid that she would come back and use--and I mean that word use--she would use the fact that she had met with Carl and me in prison, and just seeing us in prison--

See, we didn't see anybody in prison, except I saw Jean once and I saw my sister once, and Sylvia--and this lawyer that came in to see us in the Fulton County jail. So instead of being, "Oh god, it's wonderful to see you," I just can tell you now that by virtue of her personality, she would go back and it would be a big name-dropping ego trip: "I saw Carl and Frank. They asked me to come down. I came to see them. I talked to them at great length and here's what they want you all to do." She then would use that according to what she wanted somebody to do and would keep herself in position, and drive this dear Otto Nathan right out of his mind. Otto always seemed like he was eighty years

old from the time I first met him. He didn't die for many, many years. But he had this great ego. Enormous egos that we were dealing with all around the place. Again, it gets back to the fact that Jean, Anne, and Dick--a few others--but I think Russ Nixon was always very careful. I don't think he fanned any flames. I think he would have stayed out of a meeting or come into a meeting, depending whether it would help or hinder. You know, Russ arranged for me to use the UE offices in the heart of New York, right next to Saint Patricks Cathedral, because I could come in there and get desk space, telephones, and typewriters to work at any time.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I interrupted you twice. You were about to say when you got out. I don't know if this is what you're getting at. It seems to me, from reading through the letters, that this disparate group of people could really work--in addition to the petition campaign--could really gel their efforts, also, to plan an event around your release, which seemed to be a major undertaking and, as we'll get into, was kind of fraught with problems because of what you now know in terms of the FBI trying to disrupt travel plans to get you there and all of that. But what was that thought you were going to lead into?

WILKINSON: Well, Carl's and my release was just a wonderful opening for public relations. Our meetings were just giant. Carl, for his own reasons-- I never did understand this. This is something else about Carl that I never did quite understand, something like the difference over clemency and parole. When we came to New York, to me it was to welcome home Carl and Frank. Carl would not go to that meeting that night. He went out and had dinner with some Fair Play for Cuba people. At that time--I don't know whether it's true or not-- I'd heard that there was a great difference between the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Communist Party over Fair Play for Cuba, and Carl was playing it with SWP for whatever reasons. Anyway, the meeting was all mine. It would have been wonderful to be there together, but Carl didn't go. I'm not sure just how much speaking after that he did, in fact.

I guess when Carl got out his idea was to get back into the South again with SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund]. My role was to come back and work on the abolition campaign. They would do abolition work in the South, and they did do it. They established an office in their office and our staff worked out of SCEF's office, and so on.

TRELEVEN: Hence Anne's pamphlet. That was very

important.

WILKINSON: Right, in '64, and so on. But wherever I was speaking, for whatever reasons, they could draw big, big audiences of two or three thousand or 1,500--I don't know what it was--in New York or in Chicago. At the University of Chicago it was during one of what they call ice storms in Chicago, and still they packed an auditorium.

TRELEVEN: Have to pause a minute.

TAPE NUMBER: XLI, SIDE TWO

JULY 4, 1992

TRELEVEN: We're back on.

WILKINSON: From the day I got out--I didn't get to L.A. for five days, because I had been speaking--when I did get to L.A. there were big meetings in L.A., then these invitations began to come, to come and speak, and I think the differences melted away--or were finessed away--after I was out because I didn't take a side. I did everything I could to say, "Let's keep this together." I didn't sit down and say, "Now, tell me what did Sylvia say? What did Otto say? What can we do?" I avoided those things. I stayed ten feet away from it, if I could, and just used my own popularity, as it were--symbolic popularity--to try to unify and to build on the movement. Throughout '61, '62, '63, '64, I was covering twenty-five to thirty-five states a year, speaking from 125 to 150 days a year doing this sort of thing.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: So we were able to unify.

Now, here's where another thing came in, though. Our campaign in Congress was really seriously launched in-- I think [James] Roosevelt launched it pretty much

in '61, but from the beginning Roosevelt's moves were not to abolish HUAC, but to transfer it to the [House] Judiciary [Committee]. So we had to begin fighting Roosevelt.

TRELEVEN: Or to cut its budget.

WILKINSON: Or to cut its budget, and our job was not to let Roosevelt divide us. We're not giving up the campaign, but let's say, "Fine, let's do cut its budget. That would be a great step forward. Let's see how many votes we can get on that, right?" We did not allow Roosevelt to divide us and held on to the Meiklejohnian absolute position that HUAC had to be abolished.

Then this New York group, a number of them--I don't know how many; we're dealing with five or six people--would come to our meetings in Chicago. They'd come to our meetings in Washington. They would want to know what the agenda would be in advance. They wanted specific things on the agenda. You know, we weren't that kind of an organization. You'd get there and "What are we covering? We'll cover finances, the petition, the Meiklejohn thing. What do you want to do?" No, they wanted things in advance and the things they wanted were always divisive. They were always leading us into an area where there'd be conflict.

TRELEVEN: Do you think some of the New Yorkers were undercover people who were working in concert with the neutralization campaign of the FBI?

WILKINSON: Definitely, definitely. But I think some people thought more of them were that weren't really, but who just had their own personality ways and, you might say, were being used by the FBI plants. There was a guy named Bill Price who had made a First Amendment challenge of the Senate [James O.] Eastland committee. So he's like the other sixty-four First Amendment defendants; he was with that group.

Harvey, Bill, Carl and I wrote a pamphlet, "Behind the Bars for the First Amendment," where we're trying to unify not just Carl and me but those sixty-four names. We had pictures of them, what they did, and what their cases were. Well, Bill Price played a very, very either foot-dragging or questionable role, asking difficult questions at the wrong time. We couldn't quite figure it out. I don't think that Bill was an FBI agent at all. I just think that he had some means of his own that caused him to come off that way and seemingly--as we now know who actually were the informants--I don't think that Price knew they were informants. I don't think he knew it. I think if he had known it, he would have fought it. But he was

difficult.

That led to one of our most difficult meetings. Within the year after I got out, I think it was, we had a meeting in Washington and the question is how to handle the Meiklejohn [petition], the Roosevelt-Farbstein and a couple other petitions as compared with the one we were working on with Meiklejohn, the one Meiklejohn wrote and we actually got Don Edwards to introduce in '65. It was a very difficult three-year period, '62-'65, before we finally won the principal battle on which petition to be supporting. But at one of our meetings, Bill Price and someone else from New York got up and charged that I was violating First Amendment principles in my approach to things. (I can't remember the words that were used.) Anne Braden got up, and as Anne could often do, she could talk endlessly around both sides of the issue, sort of coming off neutral, but she would say, "Well, I don't know whether it's true that Frank did this, or didn't do that, or has thought that way; I haven't really talked with him that much. On the other hand, I don't really think Frank would do that. But if he did, he shouldn't have." That would be Anne Braden. She could talk a racist out of his racism simply because of just sheer fatigue of trying to answer her circumlocutory

style of conversation.

At any rate, that attack on me--fresh out of prison--just stunned me. I did my best to fight it. I finally just said, "I have to resign. I just can't take this. I resign." This was really hard on the organization because I was nominally the national director. I resigned not because it was true what they were saying, but because I couldn't stand the inference that I qualified the First Amendment. Meiklejohn was my hero and he was still living, and he didn't die himself until December of '64.

When the meeting broke up with all this controversy, people were saying, "Frank, you can't resign." I said, "I can too; I can't stand it." Anyway, the whole meeting picked up literally and went a mile away to Aubrey Williams's home, where he was staying in bed, dying. I don't know, there was a terrible, terrible evening in which Aubrey was saying, "Frank, you just cannot resign. You're letting us down."

I think that this gets to a weakness on my part, that throughout life at that time--and maybe before and maybe a little bit since when I'm under attack--instead of fighting back like I would say Dick Criley does, I tend to be hurt by the criticisms, resign, and walk

away. It's a weakness in my political background, attitude. I don't know where it comes from. I think a lot of it comes out of the [Methodist] church, out of my upbringing and that I'm not a bare-fisted protagonist in debating. I like to be on the right side, work for the right side, and make no compromises. Then when I'm accused of making a compromise, I'm just destroyed. I just can't stand it, so I resign. If I am under attack, let me out. I'm wrong. It's a weakness. If you talk to other people that knew me at the time--I think particularly Dick Criley, who had to go through this thing--he would say it was always a problem with us that when Frank was under attack, all he would do is to either let me carry the argument or he would resign. Nothing being done was wrong. I mean, we did everything right, and we never compromised.

But the New Yorkers--and this gets back to the FBI people--were wanting to fight Roosevelt. We were saying something like, "Well, we can't control Roosevelt so rather than put in an abolition petition in January, let's let him cut the appropriation, come out immediately and support that, saying that next year we'll do this sort of thing." Well, that led to charges of compromise on principle and going along, in

a way, with the idea of transferring HUAC to the Judiciary Committee.

End of that story. I don't think I am quite clear enough in my recall, but it's a weakness in my organizing skills that on that occasion--and probably one or two others--I did resign, or threaten to resign. That's sort of my style of fighting back. Only it wasn't like a real style of fighting back, it was that I just resigned and then everybody would say, "You've got to come back." So I'd say, "Okay, I'll come back." You could read that as though I did that deliberately to try to beat my political enemies and get my strength back, or you can treat it as I saw it. I just was hurt so badly that I was being called a compromiser that I couldn't tolerate it and I just had to resign. The end result was that we did hang on to the principal battle. We never deviated, and we out maneuvered Jimmy Roosevelt entirely and got Farbstain and John [V.] Lindsay away from him. Lindsay was a Republican with us at that time in New York, later mayor.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Finally, by '64, we had the Meiklejohn petition ready. We had Anne Braden's book ready. We had an interreligious task force of the National Council of Churches, Catholics, and the synagog

federations jointly on prayers for the First Amendment. In December of '64, we had all the volunteers in Mississippi, where all the young people were down there that summer organizing for civil rights, we got their statement. All the civil rights people in the South signed a resolution to abolish HUAC. We got it into Edwards's hands, at the very end--and this hindsight--it's so important to remember that ACLU's [American Civil Liberties Union] man [Laurence (Larry) Speiser] there in Washington wouldn't really work with us. I had to write things out myself. Don Edwards was the good guy who recognized that what we were doing was correct and what we were doing had a real honest mass base because by that time we did have congressional district committees to abolish HUAC in many, many states.

TRELEVEN: I got a note here from, I think, your papers [at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin] in Madison that it was Congressman [Thomas B.] Curtis that entered the Meiklejohn-[Thomas I.] Emerson petition against HUAC in the Congressional Record as of February 8, 1965.

WILKINSON: Curtis?

TRELEVEN: Curtis.

WILKINSON: In Wisconsin?

TRELEVEN: I don't know. I haven't even looked him up.
I will.

WILKINSON: It wasn't the Milwaukee guy that we finally
got in '65, '66. Bob [Robert W.] Kastenmeier we always
had.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. The Milwaukee guy was who, Henry [S.]
Reuss?

WILKINSON: Reuss.

TRELEVEN: I want to come back to two things. [tape
recorder off]

Well, we're going to get you back in prison for a
minute, but I have one statement and one question.
First, I assume that the names in almost fifty years
are going to become public knowledge, the names of
individuals who were involved in the anti-HUAC drive
who were really FBI informants. I take it that the
material sealed in the [National] Archives [and Records
Administration] will probably reveal those.

WILKINSON: Yeah, I think the protective order that we
have with federal district court [United States
District Court, Central District of California] Judge
A. Wallace Tashima forbids mention of the names that we
have obtained through that. I think that Dick Criley's
book goes as far as--

TRELEVEN: Yes, that's correct.

WILKINSON: --we're able to go. In fact, Dick is much more clear on who the informers were because he read every document. He did the research. He could pin it right down. I know that in New York he knew exactly who it was. If he were here he'd say, "Well, this guy did this and this guy did that."

TRELEVEN: Well, maybe we wouldn't want him to.

WILKINSON: Huh?

TRELEVEN: Maybe we wouldn't want him to because maybe you'd be in contempt of court. [laughter]

WILKINSON: Have to watch out. Right now I'm making plans to get the file back from Dick because our court case is seemingly winding up slowly, and I want to get the stuff consolidated down at Loeb and Loeb. As I discussed with you, later somehow make these files accessible to the public as soon as we can.

TRELEVEN: Okay, my question is that you've talked about these diverse personalities. I think of you--and I know you fairly well--and I've met Dick Criley. I don't know him as well, but I cannot think of two people who are more dissimilar in temperament, in action, in terms of Dick being very bombastic in some ways. What's the chemistry by which you and Dick were able to get along so well? Or didn't you get along very well?

WILKINSON: Well, yeah.

TRELEVEN: For instance, you are damned and determined to resign. What was Dick's position during that particular incident?

WILKINSON: Oh, his role was to step in and to see to it that I came back on board, and to argue with me, to maneuver other people to come and talk to me, and get Anne Braden to back off from a word or two. I'll tell you when Anne Braden joined in--the people from New York I could handle--but when Anne Braden cut in, that was a low blow and I just broke.

As long as I said that about my resigning, it's like in Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity when they confronted me with my having put these vulgar words into that document and then confronting me under bright lights and saying, "How could this man write these dirty words?" I broke down and cried, and cried, and cried. There's something parallel to the fact that I resigned in Washington when I was attacked. The easiest thing to say about it is that it certainly hurts the organizing work to have somebody who fights by resigning rather than arguing things out.

But Dick's role always was the mollifier. I met Dick for the first time when I came into Chicago--I'm trying to be sure whether I met him--when Jean and I

were coming across the country.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I think you did indicate that earlier.

WILKINSON: We met then in '57, but I'm not sure. Dick was then heading up the midwestern regional office of the Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born. Whatever it was, our development on HUAC was completely parallel. The midwestern committee on the foreign born remained as a separate organization--maybe they paid part of the rent--but the new committee was the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights, which Dick served as secretary. The director was an evangelical church minister, Reverend William [T.] Baird. Again, this was skill on Dick's organizational part. He got Bob [Robert J.] Havighurst, dean of education and Meiklejohn authority, and some other prominent Chicago theological seminarians up there--big, big names--and the executive director would be Reverend William Baird, who was an evangelical church guy. Dick Criley is sort of secretary, but really doing everything. He was the mainstay. He was the brains and energy, as the FBI would put it.

TRELEVEN: Okay. But what's the glue that holds you and Dick together despite each of you having a strong personality? You have very dissimilar personal characteristics. What's the glue that holds you

together?

WILKINSON: The most important glue is the fact that Dick's mind as political analyst of where we are at a given time and out of that analysis what can we and should we try to do next, is the best we ever had in the movement. Every time I sat down with Dick overnight, for a weekend, or a couple of days, I always not only got myself recharged, but I developed a clear understanding, politically, of what had to be done next. I could never talk theoretically.

TRELEVEN: Okay, how you convert theory into strategy?

WILKINSON: That's right. He gave me strategy, but it came out of Dick's theory. At all of our meetings from the very first ones forward, Dick always was the one that could make the keynote, analytical talk and tell us where we are, what is possible, what we're working with, and what our problems are. We all just looked forward to that. But I had more of it than anyone else. I just wanted it. It's my respect for Dick's mind.

Now, on the other hand, he bored me silly with his mind. He'd come home after organizing, speaking da-da-da downtown, back and forth, get home for dinner, and I'd want to have a drink and sit down and watch television, or do something to relax. Dick wanted to

keep on talking, talking, talking, talking. Many a time I lied to him and said, "I'm just exhausted. I've got to go to bed." But really I was trying to escape from Dick's long-winded-- Nothing he said was wrong; it's just that it was too long and too much. I couldn't hold any more. Dick never learned to play. He never learned to unwind.

TRELEVEN: He's very intense.

WILKINSON: He's always intense, always going. I think that was that.

The other thing is that Dick is a very modest guy. People would say that's not true, but he was altogether willing to play the role of chauffeur. He'd drive me to Wisconsin. He'd drive me there. He'd prepare dinner. He'd get people here. He would arrange meetings where I would speak. He developed me. He put me up front and kept himself in the background.

Now, that may be part of the cement we're talking about here. If we were competing in some bad, subjective personal way, it would have been disastrous. But we weren't competing. I appreciated Dick's thinking and Dick appreciated the fact that I respected his thinking. He liked the way I was able to talk to people, talk to an audience, and always felt that way and always pushed me forward. On the other hand, I'd

make a talk, but on the way home he would go through my talk and criticize the hell out of it, boy, where my language was not correct, not straight, my analysis was not clear. That all helped me. So I think the fortuitousness of a great political, analytical mind on one side, and a guy who liked to go out to the public and organize the ideas that we developed out of conversation, made it that way. Dick rarely left Chicago to speak. He always used me. Even when I came to Chicago, Dick would always use me as the primary speaker. All the meetings were built by my coming in there, Dick sort of behind the scenes doing all the work. Dick worked without salary all these years. The salary in that home came from Florence, who was an organizer of heavy industry for UE. Whatever he has from his estate probably gave him some money to live on all the time. Dick always owned the most beautiful house, the most beautiful site in--

TRELEVEN: Carmel?

WILKINSON: --Carmel, right below Point Lobos, and yet he remained living in the ghetto of Chicago. He always lived in the ghetto area and he was very much respected by black leadership in the fights against the [Richard J.] Daley machine.

I think that such success as I had as an

organizer--and I was good at it--stems directly from the help Dick gave me to think things through.

TRELEVEN: Do you have any knowledge that Dick, in taking his First Amendment stand in Chicago--taking the First Amendment tack--that he had to deal with such people as Gil Green and Sig Eisenscher? That he had his hassles with those people in Chicago?

WILKINSON: I've never heard him say that.

By the way, I've read Dick's testimony and I've heard the phonograph record of Dick's testimony--there are recordings of it. It's a very strange thing about Dick's appearance before the committee. It wasn't like he went to make a First Amendment challenge, but I didn't see any effort that he ever used the Fifth [Amendment]. The committee said he used the Fifth when Dick really didn't. I'm the First Amendment guy from beginning to end, clear. Dick's position, which he's had to say to people, "I, too, used the First Amendment three times against HUAC and the Eastland committee. But each time he walked away from it. I'm never quite sure what that meant. I never heard he was under any pressure. He was under pressure from Carl Winter; I've mentioned this in the past.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: Dispute over the repeal of the Internal

Security Act--the [Patrick A.] McCarran Act--of 1950.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: In more recent years--what we're describing here is a period from roughly '59 up until mid- to late-seventies when Dick came west to Carmel--I think Dick has gone through a great personality change. He no longer is the guy on the back scenes. He needs public audiences. He plays the role I used to play. He's not comfortable when we speak together because, as he would say, "You say things entirely differently than I do." Or he could feel that I didn't quite exactly say it precisely the way it is. I blurred the lines of a story a little bit. Since he took over the Bay Area--the Northern California area--for NCARL [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation], increasingly he'll refer-- Say, for twenty years I was up there constantly to speak. Since Dick has been up there in the last ten years, I rarely get invited to speak up there any more, and I have the feeling if I did do it very much that Dick would say, "Well, why are you up here? Why, I'm handling this all right myself."

Likewise, when he got the funds for a freedom of expression award, the Lillian Hellman-Dashiell Hammett Award, for the book. I was working with Gara LaMarche and the fund, first organizing down in Texas where he'd

been the Texas ACLU director, and then when he was in New York for the fund. He's now with the America Watch Program, or watch program, whatever they call it. When they asked for nominations for the fund--and they give two or three hundred-thousand dollars out every year--I read it and wrote back an application saying, "You honor authors. This time you should be honoring a book that was created out of political persecution." (The way they're set up is it's the author who is politically persecuted and couldn't write.) So I said, "I wish you'd make an exception here and recognize that while the author, Dick Criley, has been under persecution, it's the story, the book, the trial, NCARL, the Committee to Abolish HUAC that was always subject to political persecution. So would you consider that?"

I rummaged around till I found a copy of Stars and Stripes from March of 1944 or '45 where Dick was on the staff in western Europe. It's a quote from a HUAC-FBI plant, a guy from the Chicago Tribune, which says, "Thirteen communists in leading military roles." It mentioned Dick Criley as a lieutenant under [Dwight D.] Eisenhower, and it mentioned Dashiell Hammett, who was a private in the Aleutian Islands. These are literally the first-named victims of the Cold War--thirteen names

in Stars and Stripes--going to the service personnel all over the world. Dick already had his problems, but to be firstly named a communist when he's got a lot of power as a lieutenant, what he was doing, and because of Dick's rather full knowledge of French and Italian he was pretty important, I think not only as an officer, but as a commanding officer who knew the languages.

TRELEVEN: So here you have this connection between them.

WILKINSON: So I wrote that to them and said, "Here's one more reason why we should get it."

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Well, Gara LaMarche we've never really talked about. He knows how desperately we need money. He called me up and said, "I've got good news for you. You're going to get \$10,000 for the book from the Fund for Free Expression. Give me Dick Criley's address. I've got to write and let him know." So he wrote to Dick, telling him. Meanwhile, I'd sent Dick my letters recommending him. Dick got the letter and immediately wrote us both back. This unbelievable ego trip: He's honored to accept the award. "I've long felt that one day I could receive such an award as this. As you know, not only was I among the first named in the Cold

War, but my great, great, great grandfather was crushed under rocks at the Salem witch trial."

Dick takes this as though it was entirely an award for him personally, as an author. Dick has not written anything else except small little tracts in our area. It led to some very sharp feelings between Dick and me, not very well expressed. Above all, Dick decided to give the money to NCARL. The First Amendment Foundation, which had struggled to raise the money to print the book, was receiving nothing. I argued heavily with Dick and Rachel [Rosen DeGolia]. He objected to the whole thing: "This is my money; I'll do with it as I please." Rachel divided the money half and half.

So if you'd hear Dick now, you'd have the feeling that the guy is too self-assured. The deference that he showed when I first met him, where he was just behind the scenes running the printing press, calling up somebody to make a date, shoving me out to be the front, that period is entirely gone and now Dick is just a completely self-assured person as he always should have been. He's now thinking about writing his memoirs. He makes a great issue of the point that he won the Earl Warren Award from the ACLU of Northern California, which he truly deserves. I don't like this

part of Dick. I think he's caught up in his own ego. He's getting this award. He really thought that these writers, these publishers, these big, big names in New York--the judges--had finally found out that he was a great writer, had done this under political persecution, and gave him this award. I think Gara, who handles the fund, would have to say, "Oh, of course the award went to the author. We never give the award to organizations or to books, only to authors." That's what he has to say because that's what it is. Yet, Dick would never have received it if I didn't know Gara and if I hadn't-- I literally wrote--I've got letters saying--"This time make an exception. Give it to the author, Dick. Sure, he deserves it. His parents were this and he was in the witch trials ancestrally. Also recognize the First Amendment Foundation, who published a book under this political pressure, and to ACLU, and Loeb and Loeb--the lawyers--who got this stuff out after twelve years." These were my three recommendations.

Another thing about Dick that is negative is that he, from the very beginning-- If you go up to his home at Carmel (I'm trying to think if you were ever up there)--

TRELEVEN: No.

WILKINSON: --if you'd go there for dinner, his house has got a twenty-five-foot high ceiling, big glass windows. You look down to the ocean. The big house over here a quarter of a mile, this was his father's studio. He had to have the high ceilings to put up these big canvasses. Dick is now the patriarch of the family, of the house. Then there's a great, giant solid teak--or something--cabinet with a carving of a fourteenth-century pope in the woodwork, which was actually something that came out of Europe. I mean, it was really some papal furniture.

TRELEVEN: My god, shades of [William Randolph] Hearst.
[laughter]

WILKINSON: Right. Dick will show that, and so-and-so. He will talk about himself to the point where both his former wives--deceased wives--would say, "Dick! Stop it!" You know? The egocentricity. Donna [Childers Wilkinson] used to have enormous problems with that part.

On the other hand, she came to Chicago and met Dick there, saw his brilliance as an analyzer and thinker and talker, but she was the one that, when Dick's first wife died, went up to Carmel to get Dick, and brought him down to introduce him to her closest friend. Jan Cords was like Eve Goldberg or Sarah [H.

Cooper] would be to Donna in terms of real close friends, only Jan had been a widow for many years. She introduced them and they fell in love. She went up there and lived until she committed suicide four or five years ago. But she used to struggle with Dick's egoism, talking too much, embarrassing her too much.

Now, so much of this is also in my personality, that I talk too much about myself: whatever it is, I relate it to some story in my life, so I've got tons of it. But I think I'm either doing it consciously where I want to make a point--or want to get somewhere with somebody, or for some reason--but with Dick it's just as though he believes every word of it.

Long reaction there about Criley. If you had to put the whole abolition of the unAmerican [activities] committees down as to who did it, you could mention the Meiklejohn, Williams, myself, Harvey O'Connor, ECLC, everybody. I think the brains behind the whole campaign to abolish HUAC--and the cement that held it together and held me in line--belongs to Dick Criley.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Almost at the end of the tape.

TAPE NUMBER: XLII, SIDE ONE

JULY 4, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, we got off on this route, originally by talking about external things that are going on with the National Committee [to Abolish HUAC], that led us into Dick [Richard] Criley. What I mean by external things are things that are going on externally while you're in prison. You and Carl [Braden] were suddenly shipped to Petersburg prison, Virginia, to Lewisburg penitentiary, and finally to Allenwood, quote, "for administrative reasons," unquote, in November of '61. You're wanting to tell the comic book story, and I take it that it's your belief that the comic book story really led to your sudden transfer. I think this is a good time for you to explain what you mean by that.

WILKINSON: I find it difficult that I didn't tell you the comic book story. Maybe I just told some people about this in Oklahoma, last week.

TRELEVEN: No, I don't believe we have it on tape.

WILKINSON: All right. To begin with, I would be dumbfounded if it wasn't the comic book story that did not lead to our being shipped out. It was, of course, due in part to the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and their influence on the whole prison-

guard system there. But it also had to do with the dislike of me which the FBI engendered on the part of guards because of the good relations that Carl and I had with the inmates. The first prison after Fulton County jail in '61--middle of May, I guess--was to be moved out of the Fulton County jail up to Greenville, South Carolina.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: I did describe--did I not?--the difficulty of being chained and that sort of stuff between places?

TRELEVEN: Yes, yes. Yeah, right.

WILKINSON: I probably told about coming in to sit down in front of a warden and the warden saying, "Don't sit down; I know all about you."

TRELEVEN: Yeah. We did that. We talked about the Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

WILKINSON: All right. Okay.

TRELEVEN: We talked about your increasing involvement with the library facility.

WILKINSON: All right. Carl was working somewhere inside the warden's office on some of his--

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: --paperwork, and I was processing the paperwork on what part of the prison inmates should be put in. It was so ridiculous, the FBI watching

everything, the warden saying, "Don't teach here," there's all this educational equipment there to teach the alphabet to illiterate adults, and I'm put in charge of giving the intelligence tests, an evaluation-- and recommending to the warden what position in the prison they should work in. [laughter]

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: Whatever happened between the FBI and the warden when we first arrived there--I had very little contact with the warden after that; Carl did at times have more because he did some of the work under the warden in a different part of the prison--whenever this date came that we were shipped out-- It must have been in very early November. You got a date?

TRELEVEN: Yep. By November 13th, you--

WILKINSON: Okay, that makes sense.

TRELEVEN: --had been shipped out. This was right on the edge of Hildegard [Wilkinson] and Pete [Margrethe Petersen] coming to visit--

WILKINSON: Right. Correct, correct.

TRELEVEN: --which caused all kinds of stress in and of itself.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: You described in the library how people would donate books and you were accessioning books.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: How it was kind of ridiculous, because virtually nobody--

WILKINSON: No one could read them.

TRELEVEN: --could read.

WILKINSON: What they did like were comic books, and we had a great collection of comic books. So we went jointly to the warden one day and said, "These guys here can't read, but they love comic books. But the only time they're free to read a comic book is Sunday afternoon, and you have the library closed all of Sunday. If you'll open it up at two in the afternoon after church for a couple hours, we will be glad to handle the checking out and checking back in of the comic books. Announce it to the inmates and we'll do our chore." The warden, without any hesitation, said, "Well, that seems like a nice idea. Sure."

So at two o'clock on Sunday afternoon Carl and I go to this building which is the library. Already there's a line-up of inmates outside, waiting to get comic books. The word had been announced of what's been planned. These two guards came up--and none of the guards were friendly to us--and these guys were particularly sinister. We should have figured out the message at that point, because they glared at us

because of having to leave their-- You have to understand, these are South Carolina Baptist prison guards; their Sabbath is very sacred to them, and they have to leave their homes, drive back, open the damned library up at two, and come back and close it up at four because a couple of "communists" have agitated the warden into getting comic books out to all these "nigras." [laughter] (I'm guessing the language that would be used.) When the guards arrived, you know, there was a cheer; they were welcomed by the inmates. Then Carl and I said, "We'll be ready for you at four." We lined up and handed them out as fast as we could, and telling everybody, "Be sure you get it back here at four and we can do it again next Sunday." It went off fine.

That night in the mess hall a lot of friendly things were said to us. The next day went normally, Monday. But Tuesday morning, as I recall, our names are called out to "control." Control is just the security part of the prison. It's always menacing to get called to control; it's like going to health, or something else. It's control; you violated something. You're not called out by name; you're called out by number, and our numbers were called out. So Carl and I approached from different parts of the prison to get

there. You knock on a door saying "control" on it, and you open a door and go on in. No sooner do we go through the door than these four guards jump on me, throwing handcuffs on my hands, chains on my hands, chains around my middle, chains around my ankles--bang-bang-bang--and all this time moving me across the room, as it were, out that door where there's a prison security bus waiting outside.

I remember saying, "What? What? What? What's wrong? What did I do wrong? What did I do wrong?" I look around and here comes Carl Braden. Same rough treatment of him. He's saying, "What the hell is going on here?" Like Carl's language. Then I remembered my hearing aid batteries, which always are critical to me. I said, "Wherever you're taking me, I've got to have my batteries. I've got to go back to my bunk to get my batteries."

"No. You just shut up and take orders."

Then I said, "My books!" I had all this correspondence with [Alexander] Meiklejohn and all this other stuff there, and I wanted it. I had a collection of stuff I'd saved. It was really a little library in my bunk. "Nope. None of that." Within three minutes we're processed, out in a prison bus with bars on the windows. We look up the road a few feet and here's the

warden, standing at the warden's building, looking out observing this thing. We're in effect motioning, you know, "What is this about?" We may have even asked him, "What? What's happened? What's wrong?" We could have said that. (My mind says we said it, but whether we did or not may be an embroidery of the mind.) So we're riding. In that part of South Carolina, there's not freeways, there's not highways. You're on rural roads, and we didn't know where we're going. We had no idea what it was about, nothing about the library, nothing about anything. We did like they did in the slave days, where you follow the drinking gourd, or something like that. You follow the sun rise and set: you could tell north by watching the sun; and we knew we were going north by following the sun. We went through rural South Carolina, rural North Carolina, and about ten o'clock at night--no food, no nothing--we arrived at a prison in Virginia.

TRELEVEN: Right, which would be Petersburg prison.

WILKINSON: Is it?

TRELEVEN: Yep, that's where you went.

WILKINSON: Is that out of a letter you got that?

TRELEVEN: Yeah, it's out of a letter that you wrote.

WILKINSON: I've really got to read my old letters.

TRELEVEN: [laughter] That's right.

WILKINSON: Refresh my memory.

TRELEVEN: Now, wait a minute. Okay. I don't understand this whole situation, though. You've mentioned to me before that it was the comic books that did it, and I don't quite understand how you're so sure of that.

WILKINSON: Well, let me tell you how we found out about anything. It was Aubrey--

TRELEVEN: You had no discussion with the warden at all?

WILKINSON: Nothing.

TRELEVEN: It was like no control--

WILKINSON: No conversation with the warden or with the guard, or anything. We walked through a door, handcuffed, and within two minutes we're on a bus and the motor's running, and we drove off. Our gear-- clothing, everything--is behind us.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so you had absolutely--

WILKINSON: No warning.

TRELEVEN: --no warning.

WILKINSON: Absolutely none.

TRELEVEN: Did it occur to you that this was punishment for the petition campaign that was going to go to the White House?

WILKINSON: We considered--

TRELEVEN: Everything.

WILKINSON: --everything. Because, you know, these guards were always searching my box.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, yeah.

WILKINSON: They were pulling me out of the bus that took me to a Catholic church saying, "You're no Catholic," when I tried to ride on a bus to go to Catholic services. You know, Jean [Benson Wilkinson] had come to visit and they'd ripped my wrist watch off and told me that I wouldn't be able to see my wife and children again because I had broken a rule. I wore a five-dollar Timex wristwatch into the visitor's room, which is against the rules, and so on. We had no idea what was happening.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Because all of this took place within a week or less of the petition delegation calling on Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

WILKINSON: Is that right? I didn't realize that.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Well, again, that's what I've been able to pick out of your letters.

WILKINSON: That's news to me. We had no knowledge of when things were being done. We weren't getting communications saying, "Next Tuesday we're going to take it in." Nothing like that. We had no knowledge of it.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So it's only in retrospect you learn the reason. You were going to mention Aubrey [W. Williams] in that connection.

WILKINSON: Well, when we finally got out of the-- That night in this jail cell in Virginia was a horrendous night because there was just a slab and a blanket and the food shoved under the door at midnight; then up at six, back into the bus, and the way we were stripped and had to walk naked between our clothing and somewhere else. I don't know. They were always doing those things to you. Then getting into Lewisburg and being put into solitary. What was it? Seven or eleven days in solitary there. I want to say seven days, maybe.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, about a week at Lewisburg penitentiary.

WILKINSON: Then we end up out in this other prison; it's called Allenwood. It is the site of one of the eight concentration camps established under Title II of the Internal Security Act of 1950. That's the place where the warden there greets us very shortly after, saying that this camp has enough room to take care of 100,000 troublemakers from Baltimore and Philadelphia alone. That's what these things were built for.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, right.

WILKINSON: At that point, our correspondence ended. No letter-writing from solitary at all. And Hildegarde is coming to the wrong place. She's going to South Carolina. I'm up in middle Pennsylvania.

What we next received was a letter from Aubrey, advising us that his letter had come back from Greenville two days after we were shipped out and the letter came back, "address unknown," like you stamp on an envelope? "Address unknown." Like a German expression; in the Nazi period there was something after a person was picked up by the secret police and you were killed--something about it in German--"wie kamft," or something like that. I've seen that language in Germany. Well, that was what Aubrey got back. Anita and Aubrey had driven over from Montgomery to Greenville to try to see us, and were not allowed to see us. Sylvia [Crane] got in, but Aubrey and Anita didn't get in.

So Aubrey contacts Bennett, the director of the Bureau of Prisons, by telephone. His words to us were--not at that time, because I didn't see him at that time--that "I called Bennett and I said, 'Where are my boys?'" (You have to understand Aubrey's Alabama accent here.) Bennett says, "Your boys are down in South Carolina, Aubrey." "Oh no they're not. I got a

letter saying their address is unknown in South Carolina." Bennett said, "Let me check it out. I'll call you back," or something. Bennett calls back and says, "Aubrey, you may find it hard to believe, but your boys got caught spying for Russia and they're in solitary [confinement] up at Lewisburg penitentiary at this time." And Aubrey's remark was, "Spying for 'Roosha'?" (He couldn't say Russia.) "How could they spy for 'Roosha'?" Carl and I heard that the guards had seen us looking out of the prison windows in South Carolina. Some miles away is the [Donaldson] Air Force Base and we are seeing planes taking off. It's during the Berlin airlift. That might be a reminding factor. Would that have been in '61?

TRELEVEN: What was going on?

WILKINSON: You know, there was a Berlin airlift at one point.

TRELEVEN: When the hell was the Cuban missile crisis?

WILKINSON: Wait a minute. Oh, no, no, no, that was in '62.

TRELEVEN: That was '62, okay.

WILKINSON: I was out of prison, speaking at the big meeting in New York. What's the name of the famous black writer? Raisin in the Sun, the woman who wrote Raisin in the Sun.

TRELEVEN: Oh, sure. Hansberry?

WILKINSON: Hansberry.

TRELEVEN: Lorraine.

WILKINSON: She and I spoke together at a big rally on the night of the Cuban--

TRELEVEN: Okay. I'll have to look and see what kind of military--

WILKINSON: All right. I don't know. But at any rate, we--

TRELEVEN: Okay, you were spying for the "Rooshans".

WILKINSON: Spying for Russia, and something about "they'd seen you observing planes taking off from the base." Then we put it together that these guards--this is our imagination, because they hated us for that Sunday afternoon thing--had gone to the security forces at Donaldson Air Force Base and said they had seen us looking out and observing planes taking off. You could do that very easily from any part of the prison because there were a lot of planes coming in and out, and then we were getting that word through to Russia, and that we were reporting to Russia on the take-off of planes and landing of planes at the air force base. For that reason national security interests required us to be moved from South Carolina and be moved north to Pennsylvania. The security on us at Lewisburg was not

so much solitary confinement because of bad conduct--it was partly that, maybe--but it's also part of the orientation. When you come into Lewisburg you have a sort of a quarantine period in which you're isolated a bit. Also, it's a matter of discipline. They get every inmate, give him a taste of solitary, and from that time on you're told, "If you want to go back to solitary, just keep doing what you're doing here."

TRELEVEN: Right. Let me back up once more. In terms of the content of the comic books, was there anything in the content?

WILKINSON: Don't remember a thing. They were all kinds.

TRELEVEN: They were "Donald Duck" to--

WILKINSON: Anything. Crazy stuff.

TRELEVEN: Crazy stuff.

WILKINSON: I don't have any knowledge at all what they were, but they sure liked the comic books. We were the good guys because we got it [the library] open.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so you didn't plant any left-wing comic books?

WILKINSON: If there were any I never saw them, didn't know about them. [laughter] The last thing I would have done was to do anything Left. I was so inhibited by my prison experiences that I really was doing

everything I could to behave myself.

TRELEVEN: So the guards whose wives are screwing some of the prisoners probably went to air force security, and that resulted in this whole--

WILKINSON: That's right. That's part of it. I did tell you about the cigarettes for sex.

TRELEVEN: Yes, right.

Okay, you get to Lewisburg and you write that "this is a great stone and concrete fortress." That's what you put into your letters. You were in a solitary cell. You were worried about claustrophobia because of the lack of hearing because you didn't have your supply of batteries.

WILKINSON: Horrible.

TRELEVEN: Sounded terrifying.

WILKINSON: It was a terrifying experience. In solitary, I don't know how many cells there'd be--say twenty of them; a long row of them--a guy at one end of the block would pull a lever and that opened every door simultaneously. You have concrete walls on each side of you, concrete walls ending with a big, heavy steel door with a tiny little peep-hole in it, about three inches at the top. There was a tiny little window on this end of it so you could look out, but you couldn't see anything. It was a slit about like that, that you

could look out. So I missed the calls. I missed the calls for meals. I missed the calls. They'd let you out to get a bath. They'd let you out-- Oh, I know, one time I did get out; two times I got out. Two times I got out that I remember. It was fascinating.

TRELEVEN: Is this the [Junius] Scales story?

WILKINSON: Yes. You've had that already?

TRELEVEN: No. Why don't you tell that and then we'll wind it up for today.

WILKINSON: All right.

TRELEVEN: But if you're in solitary, how would the prisoners arrange for you to have a meeting with Scales?

WILKINSON: All right. Let me finish up one of the experiences when I got out that we'll lose otherwise.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: It is so difficult in this place. A light bulb--about a twenty-watt light bulb--up eight-feet high on a concrete ceiling which burns day and night. There's a metal bed. There's a toilet without a seat on it. There's a wash device above it somehow to wash your hands.

I miss these calls. When you did get the call, you step outside quickly and line up. It's like military precision. When you're all lined up out

there, they pull the lever and lock the cell block so nobody else can get in while you're gone, and then you start out by command lock-stepping. "All right, one, two, three," and you lock-step. You go out of the solitary area through a long corridor. It reminds me of a Gothic cathedral. The building is Gothic windows, it is masonry solid. It's really quite as you think of it, like Duke University or Parks University of Chicago. These giant big buildings--

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: There's buildings like this down at Wake Forest in Winston-Salem. I've seen them. It's the same structure, only Lewisburg is a penitentiary. You walk lock-step. Not a word is allowed. You're not to speak to anybody. You walk down that corridor. You come to where the food is. We were only brought out--I mean, when the rest of the prison population is fed we don't know--the solitary guys are brought in all by themselves. You go through a line just about as fast as you walked in, and there's inmates behind the soup, potatoes, whatever it is.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: They throw it onto your tray, boom, boom, boom, boom. At the end, your guard is pointing, "Sit there." You sit down and you've got ten minutes to

eat--no conversation, no nothing--and you eat like that.

I'll bring up the Junius Scales thing only this much: going through that line, the guy dishing out the mashed potatoes was Junius Scales--

TRELEVEN: Oh.

WILKINSON: --who I'd known in New York when he was being tried for--he was the last person tried under--the Smith Act. He went into Lewisburg after we went into South Carolina. Now he's in Lewisburg and he's assigned to the kitchen detail. So there's guards watching everything. I mean, I had the feeling that everybody was watching me, and certainly Junius, because here's one guy they called a communist, here's another guy who is a communist, the head of the Communist Party of North Carolina. So we just look at each other. You know, eyes just furtively looking at each other. Not a word is said. We knew we were in the same prison. I go back, I don't even look back over my shoulder at him. I eat. The command is given, "Up!" and you march out.

The second trick story here is that two days later we got a call to get out of there, and I used to keep my head against the wall, and Carl would bang on the concrete wall so I'd hear the vibrations because I'm

still working without batteries.

TRELEVEN: Okay, Carl's in the next cell?

WILKINSON: He's in the next cell.

TRELEVEN: So as a way to wake you--

WILKINSON: He bangs. I sleep with my head against the damned wall, shoving it against it. I tell you, if I'd wake up and my head isn't tight against the wall, I'd push it again, because I didn't want to miss these calls. Because, you know, there's no light but that light bulb up there, and the food calls can come at six a.m., they can come at ten p.m. You never know. There's no schedule. You don't have a watch to look at to decide.

So I got out this one time and we're marching. The guy, as we start marching, calls out, "Library." What happened? Library. In solitary, I'm marching, I'm told library. We go to a long, long corridor, like a hundred yards down this corridor, and then when we get there double doors, open wide, and we march lock-step right into this library. Here the library has these books. As soon as you're in there, "All right. Five minutes. Take any books you want. Five minutes." I just ran up--I had nothing to read--and grabbed up-- What do I find? I find Matthew Josephson's--

TRELEVEN: The Robber Barons?

WILKINSON: The Robber Barons. I find Harvey O'Connor's-- [laughter] Harvey O'Connor wrote Mellon's Millions. I saw another one on the betrayal in the revolution by Benedict Arnold. I said, "How many can you take?" They said, "As many as you can hold." I had eight books in my arms. Back in line, lock-step back down, I stand in front of my cell again, and I stumble into my cell with these eight books in my arms. I said, "Boy, only in America could you have prisons like this." I sit down there and I read Harvey's book. I knew Matthew Josephson--

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: --and I knew these other authors. See, [Joseph R.] McCarthy subpoenaed Harvey before a [Senate] committee in 1953--

TRELEVEN: Fifty-three, I was going to say.

WILKINSON: --because his books had been found in the overseas libraries of the United States Army, or the USIA [United States Information Agency], and McCarthy said that the taxpayers are paying to have communist books shipped out and put in American library offices all over the world. So McCarthy calls Harvey up to prove he's such a dangerous communist, it's a part of his evidence.

Here I'm in prison-- [laughter]

TRELEVEN: This revolutionary literature.

WILKINSON: --and I'm given all this revolutionary literature to read. So my last days in solitary were a complete joy, except as I'm going blind from the dim light.

Now Junius Scales. All right. First of all, my sister-- We were allowed to write a letter from Lewisburg.

TRELEVEN: Yes, you did, because you wrote several from Lewisburg.

WILKINSON: All right, yeah, and got the word through to my sister. I said, "Don't come to North Carolina. Make an inquiry, but come to Pennsylvania." My sister and Peter, her friend, flew all the way from L.A. to Allenwood to have Thanksgiving dinner. This is this wonderful sister, twelve years older, who is head of the hospital.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: This woman was Phi Beta [Kappa] at USC [University of Southern California], entered medical school at thirty-five, hung her shingle out at forty-one, then entered the hospital, announcing over the hospital system, "This is Dr. Hildegarde. On Thanksgiving I will be going to the Lewisburg penitentiary to visit my brother. I will not be here."

Boom, boom, boom. Hildegarde would say that like if anybody looks cross-wise at me, I'll kill them! Everybody knew how dangerous her brother was. She proudly would announce it.

So I'm now at Allenwood, and the prison is entirely a different experience.

TRELEVEN: Now, wait a minute.

WILKINSON: I'm at Allenwood now.

TRELEVEN: You're going to come back to Scales?

WILKINSON: Yes, this is Scales. Scales comes out of Allenwood.

TRELEVEN: Okay, I was confused. I thought that you were able to talk to him at Lewisburg, but no you weren't.

WILKINSON: I am at Allenwood.

TRELEVEN: Okay, let me put this in context. You get to Allenwood and there are fourteen letters waiting for you.

WILKINSON: Oh, wow.

TRELEVEN: You know already, I think, from material received under FOIA [Freedom of Information Act], that all of this seems to have caught the FBI flatfooted because they had this whole system of opening all of your correspondence, and my god, what do they do now because you've been transferred to--

WILKINSON: Is that in my letters?

TRELEVEN: No.

WILKINSON: That's what the FBI letters show?

TRELEVEN: No, that's what was learned many years later for the--

WILKINSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Down in South Carolina they had to take my letters and drive to Atlanta penitentiary to get them copied.

TRELEVEN: Right, which you explained.

WILKINSON: Now we're at Allenwood and I think they had a facility at Lewisburg to copy letters, so they had to go eighteen miles.

By the way, an eighteen-mile ride out to Allenwood. Let me just give you the Scales thing in this sequence.

It is bitterly, bitterly cold in Pennsylvania, like freezing. Not freezing, but ten degrees.

TRELEVEN: It's cold for you Southern Californians.

WILKINSON: All right. When they put us out of Lewisburg, they take away the clothes they gave us inside the prison and give us a blue-jean shirt and a blue-jean slack, and a pair of shoes. The stuff they give you they don't expect to see again; it's going out to the other prisoners. There's an inmate interest in preserving the better clothes for Lewisburg and keeping

it away from Allenwood. So they give you things that have been washed a thousand times and it's threadbare. So you're put in that, and that. We're marched out, just the two of us, and put on this open truck in the rear, with the guard and the driver in front and we're on this sort of open cattle truck at the back. We can't escape or anything, but we're exposed to the elements. We drive that eighteen miles and I swear it was as cold as I have ever experienced. The wind. Susquehanna river goes down through there, and it was frozen over.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: But this is only November.

TRELEVEN: Yep.

WILKINSON: When we got finally there, they opened up the gate, let us jump off the truck, and we are walked into this new wooden prison building. It's wooden, not concrete. I'm so cold that I spot a radiator--one of these steam radiators--and as soon as I've got my freedom, I walk over to put my hands on that radiator. I touched that and I jumped back because it burned them. I just held them over it, trying to keep warm without burning myself. I'd been doing that for several minutes, and some guy came up to me, laughs and says, "There's no heat coming out of that thing." I

put my hand down again to touch it, and sure enough it was cold. The radiator was there, but the heat was coming from some vent up here. That's how cold I was. All right. I never forgot that ride, it was so rough.

I was there for two-and-a-half months in November--

TRELEVEN: That's about right.

WILKINSON: --and stayed till the end of February.

TRELEVEN: Well, you were there--

WILKINSON: Another story at another time had to do with the fact that I was accused of teaching communism in Allenwood, and was called to the warden and sent--

TRELEVEN: Right, which I want to talk about.

WILKINSON: Later. That's another story.

TRELEVEN: Later. Actually, you left February 1, 1962, and this is--

WILKINSON: November 16.

TRELEVEN: --about November 20 or thereabouts.

WILKINSON: Okay. I had been for my own reasons losing weight. By this time, I went in at 195, I guess, and by this time I'm down to 155. I'm happy about that; I'm doing such things as going to the weight room and doing push ups, and I'm avoiding desserts, and I'm constantly trying to get my body in shape. I'm reading, even though I'm down to my last couple of months, and I'm out of this horrible experience at

Lewisburg.

At that point, my name is called out over control again, only this time it wasn't to control, it was to "medical." I go to "medical," and a guard reaches me there and said, "They want you right away for x-ray at Lewisburg." I said, "Well, what about?" He said, "I don't know. Here it is. X-ray, Lewisburg. Twelve noon tomorrow. Be here at eleven; the truck will drive you."

So I go back and I begin talking to Carl. Now, what the hell? I figured out that all this pressure outside had built up, they had checked my weight out when I came in there, and I've lost forty pounds. But they're beginning to be alarmed that I may have some serious disease that they haven't picked up, and they're calling me to x-ray for a medical checkup to see if I have a tumor, or whatever it was. That's what I accepted it as.

The next day I get on this truck again, and have this terribly cold drive back to Lewisburg. We arrive at Lewisburg and each time there's gates, walls, but then there's metal fences that are thirty-feet high, and then there's a guard tower up there with rifles and whatnot. A rope comes down and the driver gives them my picture and it's sent up there. Then

it's transferred over, and then we go through. The gates open; we drive in that far. Then a guy comes down and looks at the picture and looks at me and gives the picture back. Then the driver's gun, a rope is tied onto the revolver and it is pulled twenty feet up to the guard tower. Then that's done. Then we drive the truck through a second series of gates, and then finally I'm taken out. I'm in the general prison compound and I'm led up to a gated door, and again my picture is checked. The guy with me checks it, the guard checks it. All right, let me in. I go through, I don't know, five, ten checks, each time going through a different check to have my picture taken.

I finally arrive at x-ray, walk in, and there's an inmate and a guard in the x-ray office. They give my name and my picture. The inmate says, "Sit down. We'll get to you when we can." I sit down and wonder, "What in the world am I doing here? Why am I seeing a doctor?" Suddenly, the guard leaves and the inmate says, "Come with me." He takes me through two different x-ray rooms and sits me down in an x-ray room and says, "Just wait here. Somebody wants to talk to you." And I sit down. Simultaneously, all timed to the minute--I come from eighteen miles out--Junius Scales has been told by his guy in his cell block--

half-a-mile away--that he's needed at x-ray. He goes through all these checks and comes there. Then, finally, I'm sitting there and in comes Junius Scales, brought by this inmate, who says, "Okay, guys, you've got five minutes," and leaves us alone. Junie and I hug and can't believe what is happening here. He says to me, "You have no idea how wonderful these guys are. They'll do anything for you. You know, they're totally apolitical guys, but if you want to meet somebody, 'Sure, I'll get him in. Where is he located? Allenwood? Sure. When do you want to see him? I'll arrange it.'" So we had this real quick thing--he tells me rapidly, I tell him rapidly--in literally five minutes, and then the inmate comes back and says, "That's it."

Junius is taken away. Then another inmate comes in to take me back, and I go back through these six check-points, I'm put on the cattle truck, I go through these high fences--rifles up, pictures up and down--drive eighteen miles, and I arrive back at Allenwood. Every bit of it was arranged by the grapevine, or whatever you call it, the prison communication system which is just unbelievably good. It's the same way that they told us that our mail was being held up and other things that they told us: "They're not going to

let you go to that meeting in New York." All of that is done by the inmate communication. I came out of the prison having more respect for the inmate population of these prisons for their solidarity, their brotherhood, their friendship. They'll do anything for another inmate. Their hatred for every hack, every guard, in the prison.

That's the way I had my visit with Junius Scales right in the middle of Lewisburg penitentiary, right under the nose of all the guards. He is the last communist to be jailed under the Smith Act, and I'm in there where the FBI had me watched. Couldn't be more surveillance than they had on me, and yet they missed the whole trick of how Junius and I got pulled together for an x-ray treatment, for a five minute conversation. I never saw an x-ray machine. End of story.

TRELEVEN: Okay. A good one.

WILKINSON: [laughter] It's an amazing one.

TRELEVEN: Let's go back to Allenwood the next time we get together.

WILKINSON: Okay.

TRELEVEN: Thank you.

MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE

Frank Wilkinson

Interviewed by Dale E. Treleven

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Photograph: Wilkinson in June 1991. Photograph, courtesy of Frank Wilkinson, by Linda Gonzalez.

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TAPE NUMBER: XLIII, SIDE ONE

JULY 18, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, it's July 18 and we're back with Frank Wilkinson after two weeks. We left off last time with your having described how the inmates arranged for you to have a five-minute chat with Junius Scales at Lewisburg [penitentiary]. Meantime, you're at Allenwood, which according to your letters was an 8,500-acre farm. As you mentioned last time, your sister [Hildegard Wilkinson] and Pete [Margrethe Petersen] visited over Thanksgiving. One thing you found very enjoyable and comforting, I guess, was frequent walks to what you referred to as the old stone church. Tell me a little more about that.

WILKINSON: I was transferred to the Allenwood sub-camp of the Lewisburg penitentiary in mid-November, 1961, and it was a very, very lonely area. I don't really understand the Appalachians or Adirondacks, or whatever it is, the long ridges of mountains with valleys in between, and Allenwood is located sort of in a valley between two of these long ridges. So you have hillsides on either side. I was getting down to the last two months of my prison term, and I'd had this horrendous experience of being put in solitary at

Lewisburg where I couldn't do anything. I was also in this new prison more overtly threatened by the warden. He apparently was under successfully greater influence by the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] than the warden had been down in South Carolina. So I was threatened with teaching communism. I think I told you that story before.

TRELEVEN: Well, you alluded to it, and I want to get back to it. I'll give you some reference points here.

WILKINSON: Well, let me give you a summary of it.

TRELEVEN: Well, let me lead into it this way.

WILKINSON: All right.

TRELEVEN: Maybe this will help your memory, too. You wrote a letter on December 11, '61, that the superintendent had called you into his office and had read you a report that you were engaged in teaching in controversial areas. He warned you that you were to take caution that you give no word or not commit any act so that there'd not be any further misunderstandings. Now, is that the incident?

WILKINSON: That's the incident. The language there was practically self-censorship. Several times during my prison term I would write letters either in a moment when I was very happy or where I was very depressed, and the letters would come back to me saying, "Unfit to

be mailed out," and I had to tear them up.

TRELEVEN: Oh, really?

WILKINSON: That happened a lot.

TRELEVEN: That they weren't upbeat enough?

WILKINSON: They were either too downbeat or too upbeat. One time I wrote a letter from Allenwood describing the irony of sort of a happy scene of a prison guard sitting on a bunk with an inmate happily playing checkers with other inmates gathered around to tell them which move to make, and then laughing and cheering. I described this scene in a very positive way. Prisons are so hard, and yet you have these moments where guards become human and inmates become friendly. That was sent back to me. They told me it was inappropriate to come out of a prison. Apparently, they didn't want any stories coming out about guards playing checkers with inmates.

The other part is teaching or involvement in discussing controversial issues. That language. That is code words for what really was happening. I was called into the warden's office and abruptly told to pack my gear. I was going to the wall, which meant back to solitary. I asked, "Why? What happened?" And I was told that he had information that I was teaching communism. If I put that in a letter, it would never

have gotten out.

TRELEVEN: I see.

WILKINSON: I complained immediately and forcibly.

"What do you mean? I have no idea what you're even talking about. You're misinformed." And he says, "You know damned well what I mean. You go get your gear ready. You're going to the wall." It's one of the second or third times that I cried while I was in prison. The fear of going back to that wall, and particularly going back without even Carl Braden to bang his shoe on the--

TRELEVEN: By "the wall" you mean back to Lewisburg?

WILKINSON: Back to Lewisburg. All inmates fear the wall. If you're at Allenwood, you may be a lifer, but you have established enough good points that they are not afraid of you anymore. To go back to the wall means that you're more incorrigible, and not only would you be locked up, but you'd be put in solitary. In my case, that would mean the last six weeks, instead of seven days or eight days I had. And it would mean losing the good time I'd earned, which meant I would spend three more months in Lewisburg. The whole thing.

I don't know whether-- I said I cried. That's my recollection. It wasn't a cry like a child crying that's hurt. I was just pleading, pleading, not to do

this to me. Wardens have such enormous power over you and they break you down. They break you down. They broke me down completely by that point. He told me at the end of this thing, "You go back to your bunk and think about this, and come back and tell me what you were doing." Something of that kind. So I go back to my bunk absolutely dumbfounded. I can't imagine what he's talking about because I'd been behaving very well. I was speeding up on my reading of all the [Alexander] Meiklejohn reading regimen that he'd given me. I wanted to get all my books read and get other things read, get ready to be released. I was thinking about what I would do when I get out and so on. I went through twenty-four hours this way, without being able to sleep.

And it was particularly bad because my bunk mate, the guy next to me, was the warden's favorite. He was given a car to drive into town to get supplies, which always--it was taken for granted--meant sex. He hated me. He was very close to the warden. He was serving extra time because he had been the bunk mate of [William] Remington, the 1955 political prisoner coming out of the anti-communism of the fifties. Maybe forties; I don't know when Remington's time was. It's one of those cases. It's like a [Alger] Hiss case.

Similar. During the night somebody got into Remington's and this guy's cell and crushed his skull with a brick. This guy, like all inmates, would never think of telling the authorities who had killed somebody because you'd be killed yourself if you became a snitch. So he got extra years in prison because he wouldn't tell.

TRELEVEN: I'll be darned.

WILKINSON: But while he was getting extra years, he was in effect you might say, a leader of the Cold War. He was the leading anti-communist in the prison. The guy who had been killed--Remington--was an alleged communist. I don't think Remington was or was not; I don't know. But he was alleged to be. So that was all part of the thing.

At that point I walked into the john. These johns with that many inmates had long, long lines of urinals. I went up to a urinal and was urinating, and I had paid no attention to what else. I was in a daze. And I heard a voice, and the voice said, "Your problem is helping arrange the forum. If you know what's good for you, you'll stop sitting with black inmates at mess." I looked over to this guy and before I could even identify him, he walked away. It was just his quick way of communicating, walking up to my urinal, saying

something quick, and moving on. I stopped and I thought about it. Did you want to interrupt at this point?

TRELEVEN: Yeah. I want another reference point. You wrote to Jean [Benson Wilkinson] on December 14th--this is three days later--that it appears that the warden had talked to you because you had responded to inmate inquiries about possible outside speakers for the literary forum at prison. Now, is that what you are referring to?

WILKINSON: That's what I'm talking about now. I was sitting-- See, at Allenwood, as well as in South Carolina--not at Lewisburg--you were allowed to take your tray and sit where you wanted to sit. You weren't ordered to sit. At Lewisburg you were marched in and you were seated at a table, and you were marched out in ten or twelve minutes. I and Carl often sat with black inmates. And it wasn't being done. It was much, much, much more racism in the north, in Allenwood and at Lewisburg, than I ever encountered in South Carolina. High school average graduates, probably, at Allenwood compared with the non-educated, illiterate, third-grade [education] in South Carolina. But no racism in South Carolina, and intense racism in Pennsylvania.

So sitting there-- I don't think we were flaunting

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So sitting there-- I don't think we were flaunting

or being dramatic or provoking. You never thought of it that way. We weren't the only ones who did it, but we did it. While we're sitting there eating, a fellow walking around came up to the back of me and sort of squatted down to my chair and said, "We used to have a forum here and we'd like to get it going again. Do you know anybody who would come to speak if we can get the forum started?" I couldn't believe what he was saying. A forum. It just made no sense at all, having a forum in a prison. I had not encountered anything like that. The only outsiders that ever got into the prison were the Bob Jones [University] evangelists down in South Carolina, who would walk into your prison cell and preach Christianity to you, try to save you. You're trying to turn your ears off, and they had the right to sit there and go on, and on, and on about Christ and being born again.

Well, here we got a forum somehow. I said to this guy, "Well, okay. I never heard of it, but if there is one, sure I do." He said, "Well, who would you get to come? I've got to be able to give names." So at that time I was conscious of the people who had signed the clemency petition for Carl and me. So I started out with Dean John [C.] Bennett, dean of the Union Theological Seminary; Reinhold Niebuhr, who was really

among theologians quite a cold warrior, but you know, he was an ADA [Americans for Democratic Action]-type of liberal; and Martin Luther King [Jr.], and I named a man who was the secretary of the World Council of Churches, who was the one that had taken our petition to [John F.] Kennedy. I named those. I said, "I've got others, too." That was it. That was all. The guy scribbled down a few names quickly. It couldn't have been more than three minutes.

But at the table next to me was this roommate of Remington--and my roommate now--who overheard this. From that he goes to the warden and tells the warden that I'm organizing classes in communism. So the guy says the forum and I suddenly could see how the misunderstanding--I didn't know it was this guy doing it; that I learned later--but I could see how the misunderstanding would develop.

So I then got up and I had the freedom to leave the mess hall and go to the warden's office. I went to the warden's office just bubbling with relief, knocked on his door, and waited. Told to come in. He sat there sternly behind his desk. I said, "Oh, thank god, I've got some friends here. I've found out what your problem is. Your word I was teaching communism was not it; one of the inmates says you used to have a forum

here and he asked me for names of speakers and I gave him these names." This warden looked at me just grimly, like he didn't want to hear what I was saying. I had said, "Thank god I've got friends here." And the warden said, "For every friend you think you've got here, I have ten. You mind your business." Not mind your business. A very sharp rebuke. "Watch out or you're going to the wall." So I left the place up high, and then suddenly crashed. So during the last period of time I just sweated it out, afraid to say anything to anybody, because it was just as though they were trying to frame me. If it wouldn't be one thing, it would be another.

Now, not in the letter to Jean, probably, but something else relates there. In that prison was the American equivalent to the British Major Hawhaw, the American Nazi that went to Germany and broadcast to American troops as an American Nazi. You know, the same thing as you had Japanese women who were, with records, talking to the American GIs in the Pacific.

TRELEVEN: Right, "Tokyo Rose."

WILKINSON: "Tokyo Rose." But this guy was the American. Britain's guy was General or Major Hawhaw, and he was the equivalent of that. He'd been given a life sentence for being a Nazi during World War II.

He's still in prison. He's been there since the forties. He was an intellectual. He read. And he picked me out because I was reading and he wanted to discuss things. So we had had many, many fascinating conversations about [Adolf] Hitler and World War II, and anti-Semitism, and Nazism, and the brownshirts in the United States, the American Nazi Party. I just said, "Oh, my god. If this gets back to the warden, I'm really in trouble" because there I was talking political things. So I cut out my conversations with him.

When my sister, Hildegarde, and Pete came to see me--this is Thanksgiving--I did introduce them to this man and then told them what he was like. It was such an unbelievable thing. Here I'm in prison for upholding the First Amendment and my best conversation piece--because there wasn't much conversation among the other inmates--was the foremost American Nazi who had tried to cause American troops to defect during World War II.

TRELEVEN: It struck me that the timing of all this was kind of interesting, too, because again going back to your letter of December 11, you indicated you had read the December 9th account in the Louisville Courier, the AP [Associated Press] account of Jean's and Otto

Nathan's petitions [going] to the White House. It's like the story appears on the 11th. You get called into the warden's office on the 11th. I'm just struck by the coincidental--or non-coincidental--nature of this. I'm probably implying something, but there's no way to--

WILKINSON: No, I think-- Well, what we know-- I hadn't thought about that. I didn't remember it. You're refreshing my memory.

But we now know from the FBI files that there was constant surveillance of me. The wardens, the guards, and others had been told I was a dangerous communist. That's why the unbelievable irony, in the midst of this huge prison system, that I can be transported from one prison eighteen miles to another to have a private conversation with the only American communist official in jail for being a communist, Junius Scales. It's that irony.

But I have no doubt when I came out of Allenwood that the FBI-- First of all, they had probably a lot to do with getting me out of South Carolina. It wasn't just some guards who didn't want to interrupt their Baptist Sundays to open a library, but that's why they were into my bunk three times a week trying to find contraband or something. I'm sure they'd come to this

guy. "Watch him. What is he doing? Find out. Who is he talking to? Is he causing you trouble?" In other words, this warden would have been rewarded if he could have--

TRELEVEN: If he could prove you were not being a good boy.

WILKINSON: --if he could prove that I was doing something subversive, unAmerican, teaching communism. From what you say here now, with the petition-- There were two petitions, one that this man I can't think of his name--the World Council of Churches guy--and the other people had developed, that Sylvia Crane worked on; then there was one that Jean and Anne [Braden] and others worked on out of the South. Otto Nathan worked on it.

I can just put together that at the very time when the FBI would be fearful that somehow a petition would get through to John Kennedy directly instead of-- The first time, they sabotaged it by getting it away from one presidential pardon counselor to another so they could get it rejected. I'm sure Kennedy never saw that, never heard of it. Bobby [Robert F.] Kennedy probably never did. But sometimes one of these could get through, so Jean and Anne were working on a new one at that time. The possibility that it would get

through and we would get out--even if it was down to the last six weeks from getting out--it would have been a tremendous victory for us. You know, we would have, in effect, said that our imprisonment was wrong and the court decision had been wrong. That's what the net effect of it would be. So for them to come back to the warden at Allenwood and say, "What is he doing? Watch him. Keep track of him." He'd call in his snitch and say, "Watch him. Sit near him. Find out what he's talking about. What is he reading? Anything, let's get him."

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: I can believe that. That's a conspiracy analysis for sure, but from what we now know about the FBI, it could have been literally what happened, and worse.

TRELEVEN: Well, what was Carl's reaction to this incident, if you remember?

WILKINSON: I don't even remember. I don't even remember what Carl's reaction to it was. I'm trying to think where his bunk was in terms of where mine was at Allenwood. See, in South Carolina we were next door. In Lewisburg we were cell by cell, solitary cell. He wasn't next to me at Allenwood, but near.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so in this forum business, he was not

approached?

WILKINSON: He was not approached.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Carl could have been sitting with me. I could have turned to Carl and said, "He wants to arrange some people for a forum? You got any ideas?" Carl could have said, "Sure, get--" and he could have thrown out another name and I could have given it to him.

But they weren't after Carl in any way the sense they were after me. That was indicated in many, many, many ways. In fact, the warden bringing Carl in to work in his office in South Carolina where Carl was in a position of writing letters for the warden. He had a much more interesting job than I got. They hated Carl, sure. Carl was a very, very important integrationist. But I think that in my role in the unAmerican committee [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] the FBI was more concerned about me because of our mounting campaign--you know, it's not mounting; it was the second year of our campaign to abolish HUAC--and Carl had always been a civil rights agitator in the South. They always were trying to keep Carl and Anne from being effective with black leadership in the South, and Carl and Anne were always breaking through and being

effective. But that's a different story. There's really a difference in where we're coming from.

TRELEVEN: Right. Right. Which we've talked about a bit.

WILKINSON: Right.

TRELEVEN: My notes show that you were first at Allenwood assigned to work in the library. Then right around Christmastime, December 23rd, you were transferred to mechanical services as a clerk-typist. Does any of that ring a bell?

WILKINSON: I don't remember a thing about that because we were getting down to the end of our time, and that's where inmates really deal with numbers, days. You know, how many days you've got. And we're counting days. I think the wardens would be not putting you into a position where they'd depend upon you to do something in the prison. Because I was a typist, because I could write, because I could read, I'm sure they had me doing something like that. But that warden at Allenwood was vicious and he would never really try to use me as he might have used me. Besides that, at Allenwood there's lots of educated people. There were lots of college graduates there. Not bank robbers. What do you call it when you corrupt your--

TRELEVEN: Embezzlers?

WILKINSON: Embezzlers would be in there. All kinds of strange guys with different things.

Before I forget it, there's one other thing that happened about this time when I really came down to my last week, and that's when a group of men at Allenwood who were serving life prison sentences came to me shortly before I left--I mean, they came as a little group, five or six of them--and said, "You're getting out. Do you know Mr. Hiss?" Alger Hiss.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, you mentioned that.

WILKINSON: Sorry. That was a very moving thing.

But going back to where you began this question, the church. You were allowed at Allenwood during certain hours, and I think it would be up until twilight, to walk. It's such a huge place. You've given the figure 8,500 acres. That it was built probably where there was an old town, small village, at some time. About a mile down the road was a graveyard and a church, and I frequently walked down there all alone in the snow and cold and just the beauty of the mountains around there, the hillsides, the many deer-- [laughter] Prisons with deer; deer leaping. I watched the deer leap over the prison fences to come in where there's better grazing. I would try to stand still and see how near they would come to me before they would

startle and run.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: And going into the graveyard and looking at the tombstones of this old, old place. And there was a church down there, actually. That's right. On Sundays we'd walk down to the church building. It was like a one-room schoolhouse, old, old schoolhouse, and that's where chapel services were held. I always attended those things because, again, that was a sort of communication. It was like the AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] meetings, or something like that, and I always was assigned, again, to take down the numbers of guys who attended church because that was the way you proved you were trying to clean up your act while you're in prison. It was an unbelievably solitary place. No other prison in America could have produced such an experience where you walk a mile away with no one near you, the deer, and the cold, and you watch the sunset over the snow, and watching it carefully that you turned around and got back before some deadline to be at the prison. But you had freedom. And to think. And even during all these times that was a way of avoiding conversations that might get me in trouble with this warden. No one could do something bad to me if I were walking down the road. You weren't the only

one walking down there; every now and then you'd bump into another inmate walking down. But I didn't want to talk to anybody. I wanted to be alone. Did an awful lot of thinking.

TRELEVEN: On December 15th you wrote that the old church reminded you of Methodist churches in Douglas, [Arizona] and in Hollywood.

WILKINSON: God, yes.

TRELEVEN: As you walked, running through your head were the "Doxology" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

WILKINSON: Isn't that amazing? Gosh, I'm glad your research helps here.

TRELEVEN: So that experience was certainly evocative.

WILKINSON: Oh, yeah. You know, we talk nowadays a great deal about roots and an experience like that. Here I'm in prison for what I'm in there for, really coming out of the idealism I got out of the Methodist Church, and then seeing a church even though now I'm totally an atheist. But I looked to the church as a symbol of where I'd come from. I wasn't anti-seeing a church. I don't think this is terrible at all. I didn't mind seeing inmates going to service because it was the one little bit of social experience where some touch of a social gospel might be heard or some teaching of Christ might be listened to that might be

positive. That was okay.

But these hymns. Let me just dwell on that for a minute. That was 1961.

In the last two years, both times in Oklahoma where I'd been brought in by the bar associations in this Law-Related Education Program to talk to teachers and then to students on--of all things, The FBI v. The First Amendment [by Richard Criley]--the first time that I went there (I may be repeating something; you can eliminate this but right now it relates) I read over the vita on each of the teachers I was going to be talking to in Oklahoma. They're from all over the state. I was impressed by the fact that each person gave their name, their church, their school in that order, and I realized what a Bible Belt-area I was getting into. I'm trying to think: "Here I am an agnostic, an atheist, and they're coming to hear me. If they really knew what I'm thinking about they would probably not want to hear me. On the other hand, if they knew that what I've come from comes out of a positive parts of the religious experience, they might."

At any rate, that night I went to bed trying to think, "How in the world I am going to relate to these people?" I had spoken to teachers in Massachusetts,

Colorado, and North Carolina; those were quite different. These were rural Oklahoma Bible Belt, Baptist teachers. During the night a hymn gets into my mind, "He Leadeth Me: O Special Precious Light" or something like that [": O Precious Thought"]. I woke up. This is ridiculous. I try to go back to sleep. Come back five minutes later, "He Leadeth Me," and I'd have to go through all the hymn reciting it by memory in my brain. The next morning I found that somehow I was just trying to open-- Like I often do when I speak, I try to relate to what's immediately on my mind to get things going. It's not a formal talk. I told them, "I'm not sure at all that I could communicate with you. While I am not a religious person, I do come out of a religious background, as you know, and last night this hymn came back to me." As soon as I mentioned, "He Leadeth Me: O Precious Thought," their faces all lit up. "Oh, yeah. We know that." It's like I was being phony, like I was reaching them by claiming to give them a Biblical source, which I wasn't, but they accepted me and that led me from then on to be more successful. It happened recently when I was back in Oklahoma again. It [happens] at night and even this year--five or ten times--I've awakened at night and hymns that I haven't heard or sung--or even read--for fifty years, sixty

years, come back and wake me up. Not in a disturbing way in a sense that I can't sleep, but-- Or I get out of bed and I start going into the bathroom, or in the shower or something, and I'll find myself going through these hymns. It's a psychological recall. I don't know why it's happening, but it does happen.

It just relates to the fact that I would, in that prison scene, have thought of hymns. Just this week I woke up with "Onward, Christian Soldiers" again. I was going through the verses of that. To what extent is that language used and it was used during World War I-- to get the troops to feel good about going into battle-- "Onward, Christian Soldiers," you know, it's like a--
TRELEVEN: Holy crusade.

WILKINSON: It's a crusade. You're going to go out and lose your life, but you're doing the Lord's work. You know, so much of the lyrics in hymns that are used by soldiers which make them prepare to die for a war which comes out of their religious background. I this time was not thinking of it positively; I was thinking in terms of how negative some of our hymns are. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" is another one, you know, the language where you're "tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored."

TRELEVEN: Yeah, yeah.

WILKINSON: That stuff.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. So have you hit "The Old Rugged Cross" yet? [laughter]

WILKINSON: Well, that you know is very funny. My brother's now eighty-three. At my sister's house the other night, we pitched in to wash dishes and Budge [Allan Blodgett Wilkinson] said, "Remember how we used to sing hymns while we did the dishes?" And I said, "Yeah, yeah," and what came to my mind was "The Old Rugged Cross." I mentioned that. He said, "No, that was Dad and Mother's duet." I said, "Oh, yeah. That's right." But Dad [Allan M.] and Mother [Ada M.] were often called on at prayer meetings or social occasions to sing a duet. My dad the bass baritone, my mother an alto singing "The Old Rugged Cross," and certainly I heard that so, so, so many times that it's all there. It's interesting, isn't it, no matter how material one becomes in one's thinking--how agnostic, or atheist, or purely material in terms of analysis of the world origins--that in that upbringing the spiritual influence of the church is in you so deeply. Donna [Childers Wilkinson] often complains lightly or seriously that Frank is more of a Methodist than he is a Marxist. There's something to be said for that, that you don't really get that out of your system. As far

as I would say, I'd say one shouldn't get it out of one's system; one should remember it and analyze it and relate it to how that absolutely blah message of social gospel actually influenced me to more serious social concerns as I faced the problems of the real world. I think that my Methodist upbringing was a very positive part of my commitment.

TRELEVEN: Well, in the nation's history--at least in terms of white settlement in this country--it goes all the way back to religious underpinnings, whether it's Plymouth Rock, whether it's the City on the Hill and the Puritans in Boston. So it's an important thread that runs through our culture.

Well, you spent Christmas with lots of snow, so maybe Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" went through your head, too.

WILKINSON: God, the television room was jammed. We all listened to all the Christmas programs in the prison television room. There's one room, sort of the entranceway, the place where those heaters were that I tried to warm my hands on that were never really connected; that was so funny. [laughter] I often went back to those things and touched them to find if they were cold, and I'd warmed myself when I first got into that place. But they put up paper--I don't know where

they got the stuff--Christmas decorations. You weren't allowed to do anything in your bunk or really meaningful around where you lived, but there was an entranceway. Because family were allowed to come to visit with children at Christmas, the prison authorities let them spice up the place a little bit with some Santa Clauses or bells, or ribbons, papier mache'.

TRELEVEN: How did the warden respond when these tons of greeting cards began to arrive and continued to arrive? You write on December 23rd, "Ninety cards." You write on December 26th that so far you've received 200 cards. December 28th you write, "Eighty-five more have come." [laughter]

WILKINSON: This also happened in South Carolina. Mail call was outside the bunk, and they actually used a wheelbarrow.

TRELEVEN: This was your birthday, I think.

WILKINSON: Birthday; Carl's and my birthdays were a week apart in August.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, yeah.

WILKINSON: They literally had a-- Every other guy would get an individual letter, individual letter; most the inmates are getting no mail. That's the tragedy because they come from illiterate-- They can't write

and the family can't write.

TRELEVEN: Can't read. Sure.

WILKINSON: But if they get something, it means so much to get it. Here we have wheelbarrows brought out there to us and we felt happy and also guilty about it. Then the same thing happens there at Christmas. It meant a lot. It meant a great, great deal. God, I would say half of them were [from] people I never knew. They weren't friends who were writing in. There were friends who did it, but so many of them were people I didn't know of who were caught up in the fact that we were in prison for the First Amendment.

TRELEVEN: I've got to turn this over.

TAPE NUMBER: XLIII, SIDE TWO

JULY 18, 1992

TRELEVEN: Well, understandably, you get through that sort of combination beauty and loneliness of Christmas and you become filled with anticipation about your release date, which is coming up. Meantime, you're reading. You read [Jawaharlal] Nehru's autobiography, which he wrote in prison at age forty-five. You at this time, I think, are about forty-seven. You seem quite struck by that autobiography. In fact, in one of your letters you say, "This gives me some ideas about when I write my own autobiography." That's what you wrote. [laughter]

WILKINSON: God. See how much I've improved?

[laughter] At least this one is sealed in the archives and no one will read this until I'm moldering in the grave like John Brown. At that time I guess I was playing with an ego trip. I'm sorry.

TRELEVEN: Well, I don't think it's an ego trip to write an autobiography. I mean, we think sometimes of autobiographies being written, you know, when someone is well along in years, but there's a lot to say for a younger person doing that, especially one whose life might be in danger. Yours was in danger in '63, '64.

WILKINSON: I was three years from being killed then.

TRELEVEN: Nehru when he wrote this, according to your letter, was [during] his seventh time in prison.

WILKINSON: Little did we know this in January of '61. It's March 4th of '64 where the only reason I wasn't killed is because of a screwup between the FBI and the [Los Angeles] Police Department [which] alerted them of that affair in Sherman Oaks where I was supposed to be assassinated. In that sense, a biography [laughter] makes some sense, I guess. There were lots of dangers, by the way. We don't need to dwell on it, but there many, many threats given to our family and to me at that time. I didn't dwell on them too much. I was more concerned about my family than myself. I never really thought of myself getting killed, except in prison maybe.

TRELEVEN: You also read Plato, [Mohandas] Gandhi for very positive reasons. On the other hand, were you purposely staying away from American writers?

WILKINSON: No. Let me explain that. This wonderful Alexander Meiklejohn, when he discovered how ignorant I was just before I went to prison, said he'd send me books so I'd know why I was in there. That's when he discovered I hadn't read [Henry David] Thoreau or [Ralph Waldo] Emerson. So he started me out in the

things he wanted me to read. After months I complained, "When do we get to the Constitution? When do we get to the Bill of Rights?" And he would respond, "Patience, Frank, you have lots of time." He wanted me to get grounded. So he wouldn't even let me touch anything else for the first two months except Plato and [John] Milton. I struggled trying to make sense out of Paradise Lost and "Areopagitica," trying to figure out why Meiklejohn was trying to get me to read this stuff.

Plato, now, was very interesting to me. His dialogues with quoting Socrates. Fascinating because at that time, not having read I. [Isidor] F. Stone's analysis of Socrates, which we have now, I looked upon Socrates as a guy who went to jail or was killed for his ideas at the time. I didn't know the negatives of Socrates which history has now told us.

But with all that I read, I was deeply moved by Nehru and Gandhi and Socrates. Those three. Why am I moved? Because you're in prison yourself. It's like reading [Eugene V.] Debs down in that first prison in Georgia. Wild ideas that Debs was saying. Here I'm a radical communist in prison and I never read Debs till I'm in prison. That's how ignorant I was. Carl, on the other hand, knew all these things. That's the

difference between Carl Braden and me.

But you relate. You read all these great guys who did their best writing while in prison. Martin Luther King's "Letters from [Birmingham] Jail." Gandhi and Nehru had the time to write because they were in prison and I listened to that. I read them very carefully and I respected them very much. I was always, I think, pacifist-minded and Gandhi very much moved me. I'm contradictory on pacifism. I'm a pacifist and I'm not a pacifist. I have never struck anybody. I've never had a fistfight. I've never had any kind of a physical fight in the sense that I'm brought up in this turn-the-other-cheek Christianity business. Yet I theoretically would say under certain conditions, I would fight. So it's a contradiction. But I was moved by the fact that they wrote while they were in prison. I learned a great deal about Gandhi's early life and Nehru's life by reading it. There's nothing like being in a prison on a constitutional First Amendment charge and reading the lives of other people who are in prison on social concerns issues, under the oppression of the British empire in their cases, and whatever the other things were that happened.

TRELEVEN: Do you think this reading stimulated you-- once you got out--that this reading recharged your

batteries, in a sense that once you got out you were really going to leap into the crusade, Operation Abolition?

WILKINSON: Definitely. Meiklejohn used the expression, "I'll send you the books so you'll know why you're in there." That was something that stuck in my mind when he said it to me. But I had the feeling, particularly near the end--I'm a slow reader and I was afraid I wouldn't get it all read--I knew the moment I got out, my reading days would come to an end. Now was the time to get it done. I would just fight to try to keep awake and to keep reading when my eyes were tired, and always relating to what I'm learning to how I want to use this when I get out. I was eager to get out and to pick up the campaign not only to abolish the unAmerican activities committee but to repeal the Internal Security Act [of 1950], the [Richard M.] Nixon registration act of 1950, and the [Hubert H.] Humphrey "concentration camp" act. All those had been confirmed by the court in June of '61. I had reason to think back eleven years over how bad those laws were, those passed in '50 over [Harry S] Truman's veto, and that's two years before I made any commitment, like fighting a loyalty oath, for example. But it came back. I was always thinking that way and taking notes that way.

That brings up another issue. (Maybe you have it somewhere later.) I really am probably the most illiterate person of my commitment that ever has been. I just had not read. I mean, my home was a place of hymns and the least important reading. There just wasn't that in the home. I didn't get it. Then at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] with my hearing problem, I didn't get it, and my reading at UCLA was really what I had to read in order to take an examination. But as a result of that, I tried to improve my vocabulary. We can joke about [J. Danforth] Quayle's not knowing how to spell potato, but I really was amazingly ignorant of words. I had index cards that I'd taken out of the library in South Carolina and every time I came to a word that I didn't know, I wrote it down. Carl Braden: the only book he had in prison was a seventy-dollar India-paper magnificent dictionary. He'd sit there reading the dictionary all day long. That's all Carl ever did.

TRELEVEN: No kidding?

WILKINSON: He never read anything but the dictionary.

TRELEVEN: My god.

WILKINSON: You know, page by page by page, he's just studying. It's a big dictionary, India paper, that very thin type of fine paper.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: It's the kind of dictionary you'd find in a good, good public library on a pedestal. Carl would sit with this giant book in his lap and read it. So I was doing that. So we got down to the end and I had 200, maybe 300 words on index cards. My handwriting is not good, but I'd written down not the definition but what the word was. I'm trying to remember the word by just writing the word down. Tiny print, up and down columns, on an index card, both sides. Near the end, the prison authorities warn you what's going to happen when you're released, what you cannot do, what you can do. You cannot take out any written material. Letters you received are questionable. In my case, [laughter] I don't remember whether I was not allowed to bring the ones I'd received. I may have lost them, wonderful letters from Meiklejohn, [Aubrey W.] Williams, and others.

TRELEVEN: I haven't seen them.

WILKINSON: I don't remember them. But I had these words, "You cannot take anything out." I remember going to the educational director at the prison. This, again, is showing my racism. The educational director of the prison was a black guy. He had a Ph.D. in something or other. And because he was black, I

assumed he would understand me, what I was talking about. I went to him and said, "I've got a little favor to ask you. I know you're not allowed to take anything out." You know, they even looked at the bottom of your feet to make sure you haven't written out-- They're afraid you'll take out the phone number of an inmate or something. They don't want any contact between the guys inside and outside. There's no memory. You can't say, "I'll look you up when I get home. I'll call up your wife when I get out." None of that. Absolutely none of that. That's [later] why we had the guy memorize the phone number to contact Pete Seeger to let him know we were being held up eight hours.

So I went to this educational director, nice guy, educated guy. "I need a little favor of you. I've got these index cards with a couple of hundred words here that I've learned while in prison and I want to hang onto them because I think they'll help me when I get out. I want to hang on to them and be sure I remember them," and I gave them to him. He looked at them, and said, "I'll study them." I got down within two days of getting out and I went back to him and I asked him about my words. He handed them back to me and he said, "I'm sorry, you can't take these out." I said, "Why?"

He said, "Look, you write so fine there may be something in there we don't want you taking out."

TRELEVEN: Oh, boy.

WILKINSON: "And I don't have the time to go through and approve your tiny little handwriting here."

TRELEVEN: Like these are code words perhaps.

WILKINSON: Code words or something. And he told me I cannot take them out. So right here at the end, I've read, read, read, read. I've got all these new ideas and I'm wanting to get through to Meiklejohn and tell him how much he'd meant to me in prison, and I cannot take out the most precious thing I have, two or three hundred brand new words I'd never heard of before. So we had two days to go and I came to Carl and told him what had happened. I said, "Will you help me? Let's go through these words and you ask me what they are and see how many I can learn." He would ask me questions about them. We'd raise them. I'd read them out. I still did not identify a third of those words even though I'd looked them up in the dictionary. I still didn't quite get it. To my amazement, Carl Braden, who I think got a high school education and I think went briefly to a seminary, but no college education to my knowledge, Carl knew every one of those words.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: And why did he know them? He said, "When I was in seminary"--he studied to be a priest--"I studied Greek and Latin, and then I got interested in Sanskrit because in reading Gandhi and Nehru there's lots of words like 'satchegraf' and things like that, meaning civil disobedience that are Anglicized Indian words that we use in our language." Carl would take any one of those words and go to the Greek or the Latin or the Indian Sanskrit root and tell me what it meant.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: I was so impressed with Carl Braden. I felt, god, I would never, never, never become literate. I thought of the fact that he sat there month after month with that damned dictionary in his lap reading words.

Anyway, I was not allowed to take them out. When I finally did get to the time of getting out, I saw what happens. Just the way you come in is the way you go out. It's a room as long as your living room here. You take your clothes off here, strip down nude, everything. You go so many feet forward and then they come up and examine you. They look in your mouth, look through your teeth, put a light up your anus, pull back your foreskin, look in your armpits, look in the bottom of your feet. You're just so much flesh. Then you're

allowed to walk five feet forward and there are your clothes. Now your clothes you'd picked out a week before, but they are there so they've been searched. Then you get into your clothes, and you go on out. And it's such a stripping of everything human, everything literate, everything in terms of value, in terms of written value. It's taken away from you. You just walk out of there feeling that you're just as naked intellectually as you were when you stood there when they're pulling your foreskin back to see if you have an address slipped under your penis.

TRELEVEN: Wow. Well, listen, you get to about January and you're working up the plan, and the original plan is that you were going to be put on the bus and Sandy and Herb were going to meet you. Who were Sandy and Herb?

WILKINSON: Sandy and what was the other name?

TRELEVEN: Herb.

WILKINSON: Herb. Well, Sandy was a woman-- In New York we had the New York Youth Committee to Abolish HUAC and Sandy was one of the leaders of it. Dottie was another one, Dottie who married Bob Zellner later. Sandy, I don't know who she married. But these are eighteen, nineteen, twenty-year-old kids who we'd been working with to build these committees to abolish HUAC,

only we had the youth committees in New York. They were very strong, very powerful. Herb, I can't think who it would have been. Probably one of those younger people. But Sandy comes back to me just as vivid as ever, and Dottie Zellner likewise. They were two girls who were eighteen who were really leading the movement, and they went on to do many wonderful things as they grew up later in life.

So how do we know they were going to meet us?

TRELEVEN: Well, you wrote on January 4th--interesting to think how the FBI knew all this as you're sending out these letters--that you indicate on January 4th that you would be put on a bus either for Los Angeles or Atlanta. That was your information at that time.

WILKINSON: This is a letter I was writing?

TRELEVEN: That's the letter you were writing on January 4th.

WILKINSON: How would I know that early? That surprises me.

TRELEVEN: You must have found that out from someone.

WILKINSON: I know what. I come back now. The rally in New York, February 28th, is that the time I got out? I guess it was. The 27th?

TRELEVEN: No, you were to get out on February 1st.

WILKINSON: February 1st. That's right, nine months.

TRELEVEN: Right, right.

WILKINSON: That's right. We went in May 1st. Let's see. March, April, May. I don't know. Anyway, May 1st was our first day, so February 1st would have been our last day. That must have been nine months.

TRELEVEN: You were to be-- Right.

WILKINSON: Okay.

TRELEVEN: Okay, you--

WILKINSON: The idea was-- They're telling you as part of your going out thing, "Where do you want to go?" Carl wanted to go back to Kentucky and I wanted to go back to California. That was in January. Later, when we got the word that they wanted us in New York and they wanted us in Chicago, and Aubrey wanted me down in Montgomery, then we were trying to change it. That's where the FBI-- Of course, the FBI was reading my letters. [laughter] My god.

TRELEVEN: I mean, it was like a road map.

WILKINSON: They sure didn't need to do much clever spying on me. Anyway, the day I left, when I got through that, the only paper I got when I got through this naked clothing investigation, they handed me-- No, they put me in a car, the prison guards drove me to the bus there in Allenwood, and when the bus arrived they then handed us tickets, and Carl's was from Allenwood

to Louisville, Kentucky, and mine was from Allenwood to Los Angeles. Paid for by the taxpayers, by the way. A bus ticket, knowing that we weren't going to go out. Or maybe we thought we'd go into New York briefly, but not for a rally. The rally, I think, I didn't hear about until much, much later.

TRELEVEN: Well--

WILKINSON: I can't remember.

TRELEVEN: There was going to be a rally and then something happened in New York. Then, I guess, Otto Nathan decided it would be more like a small house party. Then, obviously, it became a rally again by the time you left.

WILKINSON: Yeah. You know Carl divided with me on this. I never understood why. He did not go to that rally.

TRELEVEN: That's right.

WILKINSON: He sat down with some people in Fair Play for Cuba for dinner. I went there later because I didn't want to separate from Carl. I went there with him briefly, after the rally or just before the rally, trying to get him to come and he wouldn't go.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Why he wouldn't, I don't know. This is a political difference between Carl and me that I never

understood.

TRELEVEN: So there's quite a bit of correspondence about the planning for the meeting, and the logistics of Sandy and Herb meeting you at the bus. Among the things you wrote were there are definitely some New York names that you don't want to see forgotten; you want to make sure that they are at the New York rally: Gus Hall, the Guardian people, and Matthew Josephson.

WILKINSON: How about that!

TRELEVEN: Now, why would you be insistent that they not be forgotten?

WILKINSON: Well, let's take them individually. This is all new to me by recollection. Matthew Josephson makes real sense. Harvey O'Connor and Matthew Josephson, like Lincoln Steffens, were major muckrakers of the thirties. Harvey wrote Mellon's Millions.

Matthew Josephson wrote something like the DuPonts or--

TRELEVEN: Robber Barons.

WILKINSON: Robber Barons, right, right. I forgot. You know, one reason I wanted to see him is because I got to know Matthew. I liked him. I've met a lot of wonderful people out of all this life I've had. Who else would get a chance to meet a guy like Matthew Josephson or Harvey O'Connor and these other people? When I was marched out of my solitary cell in Lewisburg

penitentiary, thinking I was going to eat or something, we march in lock-step--

TRELEVEN: Oh, to the library.

WILKINSON: --down to these cloistered-- You know, it's like Duke University.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: The doors open, you're marched into the library, I walk up to a book shelf, and there's Matthew Josephson and Harvey O'Connor and god knows what else. I also grabbed one on the American Revolution, the traitor in the American Revolution. Whatever that guy's name was, the guy who was executed.

TRELEVEN: Benedict Arnold.

WILKINSON: Benedict Arnold. I don't know why I grabbed that, I just grabbed. [laughter] But I wanted to tell Matthew Josephson that I read his book in solitary there. I thought that would be a guy I wanted to tell that to. It was a reaction.

Gus Hall: It's very interesting why I would do that. It wasn't out of any love of Gus Hall. I think it was in my way of always never wanting to red-bait. I mean, escaping the red-baiting on myself to a certain extent because I wouldn't answer the question if I was a communist. People either thought I wasn't, or didn't know what I was, or assumed I was but I wouldn't tell.

But I would never red-bait. That's why I know when I was working in the New York area, I met regularly with [Communist] Party people to keep them informed on what the abolition campaign was like. Then I'd come back to New York and they weren't eager to meet me. There were a couple of good guys in the Party [Sy Gerson, Gil Green, and Arnold Johnson] whom I really liked and I believe liked me. One of them who's dead now [Arnold Johnson] came out a religious-- He was a Methodist-background guy, a minister who became a Party leader under Gus Hall. But I wanted to tell them what the campaign was to keep the Party with it. It was my belief that we can't win this campaign unless we've got everybody with us, and that means the communists, that means the Guardian people, that means the Socialist Workers Party people, and that means the conservatives, who I was always trying to reach out and get hold of. [laughter]

The third name was who?

TRELEVEN: Well, the Guardian people, as you worded it.

WILKINSON: Guardian people. The Guardian people: You know, there was always a difference between the communists and the Guardian people. Russ Nixon, at about that time, had become editor of the Guardian. He'd left his job in UE [United Electrical, Radio, and

Machine Workers of America] to become editor of the Guardian. In fact, my son Jeff, while I was in prison got a job working in the Guardian for a while. But I always liked the Guardian. I read it and liked those people. But there were great ideological differences between the communists and the Guardian people. Somehow or other, again, I'm the maverick kind of a communist who refuses to disassociate myself, refuses to have political enemies among factions of the Left. So, I mean, I never turned down an invitation to speak before The Militant, the Socialist Workers Party paper. At the time when the communists and the Trotskyists were just ready to kill each other, they'd call me up, "Would you come and speak?" I did it in San Francisco. I did it in L.A. I did it in New York. And I think it's good. I think also it shows a little bit of an intellectual, political organizing difference I had with communists because if somebody told me I couldn't associate with Trotskyists, I wouldn't listen to them. I said, "That's ridiculous. You've got to work with everyone."

"You shouldn't work with the Guardian. They're divisive people." I said, "How do you know that? We've got to have everybody with us on the campaign to abolish HUAC."

The Gus Hall thing is one that strikes me as a little harder to explain right now, because I had no friendship with him. I didn't know him. You know, I knew of him. He didn't know me. And, of course, by that time he was already-- No, it wasn't yet. His enmity with Dorothy [Ray] Healey and with the guy who wrote-- Al Richmond.

TRELEVEN: Oh, yeah.

WILKINSON: He has a book on Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia came in '68. This is '61.

TRELEVEN: This is the early-sixties.

WILKINSON: So those differences are not there. I just think it was a symbolic gesture. I don't ever remember sitting down and having a one-on-one discussion with Gus Hall--ever. Yet, I'd come into a meeting where he would be chairing, and they'd give me ten minutes on the program of a Communist Party board meeting and I would talk about the abolition campaign.

The only time I ever had any conversation with Gus Hall was the time after a meeting in Los Angeles where I got special-- No, no. This was after I [was] blacklisted. I went to this meeting and they asked if I would drive Gus to the airport. I drove him to the airport and we talked between downtown and the airport. And [as] I drove away, I found his briefcase in the

front seat of my car. I turned around and parked my car hurriedly, ran into the airport, tried to find what plane was going to New York, ran out to the gate, got permission to go on to give this briefcase to this man, and I go right through first-class and go down the aisles looking for Gus Hall. And he's not on the plane. I can't figure out why he wouldn't be on this plane. I'm walking out and here's Gus Hall sitting in first-class. I was so shocked by that that I remember just saying, "You left your briefcase in my car. I brought it out to you." He said, "Oh, oh, thank you," and I turned and I got off. I thought, "Why is he in first-class?"

Dorothy Healey later told me that he always insisted that he fly first-class. They claimed it was security for him.

TRELEVEN: As of mid-January, the way things have been scoped out is that you were going to be released at 10:15 in the morning. The first stop on the bus route would be a place called Sunbury, Pennsylvania, where Sandy and Herb were going to pick you up, and Sylvia Crane and Howard Melisch were going to drive Carl to Philadelphia, and then he'd get a plane to Louisville. Now, that was the plan. Actually, you did not leave until 3:40 in the afternoon. Do you recall that?

WILKINSON: Five, I thought. The idea about the morning business was before we knew we weren't going to be allowed to do what we wanted to do. Sandy and the rest were going to bring me back to New York. I didn't know about Carl going to Louisville.

TRELEVEN: Right. Well, that's what you wrote at the time.

WILKINSON: All right.

TRELEVEN: Okay, then two weeks later the prison changed its release plan, according to your letter of January 29th. You'd be put on the bus for L.A., Carl for Louisville, and you would not get on the bus until 3:40 in the afternoon instead of 10:15 in the morning, which produced a great amount of consternation because-- All this makes perfect sense, now, doesn't it? I mean, in hindsight.

WILKINSON: Yeah, yeah.

TRELEVEN: But at the time, your concern is how are people going to meet you?

WILKINSON: That was the 29th?

TRELEVEN: That was the 29th of January.

WILKINSON: God, I remember how we solved it, too.

TRELEVEN: Let's get to the solution in a minute. You sent virtually your final letter on January 30th to Jean. Jean had written a letter to you: "Everyone's

asking 'Where do we go from here?'" And the context of that is that Congress had just voted HUAC its largest appropriation ever. That was in late January, with dissents only from [James] Roosevelt and [William F.] Ryan. As you're exiting prison, HUAC has just been appropriated \$35,000, a lot of money at that time. Jean asks, "Where do you go from here?" Frank writes back, "After we abolish HUAC, next we must abolish prisons."

WILKINSON: Right. There's two issues you brought us there. Can I pick up on it?

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: Let's take the communication. The idea that we don't have to tell the prison people that we're going into New York, or where we're going, and they can say, "Well, you're entitled to get out at eight, but apparently this 10 o'clock means that the bus going through town--the Greyhound--was a 10 o'clock bus.

TRELEVEN: That's correct.

WILKINSON: That was the time. But, technically, on the morning of your release you're free at 8:00 a.m. But they hang onto you until they put you on public transportation. They're concerned about just throwing you out on the streets and having you go back to crime.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: So that all sounded fine. I can get into New York easily. You meet the bus wherever you're going to meet it. I'll ride with the bus to this point, get off, you meet us there, we get into New York by 6 o'clock in the evening, and I'll be ready for the rally. Carl may or may not come in, whatever it would be. Then, on the 29th we learned that they're going to hold on to us.

We now know from the FBI files that this was done in order to prevent us from getting to the rally in New York. That was the FBI's clear-- They knew; they heard about the rally and said, "No way." They technically can hold you till 5:00. Now, you mentioned 3:40. I just--

TRELEVEN: That's a 3:40 bus, probably.

WILKINSON: I just in my mind--because technically they can hold you till 5:00--I've just forgotten the 3:40 business. But the 3:40 business was still too late to get to New York. It's something like a five-hour, six-hour drive from Allenwood to Manhattan. Something like that, I don't know. So then how do we get the word out? First of all, they're going to meet us at 10:00. We're not there.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: And they don't know where we are.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: We can't find them, they don't find us, we can't get to this place, so on and so on. So the word was to get the word out that we were being held. Now, again, this is inmate communication, like the guys who got me together with Junius Scales. They came privately. "Look, guys. You think you're going to get out at 10:00. They're going to hold you until the last possible minute."

TRELEVEN: That's how you learned it?

WILKINSON: From an inmate.

TRELEVEN: No kidding. [laughter]

WILKINSON: Absolutely. Inmates have a fraternity that can only come about from guys who have a common problem of being locked under a key by another guy. The guy with the key is the enemy.

Anyway, so how do we get the word out? No telephones, no wires, no letters will ever get there. So we had to find an inmate. The only guy getting out on the 30th was a guy who had been totally isolated from the rest of the prison population. He was a black Jew from Brooklyn, and he never talked to the other inmates. He wore a yarmulke. He wore a Jewish prayer shawl. On top of it, he was a very black, black person. So there's this irony. This guy is reading

the Torah with a yarmulke and a Jewish prayer shawl. He's the guy that's getting out, so we go to him, say "We need your help. They won't let you take this number out. But will you please learn this phone number and when you get out make an immediate call." (I've always said Pete Seeger, because he was running the concert, but I guess it could have been Sandy from the name that's mentioned here.) "Get this phone number, call them, and tell them the problem, that we don't get out until whatever, and we're being put on a bus there heading west. Have a car there; we will get off the bus immediately."

TRELEVEN: The first stop that the bus comes to after leaving?

WILKINSON: We didn't put that in our communication, no. The guy put us on the bus, the bus door closes, we turn to the bus driver and say, "We want off." See, we're free from the time that bus door closes.

TRELEVEN: I see. I see.

WILKINSON: So right in the faces of the guys who had put us on the bus, we get off, laugh at them, and run to the back of the bus. Here is not one car, but several carloads of people from New York. We hop in the car, and with horns honking we turn around and head back toward New York and didn't get there till 10:30 at

night.

TRELEVEN: My god. So--

WILKINSON: So this guy had to memorize it. He was a hard guy to deal with, not only not political, he was not anything. He was entirely, entirely wrapped up in the most Orthodox Judaism. All he ever read was the Torah, and now we've got to tell him he's got to memorize a phone number and call somebody. He agreed to do it, he did get that call made, and so they were waiting for us.

TRELEVEN: My god. Did you ever--?

WILKINSON: It was very dramatic.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Because we're locked up in a prison car with two guards escorting us. They're in charge of our lives. We are in their control, up to the point they put us on the bus. The Greyhound bus pulls in. It's a small town. It probably comes up to a curb, not to a bus station.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: But it comes up to a curb, they open the door, walk us over, put us on the bus, and the bus door closes. We're free. Then we turn around, "Let us off." The bus driver opens the door, we get off and run to the back of the bus, and here's the carload

waiting for us.

TRELEVEN: My god. So that's how it happened.

WILKINSON: Then we get in there and to walk into that meeting at 10:30 that night.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: It's another story.

TRELEVEN: Right. One follow up: did you ever see the guy again?

WILKINSON: That black guy?

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: So you never had a chance to--

WILKINSON: Never.

TRELEVEN: --see him later and make--

WILKINSON: You know, there's so many really good friendships that you make in prison, and they just cut you off. I had, particularly down in South Carolina, lots of good friends, black and white inmates, moonshiners and bootleggers. They were always promising me, "You come back, we'll really give you some good moonshine. We'll cook you a catfish dinner like you've never eaten in your life." You know it was just, "Come back to my little town," there in the Piedmont area where they lived in northern Georgia. Never got to see these guys again.

Let me wind up, unless the tape is running out.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I think we should--

WILKINSON: We've got to deal with abolishing prisons.
Maybe we can pick up on that.

TRELEVEN: Why don't we come back to that when we start
the next one?

WILKINSON: All right.

TAPE NUMBER: XLIV, SIDE ONE

JULY 18, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, before we changed the tape, you were wanting to come back to abolishing prisons.

WILKINSON: That's a very important recall from your research. I, by hindsight, talk about wanting to get out and wanting to get on with the campaign of abolishing HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities], and ultimately repealing the Internal Security Act [of 1950], HUAC's only law.

But very, very important to me--and I think Carl shared this--we thought when we got out the first thing we wanted to do is to join with others or establish a committee to abolish prisons. It was not a casual feeling. It wasn't just something light. By hindsight, it didn't last. I mean, I was drawn into the abolition campaign again, but in the back of my mind, even to this day, the need to abolish prisons is very high. Particularly in recent years under the [Ronald W.] Reagan administration and the tough sentencing law changes where our prison population has been tripled in our country, I've often come back to the point that prisons do absolutely nothing. I think the experience of the short time I was in prison--and I

would say it must affect others in a similar way--is they accomplish absolutely nothing. I think they themselves now admit--the people who advocate that type of law and order--that prisons are not rehabilitative, but they are punishment. They're vindictive. There was an earlier point in penology where a prison-- Penitentiary, I think, would indicate a word where you would admit your guilt and are rehabilitated. I think that would be an indirect but literal meaning of penitentiary. Certainly what I saw in prison, never once did I see anyone helped by being in prison, but only hurt. I reached a conclusion that the only people who should be sequestered from society are people who are mentally ill who could either do damage to themselves or to others by serious mental illnesses. The people who are normal, the people that you meet in prison, you don't meet a person in prison who's not there for basic economic causes, social causes. You can just see it in that and the way our society works. So the idea of this, of abolishing prisons, I spoke at meetings and I signed letters and I did other things in the early-sixties in that direction--and I would still do it again today. I can't imagine anything more unpolitic today than to call for the abolition of prisons.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: We all have the [Michael] Dukakis story from the last [presidential] election. What was the name of that man that they used politically, a black man who got released?

TRELEVEN: Oh, Willie Horton.

WILKINSON: Willie Horton. But that's really what I saw. I did not see any rehabilitation. South Carolina, particularly, where they had this expert modern machinery to teach reading [Laubach method] and writing to illiterate adults, and it was never even taken out of its wrappers, is an example of that. It just makes you bitter and bitter.

My own experience--and if I am repeating something, we'll have to eliminate this, but it relates to this question--when I got back to Los Angeles after the rally in New York, and the rally in Chicago, and visit with Aubrey [W. Williams], I come back to L.A. and I'm there only a few days when I come home and Jo [Hildegard Wilkinson], my daughter, greets me very excitedly, saying, "Guess what! We get to go with you to meet Burt Lancaster." A letter had come to the house addressed to all ex-convicts in the Los Angeles area, and I received it in that capacity, and it announced a preview showing of Birdman of Alcatraz

and at this preview they want only ex-convicts and their families to witness the screening of it and then comment on it. Burt Lancaster will be there--he was the star in that--and he will meet you and you're welcome to bring your family.

When I heard this my immediate reaction was just-- To a degree it's still there. Your palms begin to sweat at the thought of seeing a prison. In more recent years, I've been invited to come inside and speak on civil liberties inside a prison. And I just break out in a sweat when I go through that first clanging door. But I just said, "What is this about?" I read it and Jean [Benson Wilkinson] and Jo and Tony were all there. "Isn't that wonderful?" And I said, "I can't do that. I cannot possibly go see a picture about prisons." I just couldn't do it. "You people go on and go and I'll wait for you." So they went and I went to the office, I presume, and did some work, and came home and they came home. Jo, again, is the articulate child. She's so excited, saying, "Oh, Daddy, you would have loved it. It was so interesting. It's just like you said." And she said, "You know, they treated him so terribly. They just treated him terribly. He got so angry that he just picked up something and threw it at a guard." (I think that's

part of the story, a cuspidor or something gets thrown at a guard, and the Birdman gets extra years for having done that, I guess. I've never seen the thing yet.) And Jo said, "Daddy, you couldn't do that," meaning, you couldn't throw a cuspidor at a guard. She told it so dramatically. Jo would never shorten her stories; she throws the detail in. I just blurted out and said, "I could have and I would have killed him." I just had the feeling I wanted to get my hands on the throat of that guard and kill him for what he'd done to Lancaster in the film. And then I just felt so embarrassed that I should have said that to my daughter. Here, this is '62 now.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: As I've indicated, my background's a pacifist. Theoretically, maybe, I question pacifism under certain conditions, but I've always behaved like a pacifist. Yet after just nine months in prison, I get out, I break out in a sweat, I'm ready to kill somebody, and say so to my own daughter. She was shocked. She just sat back, her eyes glazed. "Daddy, you couldn't." I said, "I'm sorry."

Now, the only thing I would add onto this thing-- Carl and I shared this view very much so and we attended some meetings together to speak on getting rid

of prisons, using our own experience. And you're very effective when you get out and you can tell stories of why prisons don't do any good, how they don't really educate. If you're not a criminal when you go in, you will be one when you get out is really what the argument is, and you can prove it.

Then I was on a plane one day coming down from Seattle, and sitting next to me on the plane was a guy reading a Bible. Somehow or other I said, "Are you a minister?" He said, "No, I'm just working on prison reform." So I struck up a conversation with him. "What is your name?" Well, this was the guy who had been one of the [Richard M.] Nixon burglars, or Nixon's staff guy.

TRELEVEN: [John] Ehrlichman?

WILKINSON: Not Ehrlichman. The guy who is still to this day working on prison reform.

TRELEVEN: Oh, yeah, I remember--

WILKINSON: Anyway, he was sitting next to me.

TRELEVEN: [Charles] Colson.

WILKINSON: Colson. "Oh, my god. I'm interested to meet you. I served time in prison and I agree with you." We had a real heart-to-heart discussion of how together we've got to work to eliminate prisons.

Here's Colson who is a terrible guy in the Nixon

administration. He did some terrible things, like [G. Gordon] Liddy, [E. Howard] Hunt, and these other guys. And here I am working to--

TRELEVEN: Abolish people like him. [laughter]

WILKINSON: It was during the fight against the Nixon criminal code--

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: --and he was so moved by it that he took a copy of his own book and inscribed it to me as a fellow worker to eliminate prisons. That happened to me. We communicated once or twice after that. He's still doing it, by the way, and I think I can believe him. I can believe him. It's not a money-making deal. He's not an E. Howard Hunt or a Liddy who go around making \$5,000 lectures on "How I Burglarized for Nixon." But this guy is still working in a religious order of some sort to try to ultimately end prisons, and meanwhile to help inmates in prison with the experience.

TRELEVEN: Let me allow you to be as expansive--or as non-expansive--as you want to be in considering this question. What was the impact of prison on your marriage? [pause]

WILKINSON: I think that it was very, very bad on the marriage. I got out in February of '62. I go to New York and speak, Chicago and speak, L.A. and speak.

Then I'm on this tour. They have me speaking five times a day through Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio, Missouri. And I'm driving. I mean, every town. I'm speaking at Oberlin [College], Antioch [University], Cincinnati, and then I come into Columbus, a reception for my talk there at the Unitarian church. Had a dinner before I spoke and it was at the home of Donna and Jack Childers. The fact that I almost instantly fell in love with Donna Childers at that time--this would be October of '62--I think relates to the whole prison experience.

Jean was just wonderful, always, but particularly in supporting my right of conscience to make the First Amendment stand, to leave the family and destroy the family economically, and then to come out on the road to try to build up support with Anne Braden. Couldn't have been more wonderful than she was. And she went through enormous problems of having the house bombed, and having to move to this other house, and those things. Even beyond that, my blacklisting in '52, ten years earlier. I guess there's no way that my marriage to Jean could have been saved--the long separation and the constant travel--but I mean the moment that I'm suspended and then discharged by the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles], the Board of Education

calls up Jean and denies every academic procedural right a teacher ever had. Fourteen years as a tenured high school teacher, and they fire her on guilt by association with me. She took that and she goes through the next ten years of trying to help us with income from tutoring children after school from teachers who have their jobs, know Jean, and know her skills as a social studies teacher, and parents that had the money to help a student who was lagging behind in their studies to pay five dollars an hour to have Jean come by and tutor. That's what Jean did to help us survive.

Saying that, I don't want to imply that Jean's politics and mine differed; that's for her to give her oral history on. But other than the fact that I decided to join the [Communist] Party, it took a long, long time before I could accept the idea of joining the Party because I thought I was giving up a lot of intellectual independence. I wanted to observe society, work to change it, observe it, and not be as tied down as membership in an organization would be. But once I made up my mind, I didn't want to join until Jean was ready to join. I wanted to do everything together. I don't think that took very long. Maybe Jean was ready for it before I was; I don't know. But

at least I had the feeling of saying, "I don't want to join until Jean is ready." So, politically, Jean was as advanced as I was. I mean, it was the Board of Education and their sexism that judges that a teacher, a woman, cannot remain, that my bad ideas were responsible for Jean's.

Then when we did divorce in '65-- Shortly after our divorce, the Board of Education in Berkeley, where she was living then, overturned that blacklisting and hired her as a high school teacher again. So she was able to teach from '65 until her retirement. Again, that is just pure sexism. It's more than that; it's just assuming that the male dominates the thinking of the family.

But beyond the impact of prison, I think that prison was an aggravation of a separation, already.

TRELEVEN: There were stresses and strains at the time you went into prison?

WILKINSON: There were stresses and strains. When I came back from my pilgrimage to Palestine, I-- At UCLA in my junior year, when Jean was dating Gil [Gilbert A.] Harrison, I decided I would never get married. We had a threesome; we went together. They were in love and I was just their friend. Jean was just a Platonic friendship. I felt the same way about Jean as I did

about Gilbert, my best friend. In fact, when I was gone on this long trip for a year and a half, I wrote daily to Jean and Gilbert. My feeling about never getting married had to do with my deafness. It was getting increasingly severe and I didn't want any child to have to go through what I'd gone through. So I gave up the idea of marriage. Then when I came back, the first thing I did was to get a hearing aid. The attitude up to that time was that I thought if I wore a hearing aid I wouldn't be popular. I couldn't be elected student-body president if people knew I was deaf. I wouldn't make it with women if people knew I was deaf. Somehow or other, by fooling people, by pretending I could hear, I thought I would be better off. If people knew I was deaf, I would be really isolated.

It all goes back to a professor of psychology, Dr. [Grace M.] Fernald, at UCLA, who had a big black box. She'd walk in, set it down on the table, and put her hearing aid on.

TRELEVEN: Grace Fernald.

WILKINSON: I just always thought, "Oh, gee, I could never do that." My father's hearing aid was a carbon granule type he could never hear well with. Until when I came back, I'd changed. If people don't like me

because I'm deaf, that's too bad. I want to hear. I want to learn. I want to know everything. I don't want to miss anything.

I remember particularly one night in Algeria-- rural Algeria--talking to Kabylia peasants with one person speaking English around a tent in interior Algeria, and no light, moonlight, campfire. The conversation went on and Del [Delbert Harter] could communicate. I kept saying, "What, what, what, what?" Then I began to say, "This is ridiculous, I can't hear."

Anyway, the first thing my dad did was to buy me the most powerful hearing aid there was. In 1940 it cost over \$200. It was as long as what we think of as an old Eastman-Kodak [camera], ten inches long, two inches wide, the batteries inside. That was the time when they had these transistor tubes they had to have in them, like radio tubes, vacuum tubes. On top of that, two or three pounds of batteries on my belt, a big black wire coming up out of that thing, not into my ear but a steel band over my head pressing the hearing part of it not into your ear but against the mastoid. It was bone conduction, not air conduction. And I could hear and everything changed.

It was only then that I thought that I might want

to get married. But by that time I had this wonderful love affair with this Ellinor Hoffmann at the time I was leaving, so I was probably driven in both ways. I was never going to get married, and yet normally as a man I was attracted to Ellinor Hoffmann. I really wrote to her every day. So I was overcoming it. But I think getting the hearing aid was really the big point. So suddenly I could hear. Now I could just go on. In fact, I'd begun to argue that deafness is an advantage because people laugh and say, "You can turn this off when you want to." Well, that's completely true. It's one of the most valuable things. I mean, if you had to be recreated again, you'd want some way where you could turn it on or off so you could sit in quiet, you can sleep, you can read, or you can hear perfectly--which I can do now.

On top of that, I come back and everybody is shocked by my agnosticism, my turning away from religion, giving up the Methodist ministry, all that stuff. They were turned off, and no one liked me. I remember everybody--the fraternity that I was so active in, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, didn't want anything more to do with me, Adaline [C.] Guenther, Thomas [S.] Evans, at the University Religious Conference where I'd been their pride and hope (I was the chair of the student

board of the University Religious Conference)--just were shocked that Frank doesn't believe in god. My own bishop and others were shocked, my family disappointed, patient, hurt, patient, disappointed.

So at that point, I'm isolated. I can hear. I want to get married. Meanwhile, Jean had gone to [University of California] Berkeley to get her secondary degree as a teacher. She had met people in Berkeley who had radicalized her in a similar way to what I'd been radicalized by my trip. The word "radicalized" is not proper for either of us. It opened her mind up away from just being student-body vice-president, and that, to being really concerned about the world. That's where Jean was. And I'd gone through something similar. So our Platonic friendship brings us together because she's the only one that understands me. I always loved her, respected her, but it was not a--how do you want to say it?--the passion or the romanticism, or so on of a love affair.

We got married based upon a Platonic relationship. We did not have sex until we were married, and I was having sex by that time. So the marriage starts out on a basis of trying to build a marriage on a Platonic relationship. Everybody was so-- I mean, I was so put down by the treatment I was getting, people thanked

Jean for marrying me. I mean, like she could save me. They thought Jean was all right, but maybe by marrying him, maybe-- My mother and father thanked Jean for marrying me.

TRELEVEN: She could straighten you out, huh?

WILKINSON: She'd straighten me out, you know. So that's the way our thing started. I think from beginning to end we always had great ideas together. We always shared similar things. Again, what her ideas are, I think it's really not for me to say, but my memory of her is always one of complete political respect. When I wrote on my draft card, "conscientious objector," she thought that was fine even though it meant in 1939 I was getting myself into some preliminary trouble. She was supportive. Then as I went harder and harder into work with Monsignor [Thomas J.] O'Dwyer in housing and all, which meant a very, very heavy schedule, she was very supportive. At the same time, she went up the teaching ladder, so that by fourteen years she's one of the most respected high school social studies teachers in L.A. And I'm going up there. I mean, it wasn't like I was up here in the housing authority and she was down here as a housewife. Jean was an outstanding teacher and a complete equal in terms of our fields of work.

Meanwhile, the lack of sexual satisfaction on probably both our parts--but certainly on my part--became more and more of a problem. I think if I hadn't been-- Certainly, if I hadn't been blacklisted we would have stayed together. I think the blacklisting itself put a strain on our relationship.

But, you know, I was being considered for Congress in 1948. I was going to run for a congressional seat in Pasadena, at the time when Hollywood and Pasadena were in the same Congressional District.

TRELEVEN: Progressive Party?

WILKINSON: No, the Democratic Party.

TRELEVEN: As a Democrat.

WILKINSON: Joe Johnson and the Eleanor Roosevelt Democratic Club of Pasadena came to me in '48, asking me to be their candidate for Congress against the Republican. I considered it. There's other factors there that I would have to consider. The Cold War wasn't really on there, but I was thinking if I did run for Congress I'd have to leave my work in housing. I had been in the Party for six years. The Cold War was going and being a member of the Party was getting to be more and more of a no, of a very bad, evil thing, and a more secretive thing. So I'm sure that affected me. But then that's where I was going. So the blacklisting

had a lot to do with that.

Then the mounting attacks upon me as I go on into the work to criticize the unAmerican [activities] committee and go nationally with it, all these things were having their impact. Certainly, then, the subpoena and the difference with our friends over the fact that I chose to go to jail as a matter of civil disobedience, personal conscience, whatever you want to call it, and then going to jail, all these things have me on the road traveling constantly and Jean at home doing her thing. So we were more and more separated. So I think that the prison sentence was just an aggravation or sort of the final straw, the fact that we were separated for nine months undoing what solidity there was there.

But again, it wasn't a lack of respect for her or each other. We loved each other. We respected each other. She went with Anne Braden on the platforms to speak to try to get Carl and me out of prison. She did wonderful things. She supported the family. She did everything--alone. Yet we're separated. That's too long a statement, but I'd never thought about it as much, and I tried to fill in my thoughts on this in response to your question.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let's pause for just a minute. [tape

recorder off] Well, maybe a followup question and then we'll wrap it up for today. In past years, I've interviewed trade-union organizers, I've interviewed individuals who've been activists in farmers' organizations, and the toll on marriages and family alienation is quite severe. In the case of a woman who was a [Wisconsin] Farmers Union [Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America, Wisconsin Division] activist, her children in later years were not the least bit interested in anyone talking to mom about her Farmers Union days. In terms of labor organizers, I know less about the children, but marriages didn't last, and a lot of that comes from being an organizer and doing a lot of traveling. You're doing a lot of traveling, you are organizing. What's your comment on the relationship of that kind of activity to the stresses and strains of a marriage and on a family situation?

WILKINSON: Well, I would go back to '57. From '52 to '57, we lived in Los Angeles and me organizing full time. I was still there and it didn't lead to separation. But beginning in '57, I began doing this traveling. Jean, Tony, Jo, and Jeff, by automobile we drove to New York for one year. But I began traveling. My trip to Georgia, my trip to Gary, my trip to

Philadelphia, Boston, began that sort of organizing. But from '58 forward, after I used the First Amendment in Los Angeles in '56--and even more so after '58--that contributed to my effectiveness as an organizer to abolish HUAC. There's something about putting yourself at that kind of risk and going to jail for what you believe in. It became almost a tactical advance for the abolition campaign. I never made my decision on the First Amendment as a tactical move, but others thought so and would argue with me. I've mentioned this before. They would argue that, "You're going to go to jail. You won't be available here," and so on. I didn't view it as that. It was just a matter-- I'd reached that point in my life where I was so dismayed, so basically critical of what the unAmerican activities committee had done to society. To me, of course, to Jean, of course, but to lawyers, and doctors, and trade unionists, and teachers. You name it. My own bishop even, who I still respected--James C. Baker in Pasadena--had seventeen citations from the unAmerican activities committee. So making that decision was a matter of, as I said at the time, conscience and personal responsibility. I refused to answer. But the moment we'd done that, it became a tactic. In previous conversations we've had, [I've related how] the [United

States] Supreme Court came down with a decision in February of '61. Within two weeks after I'm home, I'm invited up to Berkeley to speak to my first college audience of thirty-five people. Due to the FBI's COINTELPRO interference, 5,000 are there. From then on, I averaged never less than a 100 days a year, from '58 forward, of on-the-road traveling, and never less than twenty states. Some years as much as a 165 days of travel in thirty-one states.

All of those things had this impact, obviously, upon the marriage. It has an impact upon my marriage with Jean and [now] it has an impact upon my marriage with Donna. Another fact of life; another marriage we can analyze now. At first Donna absolutely would not allow me to travel, or tried to restrict me very much. Gradually, she has recognized that travel is a necessity for the effectiveness of my work, and so she doesn't stop it, or preclude it, or discourage it. We try to make the most of what time we do have together.

You brought up the question of children and organizing. I think that is something that I wish I knew more about. Yesterday was the fiftieth birthday of my oldest son, which means I now have children, fifty, forty-eight, and forty-six. I think, first of all, I think my kids have all turned out to be better

people than I on basic issues. Take two issues of racism or sexism. I still, intellectually, have to fight my racism and my sexism. I think with them, they're all three free of it. I don't think they have to go through some intellectual process to think through racism or sexism in that way.

TRELEVEN: Well, it's the way you and Jean brought them up.

WILKINSON: Right, and so our life didn't hurt that. Maybe we ought to talk to them some time. I don't know. My thought is that the kids respect me. Maybe this is hopeful, wishful thinking on my part. I'd like to think that my kids respect me, are proud of what I did, but I'm not sure of it at all. By hindsight, they might say, "Well, we missed an awful lot. We didn't get this. We didn't get that. Didn't get the education we probably needed." And they didn't, and they didn't get this or that. But my being away from home 100 days a year from '58 forward. Fifty-eight would be, let's see, that's--

TRELEVEN: Thirty-four years ago.

WILKINSON: Thirty-four years ago. So that means that my son who's now fifty, was sixteen when I began this heavy traveling, another fourteen, and twelve. The very formative teenage years, I'm not really there.

Jeffry, I know, is the only one that tended to rebel. He did not write to me while I was in prison and he did not come down to visit me when I was there. But that relates directly to the fact that he got, I think, sick and tired of people coming up to him and saying, "You're so lucky to be Frank's son. You're just a chip off the old block, aren't you?" Jeffry was a speaker and an organizer himself, and a singer. He got tired of not being his own person, but being my son. I think that was a very real problem. Today, Jeffry and I are closer, but that was a real hard thing for him. How he solved it, I don't know. That is his life story because he went through some real trauma, but he worked it out.

Before we leave today I want to just tell you something for another agenda. Have we got five minutes left? How much have we got?

TRELEVEN: About four minutes.

WILKINSON: Oh. Well, let me just give an agenda for maybe the next time.

I am deeply disturbed--not just out of the convention rhetoric of the Democratic [Party] Convention [of 1992] and the campaign this year, but the whole attitude of our country from the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the changes in Eastern Europe, and the

changes in the Soviet Union--about "We have won the Cold War and now we can go ahead." Over and over again, "We've won the Cold War." I'd like to give you my tentative thoughts on how I feel about this thing.

The Cold War, to me, was to be won, yes, but not in terms of the destruction of struggling socialism in Cuba, or Europe, or the Soviet Union. I wanted it ended so there could be more democracy with their socialism in those places. My criticisms of socialism there were related to that. And I'd like to open up at some point, not much more than what I've said here now, but to go on [the record] on the thing, because I find myself almost going back into a self-censorship again because everybody says, "We've won the Cold War; now let's go forward." I am privately saying, "We didn't win something that was good. But the Cold War itself was as bad on our part against socialism in these countries and lack of democracy over there as it was bad for us." And, of course, economically, the military part of it destroyed them but with the trillions of dollars of debt, who knows just how much it's destroyed our country here.

I'd like to maybe go a few words beyond this the next time we meet.

TRELEVEN: Well, I think that's a very good idea

because--and it's very pertinent as we know--because within the last week it turns out that our new police chief [Willie L. Williams] of Los Angeles has sealed a room filled with spy records of the L.A. Police Department. This is after the '83 lawsuit was concluded. In that sense, the Cold War goes on in terms of the relationship between the authorities and individuals. So it's very pertinent that we do talk about that, not only in foreign countries but the continuing price of the Cold War here at home.

WILKINSON: I, this very week, have made a commitment to write a letter through my lawyers to Stanley [K.] Sheinbaum, the head of the [Los Angeles] Police Commission, trying to get the unsealing of those files by Willie Williams to find out if we can't find in there the smoking gun--

TRELEVEN: Ha.

WILKINSON: --and show that Daryl [F.] Gates was the stakeout on the night I was supposed to be assassinated.

TRELEVEN: Right. Okay, till next time. Thanks.

TAPE NUMBER: XLV, SIDE ONE

JULY 25, 1992

TRELEVEN: We left off last time with you and Carl [Braden] getting on the bus, getting off the bus, getting into waiting automobiles. Pick it up there. Tell me about the auto trip back to New York.

WILKINSON: It was a rush. I think we last week discovered it was four o'clock instead of five o'clock.

TRELEVEN: Yep, somewhere in that time frame.

WILKINSON: And the distance was such and the traffic was such that we drove as hard as we could and didn't get there till 10:30, New York.

TRELEVEN: Now, who was driving? Do you recall any other details about the individuals who were transporting you?

WILKINSON: I think there were two cars and there were six or eight people. I can't remember. The youth people were there, the New York Youth Committee to Abolish HUAC leadership was there. We stopped to eat on the way. I mean, it was that long a trip that we stopped to get something to eat. I remember that. And still wondering how we're going to get through there in time. The meeting's starting at eight o'clock with Pete Seeger singing and--

TRELEVEN: Let's see. Was it [James] Imbrie?

WILKINSON: No, it was this wonderful--

TRELEVEN: Well, we could fill it in.

WILKINSON: It was the minister. You know, the--

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Oh, what's his name? The great guy who went to jail for a year [Willard E. Uphaus].

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I've got it in my notes, too, but I can't--

WILKINSON: All right. [laughter] He's a very--

TRELEVEN: But clear up one thing for me. Did Carl then end up going to New York?

WILKINSON: Carl and I went together with them to New York.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: But when we got into New York, for reasons I cannot remember, Carl chose not to go to the public meeting and went and had a private dinner with somebody from Fair Play for Cuba.

TRELEVEN: That's right. You mentioned that.

WILKINSON: I don't know what that was about because here were people as eager to see Carl as they were me. It wasn't my show.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so--

WILKINSON: Maybe you could say it was the [National]

Committee to Abolish HUAC's show. It wasn't based upon SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund], or something like that in the South.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so how did you enter the hall?

WILKINSON: [laughter] There was a stage and I think Pete was singing. Willard Uphaus is the name we couldn't remember.

TRELEVEN: That's correct.

WILKINSON: He was speaking, one or the other, and it was about 10:30. I guess they'd been told that we're on our way, would be there any minute, and I came out on the stage at the end of something, Pete's song or something, and there was tremendous, tremendous applause, you know, cheering and whistling, and shouting. It was real, real fun, real moving. And--

TRELEVEN: Were you announced or did you just walk out?

WILKINSON: I believe I just walked out.

TRELEVEN: Let's pause for a minute. [tape recorder off] Okay, we're back on.

WILKINSON: I mean, whether I was introduced or not, I was very, very moved. I found myself amazingly insecure about speaking.

I would skip ahead and say that about a month after being out of prison, coming into Des Moines, Iowa, where I was debating a supporter of the House

Committee [on UnAmerican Activities] at Drake University, this guy attacked me as communist. I remember just almost fainting before a hostile audience. It was really a hostile audience. I just couldn't find words to defend myself. I had a hard time on my feet. I got through it all right, but it was not an easy evening for me.

But that night [in New York], I was completely surrounded by friends. I've already mentioned the fact that I had this compulsion to report the fact that the lifers at Lewisburg penitentiary wanted to send their greetings and love to Alger Hiss. (I think I've mentioned that to you before. Have we got that down on tape?)

TRELEVEN: Yeah, you did. Once you said the people at Allenwood [prison], the next time you said the people at Lewisburg. Which was it?

WILKINSON: In prison language, it's both because the people who are sent to Lewisburg-- If you have a certain type of a criminal record, you stay at Lewisburg; certain others are sent out to the Allenwood farm, which is minimum security. The people who talked with me were lifers from Lewisburg who'd been released to Allenwood because they'd been serving twenty, thirty years or something like that already--a long time--and

they were no longer considered a threat to anybody, so they were given a break to live in this less rigid atmosphere. But they had known Alger at Lewisburg, before they were transferred out to Allenwood.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: At any rate, it was just a very moving thing. Alger Hiss is still living. He is just a very impressive person and very sensitive to other people. He's a great listener. He's free of an ego trip. As they [the inmates] said, "He wrote letters for us. He read for us." They all referred to him as Mister Hiss. That was the thing I remember. Then the fact that Alger was in the audience that night and came up out of the audience on the stage was an accidental thing. I didn't have any idea who was out there. I walked out on a stage before a thousand people and it just happened he was there. That was a moving thing.

But what I do remember about the speech that night-- In my time in prison, I became increasingly concerned about the need to repeal the Internal Security Act of 1950, Title I and Title II, and I felt that the campaign to abolish HUAC ought to include the repeal of this one law the committee did get through. That law had been upheld in June of '61 in a [United States Supreme Court] decision written by [Felix]

Frankfurter. The court ultimately threw the thing out in 1965. But I felt it necessary to talk about the need for that, what was in that law. You see, you're talking to an audience-- In 1961, you're talking about a law that was passed in '51. You're talking about being in a concentration camp at Allenwood that no one even knew was a concentration camp set up under Title II of that law. I had time to read the Frankfurter decision in which he said, "This bill is the result of careful legislative findings. It is not for the court to look behind the careful legislative findings of the Congress." And Frankfurter cited seventeen hearings of the unAmerican activities committee going back to a Hamilton Fish [Jr.] hearing of 1930--where the senior Hamilton Fish claimed that the Depression was caused by communists spreading rumors against the banks (sounds like you this morning [laughter])--to '35 where the [John W.] McCormack-[Samuel] Dickstein committee charged the leaders of the New Deal with being communists. The '38 hearing, the first one under [Martin] Dies, where a guy named Matthews testified that Shirley Temple, along with Clark Gable and several other people, gave aid and comfort to the Communist Party. Really crazy stuff. Frankfurter just cites that, you know, as an example of careful legislative

findings. It was good material and I did talk about it.

Now, as I've indicated earlier, there was a dispute with Dorothy [N.] Marshall in Los Angeles on this issue. She wanted to keep our program limited to the abolition of the unAmerican activities committee. She didn't want to go to these sidelines.

Then, later on, there was another division between the Communist Party itself, who set up these special civil liberties committees all over the country to repeal the law.

TRELEVEN: Right. This, I think, was the Citizens Committee for Constitutional Liberties. Is that correct?

WILKINSON: Sounds good. Sounds close.

TRELEVEN: Well, let's pinpoint it. This is the one that Marian Friedlander was the executive secretary of?

WILKINSON: I think so.

TRELEVEN: Does that sound right?

WILKINSON: Right, and in L.A., Hugh DuLacy, former congressperson from Washington State, and Dorothy Forrest DeLacy, who was the Smith Act defendant from Colorado, were the chairs of it. You know, they set up offices two blocks away from our office on Western Avenue to start this campaign with total duplication.

Just an order from the Communist Party in New York saying, "Establish these committees and repeal this law." That's after Frankfurter's decision, which made it effective.

And I was arguing with Dorothy Marshall that we had to include the repeal of the law in order to abolish HUAC. You had to do both at once. Then Dick [Richard] Criley and I had to argue with Carl Winter and the other Communist Party leadership that to try to repeal the law outside of a framework of abolishing HUAC made no sense at all, that we had a base, we were moving, we were within sight of abolishing HUAC. I said [that] at that time--although we didn't do it for fourteen more years--and the way to do it is to combine the two campaigns.

I did talk about that. I never heard anybody say I talked too long, but I just remember that I talked over an hour, hour and a half. It must have been well after midnight and I was just coming out. There was all this stuff. I was talking about the experiences in prison. I was talking about the need to do something about the law, the movement to abolish HUAC. All of this was flowing out of me. It was not at all like an ego trip. It wasn't a prepared speech. I didn't have a note. I didn't have anything to work with. The

prison authorities wouldn't even let me take out new words I'd learned. But I just said a great deal of things that were on my conscience, in my heart, and with a great deal of passion, I'm sure. I also undoubtedly spoke strongly for the abolition of all prisons.

That's another thing that we mentioned before. Carl Braden and I both came to that feeling, as did Mr. [Charles] Colson of the Watergate [break-in] period. Many, many people who've served time in prison would come out objectively feeling that prisons do no good. They create crime.

TRELEVEN: Okay, how long did you stay in New York before you went to Montgomery?

WILKINSON: One night.

TRELEVEN: Then it was off to Montgomery because your information was that--

WILKINSON: I left New York. I was to speak then the next day in Chicago. They had me billed boom, boom, boom.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: New York, Chicago, and Montgomery because of Aubrey's [W. Williams] serious illness. He didn't die until--

TRELEVEN: Till '65.

WILKINSON: --three years later, but for all I knew, he was going. I went down to Georgia and somehow managed to rent a plane to go from Atlanta over to Montgomery-- which is not a great distance--but I somehow did that, and had a very meaningful visit with Aubrey at his bedside. I think he was in bed, yeah.

TRELEVEN: So he was quite ill.

WILKINSON: Very ill.

TRELEVEN: Did you talk to him--

WILKINSON: He actually continued. He got well again; he had remissions.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: He'd had surgery, I think, a couple of times by then. It was cancer of the colon, stomach. He chaired some more meetings. He came to Washington, D.C., at American University, Leonard gymnasium [Auditorium] where Jim [James] Forman and Aubrey and I spoke, where those Nazis broke up that meeting. He did that in '64. (Maybe it was January or February of '65.) He died, I think, in April of '65.

TRELEVEN: I think that's accurate.

WILKINSON: At any rate, I went to visit Aubrey. One thing I remember about Aubrey at that visit was that he was a great raconteur. What is that word?

TRELEVEN: That's it. Raconteur.

WILKINSON: He had read everything that Mark Twain [Samuel L. Clemens] had ever written. He'd sit in bed in great pain from this cancer, and just tears coming down his face, laughing so hard at jokes about Mark Twain. They were always a little bit off-color jokes; I probably could remember some of them if I thought about it enough. I remember some of them shocked me a bit because they were a little bit sexy-type jokes.

But while I was there, he began talking to me about [Thomas] Jefferson and the difference between presidents in our time and presidents of Jefferson's [time]. This was before we knew a lot about Jefferson's philandering with slaves, mistreatment of slaves, having children with slaves, and treating them as nursemaids even when a slave and his own daughter went to Paris. They were the same age, but the slave was to take care of his daughter.

But while he was in the White House-- Aubrey gave me this book. It was called Jefferson's Bible. I find very few people know about it. You undoubtedly do. But while he was in the White House, Jefferson took the New Testament in Greek, French, English, Latin--I don't know what it would be, four languages--and he went through the entire New Testament dealing with the life of Christ during Christ's living periods, and every

time Christ would say something about a moral code, with scissors he'd cut it out and paste it into the book. The book had several hundred pages with blank pages, a bound book without any writing. So in separate columns he'd put down the French, Greek, Latin, and English, so he had all four languages going across there. Everything that dealt with a miracle, or something that indicated a supernatural, Jefferson cut out. So all he left in there were the moral teachings of Christ.

Aubrey was impressed with that, how helpful it was. If people wanted to really find out what Christ said, they could go through there without reading about turning water into wine and having brought people back to life, and so on. He compared that with the intellectual quality of people like [Benjamin] Franklin, Jefferson, and others of our founders, first of all who knew languages, and, secondly, in the White House--without transportation, without television, without telephones--he'd spend an evening by the fire pasting up four versions of the New Testament into a book. It was sort of a hobby at night.

Aubrey gave me that book. I really appreciated it.

TRELEVEN: As I mentioned last time we taped, I think

in one of your wife, Jean's [Benson Wilkinson], last letters to you in prison, she asked a question about how everyone wants to know where we go from here. When you were visiting with Aubrey, did you discuss where we go from here?

WILKINSON: Yes. Things that I said in my speech the night before in New York, I began saying it to everybody. We have to repeal HUAC's law. You can't just abolish HUAC; you've got to repeal the law. Interestingly enough, considering what we now know, nothing in my talk, I think, dealt with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. I remained innocent of what the FBI was doing.

TRELEVEN: Or naive, in hindsight?

WILKINSON: Naive, whatever it was. I just didn't deal with that. I dealt with these issues and was already mapping out a campaign. The idea was to go home briefly with my family, make talks as I crossed the country, and then get on the road to organize.

TRELEVEN: Okay, and the basic strategy would remain congressional district by congressional district?

WILKINSON: Right. Strongly--not only Aubrey's insistence, but my own belief. See, in '62, when I was traveling so heavily-- I got out in February; in the spring I did more traveling. In the summer, I think,

Jean and I and the kids drove back [to visit] Harvey and Jessie O'Connor. They offered us to come to Little Compton, Rhode Island, for rest and recreation. But even in doing that, I remember going up to New Hampshire on the way to Little Compton to speak at World Fellowship, where Willard Uphaus had protected the membership list of the summer camp visitors there and went to jail for a year. I went there to speak about the very things I was talking about. Then comes Little Compton. Little Compton was wonderful for the family. One of Jessie's sisters had a cottage very near the O'Connor main house, and the cottage was right on the edge of the water with a little garden in front, a little fence in front. You could go inside this place; it was an old, old, old cottage freshly painted, the beds all ready for a family to move in, food in the icebox. You know, everything just so comfortable and so restful, and we stayed there.

But back on this congressional district committee: We were working hard on establishing this Committee of One Hundred in Milwaukee, which was established in '62. When I came into northern Ohio, we set up the Thirteenth Congressional District committee in Oberlin, Republican [Charles A.] Mosher's old district, and it was primarily supported by students and community

people and faculty. Students at Oberlin College came down to Columbus, where I encountered Donna [Childers]. I was talking to the audience there in Columbus: "You must build a congressional district committee here in Columbus." They were telling me that the members of Congress there were hopeless. I said, "That's always the case. You've got to do it." And we built one in Dayton, and we built one in Columbus. Donna built it, established a committee, Columbus Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights. Where we had we struggled to get 100 community leaders in Milwaukee to sign a petition and we'd agreed--it's interesting--we agreed we would not release the petition to abolish HUAC until we had 100 names, so that people would be in good company. We also agreed to show the list to everybody who'd signed it, so if they didn't like some signers that were on there and didn't want to be associated with some signers on there, they could back out. These were all--

TRELEVEN: Tactical.

WILKINSON: --practical, tactical things in the Cold War period where people were afraid of association. I know nationally when Harry Bridges came on our petition, I thought that some labor people in the oil workers [Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International

Union] would drop off, because that was the way it would be. Only this is in Milwaukee, where we had to get the council of churches, we had to get labor, community, and faculty all agreed. Anyway, we got up to ninety once and Sid Peck, who later became a leader in Mobilization for Democracy-- What was it called? I don't know, peace organization. Sidney [M.] Peck--

TRELEVEN: Yeah, we can get the name.

WILKINSON: --was a professor at Downer College. And Dave [David Randall] Luce, who later became secretary of the Committee to Abolish HUAC--professor of philosophy at [University of Wisconsin] Milwaukee--they were working on this thing. No, it would not release until 100. Finally, we got up to that 100 and we released it to the press. Within a couple of days Representative [Henry S.] Reuss of Milwaukee became one of the new congresspeople. It's exactly what Aubrey was talking about. You build them. When you get a Reuss on your side, it's easy to get a [James] Roosevelt, easier to get a [William F.] Ryan of New York. But to get a Ruess from Milwaukee, you had to have church and labor support to bring him on there.

TRELEVEN: Right. The Wisconsin context, incidentally, is that it was only with [William] Proxmire's election in '57 to the U.S. Senate which was kind of a turning

point for the building of the "new" Democratic Party in Wisconsin. I mean it was that recent. Gaylord [A.] Nelson, who later became a U.S. senator, was elected governor. So the Wisconsin context is really a major shift taking place from the generally more conservative Republican to the Democratic. So that's the context in which you were operating.

WILKINSON: I think [Robert W.] Kastenmeier was already elected by '61, '62. Maybe he didn't come in until the time that a lot of liberals came in, '64.

TRELEVEN: It would be late-fifties, early-sixties.

WILKINSON: Anyway, Kastenmeier was one of our targets, and we certainly had a committee in Madison. But the Madison area was always considered easier. I mean, I spoke at Madison repeatedly--

TRELEVEN: Which was Kastenmeier's district.

WILKINSON: --in Kastenmeier's district. And we brought enormous pressure on Kastenmeier. He claimed that he was going to get wiped out, that they had redistricted the thing somehow and brought in some of the rural areas and he didn't have strength there. But we just pressed ahead on the thing.

But getting back to Columbus--and this relates to Donna--Donna's husband [John] was the president of ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] of Columbus, and so on

her own she set up a little committee. (She would remember who they were.) It was the leader of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], somebody in the League of Women Voters, somebody in church groups. They started out to have the Columbus Committee of Five Hundred. Donna and this committee really, really organized and produced 500 members, 500 community leaders in Columbus. Now, there we never got the congressperson to join us. We didn't win the battle, but you had the effect that if you couldn't win them over, you certainly could keep them from supporting the unAmerican activities committee. It was a double-edged sword here. In other words, they couldn't red-bait a guy like Mosher, a Republican, for going along with it--which he did do--because it was a popular issue. The Columbus Dispatch did not editorially support HUAC any longer after the campaign carried on there. It became a "safe"--quote, unquote--"safe" issue politically for politicians and for community leaders. Even the mayor of Columbus at that time, I remember, said some things favorable to the campaign.

But we had labor, it was the council of churches, the board of education, the NAACP, CORE [Congress of Racial Equality]. One of the best organizing drives we

ever had on that issue. When you got into other areas that we were doing in California, New York, Oregon-- In New York, so much with Ryan already better than Roosevelt on the issue, we got [John V.] Lindsay, who was a Republican at that time, to come out with us. But Lindsay was never very strong. We worked on an [state] assembly district in New York. We had not only congressional-district, but assembly-district committees to abolish HUAC in Manhattan. We didn't do much upstate, but we sure did a good job. But it's so much easier [in New York City].

A man I knew later that wrote many books and did much of the research, a lawyer, assemblyperson from Manhattan who did so much of the study on the assassination of [John F.] Kennedy--Mark Lane--came over to our side. Ryan began coming to speak at receptions we'd hold, fund-raising receptions. He'd come there to support our campaign. But that is easy territory compared to working in Wisconsin--at least Milwaukee--working in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo.

I mean, at that time in Toledo when I came to speak there, people still remember they'd never seen anything like it. The American Legion was notified by-- we now know--the FBI. They passed a resolution. They had big newspaper stories on the campus and in the

community for people to boycott this meeting, not to attend this meeting where I was going to speak, and it boomeranged on them. But the hostility was so great. Anyway, when I got there--the group that brought me in, a humanist group in Toledo headed up by a woman who still supports our work, Naomi Twining--the auditorium was filled. They expected, you know, fifteen, twenty people. As happened to me also in Florida at a similar meeting like that where the Birchers [John Birch Society] would literally take over, in this case the American Legion packed the place. I don't know what the real make-up of that audience would be, because I've heard that many students came out of curiosity about the campaign, but it was really a community meeting rather than a student meeting. And that's the place where the FBI--we now know--regrets and warns people, "Don't make a martyr, don't make a hero out of this man." (I just happened to read this FBI document later.)

I walked into the room and this audience was very restless for the meeting to begin. They just became silent. I walked down the aisle, stepped up on the stage, and here is a man in the American Legion uniform at the podium to wait for me to come up. I just walked up to him and quietly, without comment to the audience,

said, "You have no American flag flying here, and I don't speak without an American flag." And this guy who was painting me as a red, dangerous, awful, completely accepted the fact that I would not speak without an American flag. So he held up the meeting, called a janitor--the FBI records report the name of the janitor who searched such-and-such a building in trying to find an American flag--and he finally came down the aisle holding this little flag. It was just a pitiful little thing. The audience applauded him. He put it down and the legion leader said, "Mr. Wilkinson does not speak without the American flag." Then I had an audience that didn't heckle me once, listened to me, and [asked] very good questions.

But I was talking about the hostilities that were there. Toledo's just one example. In Cleveland, they did awful things to try to break up, including the Mike Douglas TV Show to-- Have I covered this in the past?

TRELEVEN: Well, yeah. And it's in Dick's [Richard Criley's] book [The FBI v. The First Amendment].

WILKINSON: All right. Well, that example--

TRELEVEN: But I want to stick with this congressional district thing.

WILKINSON: All right.

TRELEVEN: Was the idea of organizing that way, was

that principally Aubrey's idea?

WILKINSON: Entirely.

TRELEVEN: Entirely his idea.

WILKINSON: I think all of us were unprofessional. We were not used to working in Washington. We're newcomers. In fact, in my adult life the first time I ever came to Washington on this issue was when I went in to see Jimmy Roosevelt. It was the first time I'd been there since I was twenty-one years of age. And Aubrey, you know, he was an old-timer in Washington New Deal politics.

TRELEVEN: An old Washington insider, yeah.

WILKINSON: He had been Harry Hopkins's right-hand man. He headed up the youth for--

TRELEVEN: National Youth Administration.

WILKINSON: National Youth Administration. He had done a lot of the WPA [Works Progress Administration] stuff. He's the one who hired Lyndon [B.] Johnson. He was very close to Eleanor Roosevelt. He told me that what's wrong here in Washington is that most organizations set up an office here for whatever their issue is, and they have no grassroots behind them. Your job is to build your grassroots and then come in and set up your office. In that case, where you find a problem on the hill, in a committee, among congressmen,

you can call out to your grassroots like an artillery spotter and say, "Get a hundred letters in from the Catholic Church, or from labor," whatever that member of Congress is--whatever he requires you've got to go to his base and his district and get it. So it sounded fine with me, and we did not set up a real office until we got things going like that.

TRELEVEN: Okay, how do you--?

WILKINSON: I'm trying to think if there's more on the congressional districts. Oh, I know. I know I touched on this before, but let me just repeat: that Aubrey backed up the congressional district committee by offering them free literature. We had this very strong statement of petition, and we had Jimmy Roosevelt's famous talk on the floor of the Congress called "The Dragon Slayers," ridiculing HUAC. Then we had a list of people who'd done this, and all the little support we had around here. It was the full size of a newspaper on both sides, and in the front left corner was a box five inches high by three columns wide with the sponsorship. So you'd have this thing: Thirteenth Ohio so-and-so, the Twenty-sixth Los Angeles, the Third New York, and Aubrey reproduced this and would give thousands of copies free of charge or he charged something like two dollars a thousand for this

literature, printing them out on his printing press that he'd set up in Montgomery when he, himself, was sort of driven out of Washington by the red scares of the fifties.

TRELEVEN: What's the process by which you pinpointed particular congressional districts? In other words, you wouldn't go after all 435. You would be selective. Was this--

WILKINSON: I think at first we tried to set them up wherever we could get an invitation. When I'd go on a field trip into an area--

TRELEVEN: Okay, let's say Minnesota, for example.

WILKINSON: Right. We definitely did set up one in the First [Congressional] District in the Twin Cities, and got Doug [Donald M.] Frazier--who later became a mayor of Minneapolis--by setting up this committee there. I think it was more of where we were invited, and the invitations were very, very wide. I mean, I was covering at least twenty-five states a year, and it was all by invitation. There was just as much traveling as I could possibly do without any organizing. And good meetings, well attended meetings, and setting up a committee. It was just a natural organizing time.

Later, when Donna Allen became our Washington director, she began to tell us that we had to

concentrate on certain of the leadership--Republican and Democratic leadership--and so we would. We knew we had to get into Cleveland. Not just Cleveland, but a particular area there where a member of Congress was key in the hierarchy of the Democratic Party. We also concentrated on the Judiciary Committee members of the House. We also worked in the districts where members of HUAC resided.

For example, Joe Poole of Texas was an active guy. He was an extremely conservative Texan who, when he was in the state legislature of Texas, got a law through the Texas state legislature providing the death penalty for anyone who was a member of the NAACP. He was a very, very dangerous man and became a very active leader in the unAmerican committee. But we went into Texas to organize in his district.

[Albert W.] Watson was a very dangerous guy from South Carolina. We went into Orangeburg to organize against Watson in his own district. There we were working very effectively on pointing out that the committee was essentially a southern racist committee and that these members of the Congress on the committee came from districts in which as much as 50 percent of the population was black, but with only 1 percent of the population voting. I worked a lot with the voters

rights committee in Atlanta to get the statistics on this thing so we could go into the districts and organize liberal whites and blacks against those members of the [unAmerican activities] committee.

Edwin [E.] Willis of Louisiana was another guy we targeted, although he was outside of the main cities--more of a rural member--[but] we could do a lot of work in a state like Louisiana with strong meetings in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, the two main places that I organized in. We also became very conscious--I haven't touched on this nearly enough--that this attack had to be bipartisan. From the beginning, we knew we could never abolish HUAC if we made it an appeal to liberal Democrats. It had to be bipartisan. There had to be Republican support. So getting Mosher, getting Lindsay; I could name a number of other Republicans that we concentrated on and we got their support. When the vote finally came in '75--

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TRELEVEN: Okay, you were talking about getting Republican support, leading up to '75.

WILKINSON: As I say, the actual vote, the critical vote, was in a Democratic caucus on January 15 of '75. But by that time we had secured a great amount of Republican support. We tried to make the committee an embarrassment, as it really was to all the Congress. We tried to keep it from being a liberal program.

TRELEVEN: To avoid it looking somewhat like a liberal witch hunt, or--

WILKINSON: There's another tactical thing that is important to bear in mind. We targeted committee members. [Richard H.] Ichord became the chair in the late-sixties or early-seventies. Ichord came from Columbia, Missouri. Most of my work up to that time had been in St. Louis or Kansas City. But I went in Columbia, Missouri. It's seventy-five, a hundred miles out of St. Louis.

TRELEVEN: A university town?

WILKINSON: It's a university town. It's a conservative university town, by the way. It reminds me much more of Athens, Ohio, where the university

[Ohio University] is, a very conservative town. University towns are not necessarily liberal. They're more liberal than their basic population, maybe. But I came in and we organized very hard in Ichord's district. We just attacked him, you know, any way when one of us would come into town there: Not only were meetings held, but press conferences were held. You could almost guarantee that you would hit CBS, NBC, ABC nightly [television] news at that time with your program, as well as the major paper in town, which, you know, a visiting fire person like we were, it's news. The campus papers, very big news, and we worked on that.

Now, the pressure on Ichord also was closely supported by the fact that the House leadership, beginning back in the sixties, had decided to put one liberal on the committee. Nine members of the committee, one liberal. It started out with a man by the name of [John C.] Culver from Iowa.

TRELEVEN: Yes. I heard him speak once.

WILKINSON: And then there was a man named [Louis] Stokes from Cleveland. Later on, it became Robert [F.] Drinan, the Jesuit priest, the dean of Boston College of Law in Boston. Each of these liberals in their own way tried to play the game correctly. They're members

of the committee, attend hearings and so on, but they would ask questions that were helpful. They tried to speak out in their own way. Culver and Stokes did good things. In our literature, our political action literature, we'd cite all the good things that members of the committee like Stokes or Culver did.

But when Robert Drinan came in, by that time the committee had already, at Ichord's own move to meet the pressure--the Committee to Abolish HUAC was effective--on their own motion, got through an action in the Congress to change their name from the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities to the House Committee on Internal Security. That, they thought, would silence us. Well, from the moment that happened, our Committee to Abolish HUAC had a meeting and changed our name to the Committee to Abolish HUAC/HISC [House Committee on Internal Security]. In each case, it's important to note, that the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities, the House Committee on Internal Security, which it sends the-- The acronym.

TRELEVEN: Acronym.

WILKINSON: It's hard. HUAC is hard, but HUAC is easy; HISC is easy.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, yeah.

WILKINSON: So we made it "House UnAmerican Activities

Committee and House Internal Security Committee." So it was the Committee to Abolish HUAC/HISC. Often the right wing tried to put us down by saying, "They don't even pronounce the name correctly," that sort of thing, and joking.

But Ichord's efforts didn't stem the tide because two things had happened at that time. First, I think in '65, the committee came into Chicago and subpoenaed Jeremiah Stamler, a leading heart specialist, Milton Cohen, who was a radical social worker, and a woman named [Yolanda] Hall, who had been a communist under the Smith Act. So she was clearly a communist. Whether Stamler was ever a communist or not, I don't know. Whether Cohen was ever a communist, I don't know. We never paid attention as to what the committee said people were.

But Dick Criley and our Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights, working with the Stamler, Hall, Cohen committee, really built up a defense committee the likes of which we'd never seen before. Arthur Kinoy was brought in as the lawyer from Rutgers [University]. Arthur was a firebrand, a wonderful radical lawyer. There's famous pictures of him being literally choked and carried out of hearings of the [House] committee. But Arthur was very effective and

argued with these three subpoenaed people that they've got to get some leading Republicans on this thing. So he suggested that they get Albert E. Jenner, who was the president of the American Bar Association and a leading Republican lawyer in Chicago. There was the Jenner, Jenner, Jenner and Block [law firm], something like that.

TRELEVEN: Right. Although he's a representative of Indiana.

WILKINSON: No, you're talking about a congressperson. Jenner is a lawyer in Chicago.

TRELEVEN: Oh, sorry. Okay.

WILKINSON: That's all right. There was a Jenner committee, which is another thing more on the Senate side of the thing, I think.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, okay. You're right.

WILKINSON: But at any rate, then the whole idea was to build a powerful support. So here's Stamler, a leading heart specialist. He's known, he's published, his books are famous. And Stamler also had a very powerful wife, Rose Stamler, who was a very good organizer. So there was [also] [Dwight D.] Eisenhower's heart specialist, which made him like god among heart specialists. So the Stamlers got Paul Dudley White.

TRELEVEN: Oh, that's right.

WILKINSON: Paul Dudley White. So Paul Dudley White became the chair of the Stamler Defense Committee. They wrote letters to medical doctors all over the United States and had thousands of medical doctors.

TRELEVEN: Let's pause for a minute. [tape recorder off]

WILKINSON: Thousands of medical doctors, and they sent in hundreds and hundreds of dollars. We helped them in L.A. to do the mailing. We'd use the medical doctors and we'd mail it out to other professions: political scientists, and whatnot. We were building a national campaign around the case. Now it was called the Stamler, Hall and Cohen cases. It was very important that Jerry Stamler never walked away from Milton Cohen, who was the head of some social agency as a social worker in Chicago, and Hall, who was tied up in a fight for the integration of a suburb of Chicago. That's why HUAC claimed they were after her: communist stirring up racial troubles in the suburbs. Stamler never walked away from them. But the whole case was built around his name. Then with this thing a lawsuit was filed, developed by Jenner.

Some very strange things happened. This is were Dick's work comes into it. When the hearings were held, there were hundreds and hundreds of people

demonstrating outside. There was a picture of a line of march from the Loop coming up to where this thing was, led by prominent women in the line of march. Leading church people carrying signs: the Chicago Theological Seminary supports Stamler, Hall, Cohen, and so on. There were students there. This was the time of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], the time of the Jerry Rubins and the activists, more people who wanted to not play the thing straight. They did things like sitting down in the street and getting arrested, things that were very effective in their own light. But the real thing was carried by these middle-class, upper-class people coming to that hearing.

In the hearing one of the things that amazingly happened: Jenner was tied up when the hearing began.

TRELEVEN: Let me interrupt. Were you there?

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: Okay. This is an eye-witness account?

WILKINSON: Right.

WILKINSON: Okay, go ahead.

WILKINSON: Jenner was not able to come. His law partner of Jenner, Jenner, Jenner and Block was a Catholic leader by the name of Sullivan, so Sullivan was in the room representing Stamler. And as always happens in these hearings, the committee starts out

with other witnesses. The committee would say to one other person, "Now when did you meet Jeremiah Stamler? Was he a communist?" or like that. Well, Sullivan was on his feet immediately. He could never remember he was not in court. He always addressed the committee, at that time led by Joe Poole of Texas, this big guy we finally got out on a charge of fraud, money factors-- TRELEVEN: Malfeasance, or something?

WILKINSON: Malfeasance on the part of Joe Poole. We got him out of Congress, in fact, because of that. But Sullivan would leap up and say, "Your Honor, my client's name has been mentioned. We're not here as a matter of record as yet." Before he'd get that many words out, Poole would say, "Sit down!" Something like that. "Sit down," you know. And--

TRELEVEN: Excuse me again. Was this being televised at this time? Do you recall?

WILKINSON: Probably. I know it was--

TRELEVEN: Radio?

WILKINSON: I know we have photographs of it.

TRELEVEN: Okay, go ahead.

WILKINSON: Anyway, a few minutes later it would come up. Sullivan would repeat again, "Your Honor--" At that point, Joe Poole, this big, fat, blustering Texas Texan, just turned to the marshal and said, "Marshal,

set that feller down." So these marshals--big bruising guys--walked up to Sullivan, who was a small man, and literally lifted him off his feet and plopped him down in a chair.

Well, the picture was taken of Sullivan of Jenner, Jenner, Jenner and Block being thrown into his seat. In the building of Jenner, real fancy law offices, they have this big picture proudly showing Sullivan being put down like that.

At this point Jenner--I got to know him and went to his office a lot--began making a regular pledge to the support of the Committee to Abolish the UnAmerican Activities Committee. He liked what we were doing. Dick Criley, of course, was the main factor here in pulling the various forces together and working with Rose Stamler and with other people.

I just remembered at this time that Arnold Lockshin, the member of our staff up in Boston at that time, who had been a graduate of Madison [Wisconsin]--who I described at another point here on the tape, a man that later took his family and went to the Soviet Union--was so effective as an organizer, primarily with the Catholic church, that he would take the names of the Paul Dudley White supporters and go in and get mailings out to a new field of academicians at Harvard

[University] or in the Cambridge area--universities--getting very famous names at Harvard Law School all in support of the Stamler, Hall, Cohen thing. So that was done.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I think we're losing a thread here with Drinan.

WILKINSON: All right.

TRELEVEN: Where we had to go with Republicans.

WILKINSON: All right. I'm really finished. The point is, I can end this by saying that the committee, which changed names, never held another hearing out of Washington [D.C.] after the Stamler, Hall, Cohen hearing. It was just the end of it. They, furthermore, never again invited an unfriendly witness before them. They held their hearings in Washington and they only brought up the informers to name people. But they never went after people to call them up and embarrass them before the committee, as had been done from 1938 to '65. That ended.

Now the other thing that's so important here because inside the committee replacing Stokes--there may have been a fourth person I can't think of--came Father Drinan. Father Drinan was not only a priest, a dean of the law school, and a prominent Jesuit, but he was a very feisty, articulate guy and a good civil

libertarian. The first thing that he did--and he publicized this--was he went to Ichord when he was newly in the Congress and a member of the committee, and said, "I'd like to see our files." (And he quotes all this on the floor of the Congress.) Ichord said, "Well, the chair and the staff maintain those files. We ordinarily don't discuss them." And Drinan said, "Well, I would like to see them. I'm a member. I want to see them." Under that pressure, Ichord was compelled to open the door in a large hearing room on the third floor of the old Cannon [office] building that had been converted into the file room for HUAC. They'd taken over two or three rooms. In this room they had this giant hand-crank computer, like a Rolodex, only it had the files of 756,000--

TRELEVEN: Oh, yeah. I know what you--

WILKINSON: Seven hundred and fifty-six-thousand Americans were in there.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: A guy sat at one end. When he wanted a name, he would crank it until the thing would come around. It's like going to the [dry] cleaners where they push a button until your suit comes down to the right number and you get your suit. Only this had no electricity; this was all hand-cranking. So Drinan

came in there with Marty [Martin] Michaelson, who was on his staff and later became--and continues to be--a vice-chair of the Committee to Abolish HUAC, Committee to Abolish HUAC/HISC, and now the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation [NCARL].

Anyway, so they go in there and Drinan says to Ichord--or says to the operator--"Put in my name."
[laughter] The guy started cranking to get up Drinan's name, and Ichord stopped it and said, "No, no, no. When a person becomes a member of Congress their names are not maintained in this file."

"Well, where are they kept?" And Ichord said, "I maintain them in a closet in my office and I am the only one that has the key to that office."

TRELEVEN: God.

WILKINSON: Anyway, Drinan drove right to the House floor, and before the Congress gets up and said, "We've got to relieve our brother Ichord. He's carrying an unfair burden. He has 756,000 names up here on the third floor of this building, but he has got the names of every one of us who were in those files. They're all removed now, but they're in a closet and he alone has the key. I think we should relieve him of that burden." Well, Ichord just went beet red in anger and embarrassment, and the Congress roared with laughter at

the embarrassing situation.

Then Drinan, at that time, got so excited he invited me in to go see my own file.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let me interrupt. Had there been briefing of Drinan and Michaelson by Lockshin leading up to this? Because Lockshin was running your New England [NCAHUAC] regional office. What do you know about the connection between Michaelson, Drinan, and Lockshin?

WILKINSON: I think by this time Lockshin may have left our committee and was working on the peace--I think he left in the late-sixties, I can't remember--and was working for peace. Then he became a communist and went to work for the Communist Party in Cleveland.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so maybe--

WILKINSON: So he was not involved.

TRELEVEN: So who was Lockshin's successor?

WILKINSON: A series of people. Peter [H.] Irons, who is today a professor of history at the San Diego State University, and at that time had his degree in history. He got his degree in history at a university in Boston and then was working on his law degree. He was one of these completely over-educated guys, a Ph.D. in history and a law degree from Harvard. Peter took over. In between their time, the O'Connor children had grown up

and Steve [Stephen] O'Connor and his wife, Lucy, became sort of the treasurer of the New England Committee to Abolish HUAC. They ran the sustainer program there.

TRELEVEN: Okay, I--

WILKINSON: I'm not sure about one at the time of Lockshin's--

TRELEVEN: I think it appears to be, maybe, as early as '67.

WILKINSON: When he left?

TRELEVEN: Let me restate the question, then. Had NCARL, through its New England office or through you-- Had you had-- What kind of communications had you had with Michaelson and Drinan leading up to this? How did Drinan get sensitized or Michaelson get sensitized to all this stuff?

WILKINSON: Well, I did not meet Michaelson or Drinan until a few years after the word of what Lockshin had done with the Council of Catholic Bishops in the dialogue between Edwin Willis and the monsignor who headed up the Council of Catholic Bishops. The dialogue that Vern Countryman ghost-wrote for the Council of Catholic Bishops where Lockshin was the intermediary and these things were reprinted not in the archdiocesan paper in Boston, but in Chicago. That had come early. We had published that and distributed it

widely among Catholics. Dorothy [N.] Marshall toured the country speaking just to Catholic audiences on this. She was a former head of the Catholic Women's Club here in L.A.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: But I don't remember meeting Drinan up to that point. Now, I had spoken at Boston College law school, or else I began speaking there, but I know that one of the first times I came there--it was the first time I really met Drinan--we had a major meeting at Boston college of law and the subject was "Abolish HUAC from the Inside," Robert F. Drinan; "From the Outside," Frank Wilkinson. We teamed up as a speaking team to work on this thing. It was very popular and very, very fun because literally we had a member of Congress on HUAC out in the field organizing to get rid of the committee.

TRELEVEN: Okay, okay. Thank you. Let's see. You're invited to look for your own file in--

WILKINSON: Well, Drinan and Michaelson thought it would be great sport to have me do it. Well, that means you were building up, hoping for something. It did not take place. I don't know what happened to it. They thought, on their own judgment, it would be counterproductive that Ichord might, I presume-- They

never told me this, but I can imagine. You know, there's a lot of Cold War language very actively going on, and for Drinan to invite me in to see this mechanism and to see my own file would have put Ichord in the position of trying to get him off the committee because here's a member of the committee itself working closely with notorious communists and breaking down the national security of our country by allowing communists to see the inner workings of its Committee on UnAmerican Activities. That would be what I would think they were afraid of.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Nothing like that was said to me.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so by the time Drinan on the House floor brings all this up, he embarrasses Ichord, that in turn leads up to the abolishment of the committee?

WILKINSON: That contributed mightily to it. The exact date we'd have to find.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: There was a series of running battles like that, where Drinan at hearings would always play the devil's advocate--and very forcibly so. So, I'm suggesting that while we started out with a congressional district committee, we got six, eight, twelve, twenty, sixty-four congresspeople on our side.

Rather than just continue this geometrically, the Stamler, Hall, Cohen hearing in Chicago made one great impact. The fact of Culver, Stokes, and Drinan being on the [unAmerican] committee, speaking out against the committee, was another thing and all contributing to the thing.

Then one thing I did leave out entirely here: I think one of the last [groups of] unfriendly witnesses to be called before the committee were the yippies.

TRELEVEN: Yippies, right. Abbie Hoffman and--

WILKINSON: Jerry Rubin.

TRELEVEN: --Jerry Rubin.

WILKINSON: Jerry Rubin primarily. I don't remember whether Abbie was actually there. We were playing this thing always very formally. In '62, the Women Strike for Peace [members] all wear white dresses and present the witnesses with a dozen American Beauty roses when they got off the stand, and have games like having the younger women open babies' diapers when the hearing began. We were playing tricks and doing frontal attacks, but all within the system, within the--

TRELEVEN: Decorum?

WILKINSON: --decorum of the Congress.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: When Jerry Rubin was called up, he came

before the committee, he stripped nude--chest nude--he painted his body with all kinds of wild colors.

TRELEVEN: Psychedelic colors?

WILKINSON: Psychedelic colors. He put a double bandolier of fake bullets across his chest and carried a toy submachine gun to go before the committee to just drill them. [laughter] Yeah. I think it's very important to note that the abolition of the committee was helped greatly along by this total satire, as compared with our formal, legal, proper decorum-type of thing that our committee was running.

Arthur Kinoy's appearance before the committee where he was forcibly choked and removed. In the book that Arthur Kinoy has written [Rights on Trial: The Odyssey of a People's Lawyer], there's a picture of him with marshals around his neck choking him, this diminutive little five-foot tall, thin man being choked, carried out of the committee hearing. Those types of confrontations were very important.

I'm painting a picture here that you have challenges, like Carl Braden's and my own, and fifty-six others who made legal challenges.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: We were setting up congressional district committees--

TRELEVEN: Grassroots organizing.

WILKINSON: Committee of a Hundred, Committee of Five Hundred. We have worked with Congress at last naming a liberal to be the watchdog on the committee to keep it under wraps to a degree. Then you have the use of the Stamler case to build up a tremendous popular campaign. I mean, my brother and sister, medical doctors, contributed to Paul Dudley White on a letter for the Stamler, Hall thing. They never gave me any money, but they contributed to-- They'd call me up and say, "Do you know a Dr. Stamler in Chicago? He's been called before that committee you're fighting." You know, that's the way it came about.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: But then you must put into that picture the role of street theater, satire, the yippies, the role they played in it. The day that they held the hearing, in a park in Washington, D.C. they had a pig. They released a painted pig.

TRELEVEN: Oh, god, yes. I sort of remember that.

WILKINSON: The pig was called HUAC, or something like that [which] was painted on it. I don't know what it was. This brought humor, laughter, and among younger people, particularly, where I always got serious audiences and others of us were speaking before serious

audiences, I think that the joke, the satire, the street theater was much more appreciated, I'm sure, than the more serious talks that we were making.

Then I want to bring in one historical fact here that's really interesting. When Jerry Rubin was called before the committee, for some reason or other he was in Berkeley at the time, and the student group up there working to abolish HUAC--

Oh, that's another thing I just left out. The 1961 student HUAC hearings.

TRELEVEN: No, we--

WILKINSON: Nineteen sixty, 1960, the washing down the stairs.

TRELEVEN: No, we talked--

WILKINSON: What?

TRELEVEN: We did a lot of talking about--

WILKINSON: I know, but I'm not talking about that. I'm just telling you that's another factor that led to the--

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: I'm trying to show you all the different things, not to say we did it or this did it, but it was a combination.

TRELEVEN: Right. The relationships--

WILKINSON: Anyway, somebody up there-- This would be

whenever Jerry Rubin was called up. A meeting was held to support Jerry Rubin. It was held in Wheeler Auditorium, the same place where I had spoken in '61 on my way to prison. I was invited to speak along with Jerry Rubin. It was a small audience of a hundred, but I got up and made a serious report on what our campaign is, where we are, what's going on, and the constitutional reasons why the committee must be abolished, and what your choices are when you're called before the committee.

Then Jerry Rubin was called to speak. He began by saying, "You know, I respect people like Frank Wilkinson and Carl Braden, but that's not the way we're doing it now. That's their generation. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. When I am called before that committee, when I go up there before the committee, if they ask me if I'm a yippie, I'm not going to use any amendment. I'm going to say, 'Of course, I'm a yippie.'" And the audience applauded. You know, it's like all these people going along here with "I claim the First, Fifth, Sixth Amendments." They loved the direct confrontation. "Of course, I'm going to tell them; I'm going to tell them I'm proud to be a yippie." He implied that if communists had done the same thing in the fifties and sixties, the committee wouldn't have

had the strength it had. (I don't know whether he said that. I presume that was the implication.)

I was then called upon to comment on that, and I confronted Jerry this way. I said, "You're before the committee, you're under oath, and you're asked 'Are you a yippie?' and you say, 'Yes, I'm proud to be.' The next question to you, Jerry, will be, 'Thank you very much for answering. We like people like you. You're a good, red-blooded American. Now, Mr. Rubin, will you please tell us all the other members of the yippies that you know of, so we can have the full record of everyone?' And Jerry says, 'Of course. I'll give you the names of them.'" Well, that audience, a hush fell over it because I had made the point of what happened here if your choices are, if you say you are not a communist, they'll produce witnesses who say you are. If you say you are a communist, they'll thank you and say, "Now who else do you know?" and you go to jail for contempt because you've waived your rights. I'd talked waiving your rights in my formal talk. I said, "Jerry, you have waived your rights." I didn't have to say it to him. He said he would be glad to. It was the fact that he was willing to name names. He'd carried his caricature too far and it fell dead in that meeting. Jerry was made to appear to be a little bit of a fool

who was quite willing to sacrifice-- He didn't appreciate the use of constitutional protections to protect not only oneself but to protect one from becoming an informer against other people. I just wanted to mention that to you.

But I think the broad stroke I'm taking here is that the yippies, the Arthur Kinoy's, made a major contribution to the whole demise of the committee.

TRELEVEN: How would you assess the contribution, if any, of the relationship between the committee and the anti-Vietnam War movement?

WILKINSON: Well, this change from public hearings in '65 relates directly to the way they approach the war movement. In '62, they called up Women Strike for Peace and happened to hold hearings in Washington, but the fact they had it in Washington didn't mean they were not getting people around the country. In '62, they also went after students in Los Angeles. We demonstrated: thousands of people around the federal building downtown when they went after students in April of '62, and yet they held them in Washington.

All right. After '65, the committee developed using informants sometimes by name, sometimes by just not giving names, of the people who were active in SDS, which related to the more radical student movement.

They did the same thing to the Black Panther Party.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, SWP [Socialist Workers Party].

WILKINSON: And what?

TRELEVEN: Socialist Workers Party.

WILKINSON: No, not then.

TRELEVEN: Black Panthers?

WILKINSON: No, no. I'm talking now about the peace--
SDS--

TRELEVEN: Anti-war.

WILKINSON: Anti-war and Black Panthers who were whatever they were on the war question. I'm not sure how active they were. Theirs was more domestic protest on racism. But they developed mug shots and published books, reports, showing the picture and the name of every member of the SDS--hundreds of pictures--and put them out characterizing them as dangerous unAmerican, subversive types. That was a very damaging kind of document. It wasn't quite funny to have your picture in there. And they were not friendly mug shots. They were mug shots that they grabbed any number of places. If you'd ever been arrested as an SDS member for a protest, they'd take a picture of you with your arresting record across your chest so you look like a criminal, you know, being arraigned, indicted.

This leads us up to what some of us were doing and

the Chicago [Democratic Party] Convention where--

TRELEVEN: In '68.

WILKINSON: --in '68, where SDS, the Chicago Seven were arrested, where there was real confrontation where the police brutally beat up hundreds of demonstrators. The Democratic convention was turned into a shambles.

That's after [Lyndon B.] Johnson was forced to resign and [Hubert H.] Humphrey was running--and [Richard M.] Nixon won the [presidential] election.

Now, at that time there was a move against electoral politics among many, many people in the Left.

TRELEVEN: That's right, "tweedledee-tweedledum."

WILKINSON: And our Committee to Abolish HUAC and our congressional district organizing committee was at odds with the tactics used by the youthful militant people in the peace movement. *[We were going to see convention delegations to support our petition to repeal the HUAC-Humphrey 1950 "concentration camp" act that HUAC was then calling for President Johnson to use against the ghetto uprisings.]

TRELEVEN: Okay, because you felt it was important to elect good people to Congress?

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

WILKINSON: Right, and they were in effect--

TRELEVEN: They didn't think it made any difference.

WILKINSON: There was a complete put-down of electoral politics. That's what they called it. Electoral politics was a bad word for them.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: "We don't do that anymore. We'll take over the streets." There's some language you can find from Tom Hayden and other people about people taking over the streets of this country. "We'll take over like we started to do in Chicago."

TRELEVEN: Right. Through a mechanism called participatory democracy, right?

WILKINSON: Right. So our job, now this is very important strategically and tactically and organizationally: We did not confront them that they were wrong and we were right on this thing. We participated. We attended. I was at the Rubin hearings. I spoke at the rallies for Jerry Rubin and the other people in Chicago. When the Chicago Seven case came up, I was the one that wrote their main piece of literature to defend them. The straight fact is that we used the same format to defend Tom Hayden and the other members of the Chicago Seven, Dave [David] Dellinger, Abbie Hoffman, and--

TRELEVEN: Tom Hayden. Are you talking about the Seven?

WILKINSON: Yeah.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, John Froines, who's now at UCLA, etc.

WILKINSON: Yes, right. At any rate, we had prepared this tremendous piece of literature in '68 on the concentration camp issue.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I think we're almost at the end of the tape and we'll pick it up with the piece of literature.

WILKINSON: All right.

TAPE NUMBER: XLVI, SIDE ONE

AUGUST 8, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, it's August 8 and we're back with Frank Wilkinson. Frank, as in past sessions sometimes we've sort of been paralleling the present with the historical past, and by present we mean keeping up with your activities during these taping sessions. Since the last time we were together I think you were in the South.

WILKINSON: That's right. I was in Arkansas.

TRELEVEN: I wonder if you could tell me about that.

WILKINSON: Arkansas is amazing. On the humorous side, at a banquet where I was the speaker they surprised me by giving me a plaque, an award, you know, very fancy engraved, fancy ribbons and whatnot, making me an Arkansas Traveler, and personally signed by Bill [William J.] Clinton. [laughter]

The trip to Arkansas was two weeks ago, and it was one more state in a series of invitations I've had. They've come indirectly from the bar associations of each state, but there are sub-organizations, and this one is called "Learning Law in Arkansas." I was brought down there through word of mouth to another, from Oklahoma or Nebraska. They picked me up. I hope

there'll be more. But each time I run out of good adjectives that are not hyperbolic because it's so exciting. Same thing as usual in terms of I'm brought in there to speak to teachers. Then, later on, these teachers bring me back to speak to their students. So it's a little start of a series, I presume, like it has in Oklahoma and other states. Smaller this time; there were only thirty teachers competitively selected from all over the state. None of the thirty teachers knew each other by sight or by name. They're just in there, it's a four-day conference for them. Unlike most of these I've attended, which are usually held in colleges or on college campuses where they get cheap housing for them, they set themselves up in the fanciest Holiday Inn in Little Rock. I mean really overly fancy, a huge atrium, with huge fountains and all those things you associate with a modern-day tourist-trapping, country-club-type of thing.

The thing that was unusual about this was their pre-planned structure. They had me speak at their banquet, which was another thing the night before, but then the morning that I really was on--the day I was on--began with an hour-and-a-half, two-hour talk by me to the whole group on the First Amendment as it applies to the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. As

usual, I deal with NCARL's [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation] and my own experience, what we've learned from the FBI to get them interested in how bad the FBI was under J. Edgar Hoover, and then bring them up-to-date with what the FBI is doing to you today in Arkansas. And the response is, at every one of these things, it's a response of wanting to believe me, but incredulous--I guess that's the word--that what I'm saying is really factual. Of course, I always have the facts with me or the documents there to back it up. They don't really come up and ask to read something, but it's that attitude. The questions almost always have a disrupting impact on the conference because the next thing scheduled they want to put off for another hour because they want to ask more questions.

Then we came back in the afternoon and this was a totally new experience. A professor at one of the universities in Arkansas took my trial in Georgia in 1958, mixed it up with the [United States] Supreme Court decision, and mixed that up with the pre-HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] hearing that I'd had in Los Angeles, and made it into kind of a docudrama. I don't know what you'd call it. It's a design for teachers to get students involved. So they write the thing out with seven to ten parts.

TRELEVEN: Ah, so it's kind of like role playing.

WILKINSON: Role playing.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Then this time the teachers, without knowledge, are given these documents. Their part is-- what do you call it?--illuminated or sort of marked [highlighted] to show them where they speak each time. And they do this thing. So I heard my own HUAC hearing played with their own sense of what was important, their own acting tendencies when they read something, to say it this way or that way. It was a full hour, and then another hour where the thirty people break into five different sections--and this is all presuming they're really a classroom of students--so you divide the students into five sections in which they are then asked to be the jury and to weigh: was the government right or was I right? That's the way it runs. In this particular case, it was based upon the record as they knew it from 1958, some of the lack of information that Life magazine intentionally made in their story, leaving out the role of the FBI, leaving out the role of Anita Bell Schneider, and other things like that. So I asked, could I have five minutes at the end of the role-acting thing to update them on a few things, and I did that. The thing that hit them the hardest was that

in their role playing they had Anita Bell Schneider come on and attack me. Her information is so, you know, convincing. "Do you know him to be a communist?" "Yes," and so on. Well, I then showed them, read them, the FBI document that we obtained thirty years after my year in prison, in which she's emotionally unstable and totally discredited. Then I read the Supreme Court decision which they had read in their play as convincing. I mean, they have the majority opinion read as though we've really got to protect national security and there are areas where the First Amendment must be limited in order to get information, with a little touch of the minority opinion by [William O.] Douglas and [Hugo L.] Black.

TRELEVEN: Well, you mean no teacher was assigned Black's dissent?

WILKINSON: Yes, but it was a little Black and a little Douglas. They didn't play it up. The professor who wrote this, I don't know, out of objectivity dealt more with [Lewis F.] Powell [Jr.]'s opinion against me.

So I get up and I tell them not just about Anita Bell Schneider, which they are just in total disbelief that a guy's going to jail, they've just had an exercise and they're ready to say is it right or wrong for him to go to jail, and they suddenly find that from

what they know, this witness--and they use that word, "competent witness," or whatever the word was--they clearly see a case where a person went to jail for false information. They really are stirred by that.

But then the questions come up, "Well, why didn't you say something about it?" Then I read to them from the statement that-- When you get your subpoena from HUAC, you get a little two-page rules of behavior before the committee. One, you may have a lawyer. However, your lawyer may not address the committee at any time. Second, you may not cross-examine such witnesses as we may bring before you against you. I read that to them and they, out of their historic belief in justice and cross-examination of accusers and so on, they then knew that Anita Bell Schneider had lied, but I was helpless to say she was lying.

Anyway, that was the most moving thing. It was supposed to run for four hours and it ran right up to the time when I went to catch the bus to the airport.

TRELEVEN: My gosh.

WILKINSON: They were still out at the door, fifteen of them, waiting, with last questions. I had Dick [Richard] Criley's book [The FBI v. The First Amendment] with me and we do this now. It's a good gimmick. I sign not as the author, but on a picture

with Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] and the others.

TRELEVEN: So you take these and--

WILKINSON: So I sign these for them and they really come up and get a second book and say, "Would you sign this to my daughter? Would you sign this to my friend? I know that he would be interested." The people who are doing this, you've got to look in their faces. These people come from rural Arkansas--a few in the main cities--but by and large they come from towns where there may be 300 in the whole school, including all the farm community, and it's K-12, kindergarten through twelfth grade.

TRELEVEN: Integrated, Frank?

WILKINSON: Yes, but not nearly as well as Oklahoma or Nebraska. There were four black women out of the thirty, but they self-segregated themselves. At the time I was there, they sat at a table. The sponsors had divided them up into four or five different groups, but they sat with each other, they ate with each other, they socialized with each other. As I often do, I sit with various people; I try to get around if there's chances to have a breakfast with one group and a lunch with another group, I do that. So I sat with them and there was a real coolness at first. Then, by the time I was leaving, they were really warming up. One person

said, "I've never heard a white man talk like you talk." And "I have a niece, a graduate of Loyola [University] Law School; I'd like her to know you. Will you please contact her?" That sort of stuff happened.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Let me ask: These teachers--let's say these four African Americans--do they have an historical sense of who people like C.T. Vivian are?

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: Not at all?

WILKINSON: I have a sense they don't.

TRELEVEN: And those African Americans who are really part of some of the same struggle in which you've been involved, but they have no sense of it?

WILKINSON: I've found out not from this case, but through the last twenty years, in the South--this is only in the South--black middle-class or educated, whatever you want to describe it, like a teacher is therefore more educated than some rank-and-file person know Dr. King's name, they are not sure of Rosa Parks, they never heard of John [R.] Lewis, they don't know C.T. Vivian.

TRELEVEN: My god.

WILKINSON: They have no knowledge of Malcolm [X]. They have no knowledge of Dr. [W. E. B.] DuBois.

They're more likely to know the name [George Washington] Carver.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Once I was speaking in Tennessee to an all-black college. It was at the time of a massacre of-- the shootings at Kent State [University], which was followed by the killings of students at Jackson State [University] in Mississippi.

TRELEVEN: Massacre sounds like the correct word to me.

WILKINSON: That's a bad word to use. It got into our genes when I've been reading too much Olympic [games] recalls of '72--

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: --or Yugoslavia. Anyhow, the shootings, the killing of students: I found out that they did know about Jackson. This was in Tennessee, but they did know a little bit about Jackson, but not much. They didn't know what caused it. They didn't know that the swimming pool had been drained in order to avoid being compelled to integrate a swimming pool as they did in Mississippi at that time. But they knew all about Kent State in detail. Then I asked them when they were really discussing, I said, "Now, how many of you are familiar with Orangeburg [South Carolina]?" Not one hand. "How many of you know where Orangeburg was?"

Nobody knew.

TRELEVEN: How about Greenville?

WILKINSON: Let me finish with Orangeburg.

TRELEVEN: Sorry.

WILKINSON: I then told them that Orangeburg was in South Carolina and I dealt with the fact that the member of HUAC, which I was talking about at that time, from Orangeburg county--one of the counties--was something like 70 percent black and only 1 percent of the black voters were registered. This all-black district sends a white member to Congress who then becomes a member of HUAC and then attacks the likes of Dr. King. I then described the Orangeburg-- It's called massacre. It's the Orangeburg some word, in which the state college in that town, black college--there's always secondary equipment, secondary type of teachers and whatnot. There was no recreation on the campus. The only place to recreate was a bowling alley, and the students came down and asked to bowl. Not integrated bowling, but to bowl. How integrated can you get at a bowling alley? You know, you've got one throw at a time. They were barred, and then they were protesting. Then they were ordered to leave and they stood chanting, they opened fire on them, and the students were shot. Every one of them was shot in the

back or even in the bottom of their feet as they were running up a hill to get away from the gunfire. I told them this. They had never heard about it; it's half the distance from Jackson and just a couple-hundred miles away from Tennessee.

One more thing comes back on Arkansas as I'm talking about this. The role playing, the reading of lines: There were two black women who were given roles to play. They for the first time each have a copy and are reading. Three or four words, in each case, they could not pronounce. The white teachers could pronounce them. (I can't remember the words.) It was some really gross mispronunciation that just missed it entirely. They didn't know the words. The differential in education even at the teacher level was there.

Now just look how I get going here where you ask me about what happened last week and I come back with a whole--

TRELEVEN: Oh, this is interesting.

WILKINSON: This is one of the things why, at my age, it's still so exciting because you can see the problem and you see the possibilities and you see how black teachers can overcome their prejudice against white people like me. They don't completely overcome it, but

even in my talking, I almost always find some occasion to say that I'm seventy-eight and I know that I can never overcome my own racism or my own sexism. I don't think they've ever heard that coming out of a white face. I say, "Anyone with my male, white privileges in Beverly Hills can never overcome that. If you have that for the first twenty-five years, it's fixed in you. Intellectually you can be correct. Intellectually you can drop certain words and use certain words, but in your guts you've still got it." And to them, they just never heard anyone admit that. So many whites, I find, were like I was in the early days when I was trying to overcome this. They will say, "I don't have any prejudice anymore."

Now, one final thing on Arkansas. You know, Oklahoma and Nebraska are dry states, which I've mentioned before. You finish one of these intensive days and you'd like a beer or anything to drink and you can't get anything. There's no bars, no nothing. In Arkansas, you drink. There's a bar in the atrium of the hotel, so you sit around and have a drink. The person who brought me down there, the leader of "Learning Law in Arkansas"--a very well-educated, very strong teacher probably forty-years old but very much a leader, going up the thing--they got into a discussion.

(There were no blacks at our table.) The question is, "You know, it's interesting what you've been saying about black and white relations. How do you account for the fact that you found more segregation and discrimination in Lewisburg Penitentiary in the North, where you have a high-school education as compared with a third-grade education in South Carolina where you have black and whites really living together as moonshiner bootleggers. There's only one enemy, it's not black or white; revenue agents come in all colors." And that was it, they were asking about that. Then I said something about my problem was struggling with my own racism. This teacher said, "Well, I think I agree with everything that you're going to say, but you know, I've got a sixteen-year old son, and from what we've been talking about here today I say, 'What would I do if my son brought home a black girlfriend?'" She looked knowingly at everybody at the table as though we would all understand, "Oh, yeah. That would be different." I said, "That'd be wonderful. You should be proud of the fact that if that happens, you've raised your kid to get rid of your own racism, and here's a kid coming back better than you are." She looked at me aghast when I said that. [laughter]

In other words, you get down to the nitty-gritty:

Would you let your daughter marry a black man--that is where you separate the-- What's the famous expression? Something about the wheat from--

TRELEVEN: The wheat from the chaff.

WILKINSON: --the chaff. You're from chaff-growing--

TRELEVEN: Farmer background.

WILKINSON: Farmer background.

TRELEVEN: One more question and then we'll leave Arkansas. In terms of the whites in particular, have they any sense of the names [Carl] Braden, Aubrey [W.] Williams, the Durrs [Clifford and Virginia], [James A.] Dombrowski? Do the whites have that sense of who those kinds of people were--and are?

WILKINSON: I have to speculate. My memory here is not just Arkansas but the other states. I've never heard anyone who knew who Aubrey Williams or Harry [L.] Hopkins were. If there's a lawyer-guest there as a co-speaker with me, like there was a [Oklahoma State] Supreme Court justice speaking when I spoke in Oklahoma last week, I guess it was, and I said, "This picture is James Dombrowski; you would know him from the Dombrowski v Pfister case." Even that guy--the Supreme Court judge--nods as I'm saying, and there's other people there, like in agreement, but I can tell by his face he'd never heard what Dombrowski v Pfister was,

which is the key ruling in the South that allowed organizations suffering from prejudice--civil liberties prejudice--no chance in the local or state high courts to go immediately to the [United States] Supreme Court to get an answer to their problems, to redress their grievance. That's what Dombrowski was. He went right to the Supreme Court, never went through the lower courts, because you never could win in Louisiana at that time. So the answer is no.

I look at their textbooks. You know, some of the things they're handing out; there is the West Publishing Company, which is a major publisher for law and other things.

TRELEVEN: Yes, sure.

WILKINSON: They have lots of wonderful new books on civil liberties, and I go through them while I'm there. At each place I pick them up, I'm always looking at the index. I look for the name [J. Edgar] Hoover. I look for the unAmerican activities committee. If there's court decisions I look for Braden and Wilkinson. Never, never. J. Edgar Hoover: I saw in Nebraska a footnote saying, "The director of the FBI, appointed 1924."

TRELEVEN: Okay. Why don't we go back to the sixties? I have a couple of questions. One had to do with

NCARL's and your position on the factionalism that developed within the New Left. What I'm trying to get here is a sense of how you dealt with that because you're an organization and you never asked anybody what organization they belonged to. You've explained your reasons in the past, but what about SDS [Students for a Democratic Society], PL [Progressive Labor Party], SWP [Socialist Workers Party], and so on? Were you drawn into that kind of discussion, that kind of argument amongst these New Left groups?

WILKINSON: Let me try to do some recall there. I think when I was here last I was dealing with the difference between the youth movement at the time of the Democratic [Party] convention in Chicago [of 1968], where they're against electoral politics.

TRELEVEN: Correct.

WILKINSON: That was the issue.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: We were coming in with legislation that if passed that would abolish the unAmerican activities committee and repeal the Richard [M.] Nixon-Hubert [H.] Humphrey "concentration camp" act of 1950. That is electoral politics.

At that time there was real suspicion on the part of people under thirty in regard to solving problems

through political action in Congress. It varied a great deal. Some people would be very outspoken about very militant actions in the streets. Others would just sort of look skeptical. Let me summarize it: Instead of challenging the New Left and arguing with them that you're wrong and we're right, we tried to find ways to stay with them, not be excluded. I think there was the danger of being excluded that bothered me the most. I'll never forget that at the time of the [1968] Democratic [Party] convention in Chicago, where such awful police rioting occurred outside the Democratic convention, really rough stuff where many, many people were hurt badly at Grant Park.

What were Dick Criley and I doing there? We had contacts with these younger people. We'd go to them. We knew where they were and we'd go to the park. We'd see them and communicate. Even recognition is important. I mean, I had name recognition without [them] really knowing where I come from because I'd been to jail. This is '68. I'm only six years out of prison, so there's certain favorable things. In their minds, the fact that I went to jail means I'm really with them on street action and civil disobedience rather than doing something in Congress to get some relief.

But what were Dick and I doing? There were the uprisings in Detroit, Newark, and a few other places in '67 and '68, at which time the unAmerican activities committee came out with a press release--unusual for them--calling upon Lyndon [B.] Johnson to use the 1950 Title II of the Internal Security Act that provided for detention centers--concentration camps--to use that to round up the dissidents--we would say round up activists in the ghettos--and put them in concentration camps. HUAC said that.

Well, we had known about the Title II for a long time. As I mentioned, my last stay in prison, Allenwood, was a concentration camp outside of Philadelphia maintained from 1950 forward. But when we saw this, it was an immediate thing. We saw the need, along with our work to abolish HUAC, not just to take on the Internal Security Act--which is the [Patrick A.] McCarran Act, Title I--but to take out Title II. So we designed a piece of literature. It was a large sheet of paper, 17 x 30 [inches] folded down to a number-ten envelope. Across the front of it, it said: Would You Believe Concentration Camps In America? That was the only thing on it, those words, and then barbed wire across the page, done in two colors. If you can imagine blue and black so that the wire [really] looked

like it was a piece of wire. You almost could get a double vision, you know, an art work that brings things up to your eyes that look--

TRELEVEN: It had a dimension to it.

WILKINSON: Yeah, third dimension, right.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: We developed that, and in developing that we found out that the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] had taken a stand. We got a marvelous interview by Look magazine. You see, we're leading up to the point where Dr. King was killed in March or April of '68. Bobby [Robert F.] Kennedy had been killed-- Let me get my--

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I'm losing my--

WILKINSON: I'm losing my--

TRELEVEN: We can fill that in.

WILKINSON: At any rate, he was still campaigning for the presidency in California, so I don't remember when it was. Over here was Dr. Martin Luther King saying that "I see a time when this nation will round up and intern in concentration camps those of us who are fighting for social change, even as was done by Hitler Germany." A powerful statement! I never heard him make it. I saw it in Look magazine. So we put that in the literature. It was a very attractive-looking

folder, the best thing we ever did. The art work on it was done by a friend out here who volunteered, a very high-priced PR man who took my ideas and laid them out in good-looking literature.

Dick and I took 10,000 copies of that piece of literature, got the location of each state delegation in each hotel in Chicago, and made the rounds. We divided them up. You know, you had to go to fifty different delegations, find the leadership, ask for a few minutes to talk to them about this legislation--the need for legislation to repeal the law--and if not being able to do that, get the room numbers of each delegate in a hotel, go down the hallways looking for room numbers and slipping a piece of literature not in every door, but the door where you knew somebody was there from Idaho or whatever it was. We were doing that at the time when the police were, just before, beating down the people outside.

I'll never forget the difference. I mean, at the time I had second thoughts. I mean, what am I doing? I'm working on a piece of literature for Congress to act at a time when who knew what would happen after the whoever-the-candidate-for-president might be at that time, you know. Lyndon [B.] Johnson's so deeply carrying us through the Vietnam War at that time.

But the interesting thing [is] that that piece of literature was seen by the New Left. They overlooked the fact that we were calling for a political action. Our end was contact your congressperson--not person, we probably would have said representative, because that's a gimmick where those of us with gender sensitivity know what words not to use--representative, or whatnot. When that was over with and King was killed, at the memorial for King, they voted through the Fair Housing Act [1968]. I don't know whether you know these things that happened. So many members of the Congress went down to Georgia for the funeral of Dr. King, and while there they vowed that the long-bottled-up bill on fair housing would be passed. A very important victory out of King's death is that we got the Fair Housing Act.

But even as it was passed, [James] Strom Thurmond got up and said, "If we're going to do this, we ought to remind ourselves that there's rioting going on in the streets even as King's dead"--you know, Washington burned; all over the country people were, quote, "rioting;" it was an uprising over the death of Dr. King--"and, therefore, I move that we adopt an anti-riot act where anyone who crosses a state boundary to incite a riot shall be subject to five years and a \$10,000 fine." In order to get the fair housing

through, the Democrats accepted Strom Thurmond's anti-riot act.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, that's the kind of thing that would have been directed at [H.] Rap Brown.

WILKINSON: Rap Brown, all right. H. Rap Brown was the guy. There was Maryland, there were cases like that. Of course, it was--

But then the Chicago thing is over with and just the injury to people and the dislocation of the process was so obvious that then the government moved in to prosecute Tom Hayden, [David T.] Dellinger, a black guy who was bound in chains when--

TRELEVEN: Huey Newton.

WILKINSON: Huey Newton and other of the Chicago Seven.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: The trial came up before this unbelievable reactionary judge [Julius J. Hoffman], and I get a call from Tom Hayden.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I think you did talk about this.

WILKINSON: Did I? Okay. They need someone to explain what the anti-riot bill was all about. Would I do a piece of literature like the concentration camp literature? So using the same style, the same layout, I did a piece which SDS and all the people supporting the Chicago Seven used. It was a way that we found to

work together with them. (I'm still just recalling.)

I remember when-- I know I already mentioned the fact that when the yippies--Jerry Rubin and all, I mentioned that experience--but at the time when those people were called up before HUAC in Washington--at that time, no more hearings outside of Washington--Arthur Kinoy and Bill [William] Kuntsler, who were there handling their cases, were the accepted lawyers, were people's lawyers, not ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]-type lawyers.

TRELEVEN: Establishment lawyers.

WILKINSON: Yeah, right. They brought me in to the conferences where I sat in with the individual defendants before HUAC and spoke at a number of small rallies in Washington where they were getting out. I was brought in as a guy who went to jail on this thing and knew all about it. I was an acceptable over-fifty person. Everywhere that we could, we tried to relate. Finally, let me just point out, that where there were these confrontations-- Say we'd be making a talk and somebody would get up in the audience right at the time when you're ready to move something and would say, "When will people your age ever learn that this Congress, this government, will never do anything about these things? When will you learn what we know?"

TRELEVEN: Right, and then there'd be great applause.

WILKINSON: Right, right. And I'd get up and try to come back on the electoral thing. I know of at least three occasions where we were invited to come and defend ourselves. I remember one time at the University of Chicago where they wanted me to come and speak, and I dodged it. I told Dick, "I'm just not good at this thing. I wither under that thing." What I meant by wither is that I was emotionally divided. I had so much of my mind and in my heart with the street people as compared with my pure electoral-politics posture that I would say, "I wouldn't be any good. Dick, will you go?" If Dick were here, joining us on this tape, he would say, "My god, yes. He sent me into the lion's den time after time. He comes off smelling like a rose and sends me in to defend electoral politics to a bunch of radical youth."

TRELEVEN: That's kind of Dick's venue, too, right?

WILKINSON: Oh, Dick--

TRELEVEN: I can't see Dick not enjoying that.

WILKINSON: That's right. He complained, but I think he enjoyed it.

Now, that's the difference between us. That's also the difference between Dick and me and between Carl Braden and me, where Carl Braden was always able

to articulate the point of view of the youth on the streets and who could mobilize and deal with their language. I always was uncomfortable with Carl's posture there. Even when we were going around the country speaking before and after going to prison, Willard [E.] Uphaus and I would come off as sort of "effective," quote, unquote, spokespeople. Carl would come off like a bull in a china shop, getting up and shouting out at some heckler, "Are there any police in the room? Get that guy out of here!" You know, boom, bang, bang. Willard and I would try to say, "Now, I've heard your question, now just let me give you an answer and then you ask another question." That would be our approach. Carl would be, "Get them out!" He'd see police officers in the back of the room and say, "Don't you guys know what you're supposed to do? There's a troublemaker here. Get him out!" (Not those words, but that was the tone.) All right.

TRELEVEN: Well, this is your interview, not Dick's, but on the basis of your knowledge, was Dick able to build effective bridges with the Black Panthers in Chicago, and other groups that may be of mixed racial composition that we might characterize as being New Left?

WILKINSON: Dick was able to build coalitions during

the [Joseph R.] McCarthy years. So if you carry that up through the early-sixties, late-fifties, he was able to build coalitions that included, always, important black leadership in Cook County. But I'm thinking more that he was able to reach out to white middle-class people who, instead of being afraid of dealing with a communist or the Left, joined in. He's the one that brought in [Alexander] Meiklejohn-school educators, like [Robert J.] Havighurst of the Chicago Theological Seminary and several of the great theologians to be on his board, even at the time the FBI was sending false letters to the board saying, "Get rid of this man. He's a communist."

But on the black question: first of all, Dick and Florence lived in the ghetto, always, so instead of the more militant thing that you think of as the Fred Hamptons and the Black Panthers of Chicago, Dick and Florence were effective in dealing with black working-class people at a precinct level, fighting the [Richard J.] Daley machine. I think that some of those people--the black leadership--there that were fighting the Daley machine would probably be very critical of the Fred Hamptons and the Black Panther party because they were going too militant, or too something. But I think that the black leadership that I've come to know are

all the result of Dick's organizing.

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're out of tape.

TAPE NUMBER: XLVI, SIDE TWO

AUGUST 8, 1992

TRELEVEN: We're back on. One area we wanted to come back to, Frank--and you've mentioned the Internal Security Act of 1950--was the Japanese American association that you had in 1968 in terms of the effect on Japanese Americans of the emergency detention provision of the Internal Security Act. I'd like you to tell me about that.

WILKINSON: Well, in the context of what I was just saying regarding the SDS and Tom Hayden or Dave Dellinger as an example, asking us to write literature similar to ours on the concentration camps for their Save The Chicago Seven From Jail, that same piece of literature came into the hands of the Japanese-American Citizens League [JACL] here in Los Angeles. I had inquiries coming to me from a group that I had had no prior contact with in my life. These are young, thirty- and forty-year-old Nisei born in this country--their parents may have been born in Japan--and who were interned in 1942 when they were between five and seven years of age. That was a very exciting time because the JACL--I've often referred to it as a pottery lobby. It was trying to build-- It was valuable for Japanese

businesses, which were not many. We're not dealing with a Japanese influence in our country today. We're talking about a time where there was very little Japanese entrepreneurship other than small shops--mom and pop shops--or primarily in the landscaping industry of the wealthy people in the area. They were promoting trying to get laws passed that would stop the restrictions against Asian business.

TRELEVEN: These are restrictions that are still a carryover from the Internal Security Act?

WILKINSON: Well, going back to the turn of the century when the anti-Asian laws were passed forbidding Chinese, Japanese, and others from owning property in California at the time they were brought over to build the railroads.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: There were powers that wanted to get them back to where they came from and prevent them--

TRELEVEN: Then, in the twenties, the restrictive immigration laws.

WILKINSON: Right. Absolutely. Sharply, so people could not bring-- Men over here that had come over to work building a railroad not able to bring their wives over to join them.

All right. At any rate, I didn't meet any of the

older-- I don't remember meeting one older Japanese American other than the members of the House and Senate, Senator [Daniel K.] Inouye, and Patsy [T.] Mink, and Spark [M.] Matsunaga, those people. The people I met were like Edison Uno, who was a leading JACL person in the Bay Area, and very much all over the country. Remarkable family, the Uno family. Uno's a very common name. You'll find Unos everywhere there's Japanese living. I knew a very important lawyer in Salt Lake City whose name was Uno out of the internment camps in Utah or Arizona and remained in the area after they were released in '45.

Edison Uno was one. Here in Los Angeles there were several of them, but Robert Suzuki was a person I met. There were a number of Japanese Americans in Pasadena. They had a JACL group. I found myself coming to speak before the Japanese-American Citizens League clubs.

TRELEVEN: You've done this literature, they had been sent copies of it, they became aware that you had something important to say about the Internal Security Act vis-a-vis Japanese Americans?

WILKINSON: Right, right.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: Of course, the thing that I literally

heard--verbally, not just paraphrasing--would be that, speaking as Japanese Americans, "We must not allow what happened to us to be visited upon our black"--or Negro, whatever word they would use--"brothers and sisters." It was a real sense of avoiding. In other words, they were not afraid that the concentration camp would come back to them again. We're now in 1968 and that is twenty-five years after their experience.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. I'm going to have to pause for a minute. [tape recorder off] Okay, back on. Go ahead.

WILKINSON: Well, they used that expression. They did not feel this was a threat to them. In fact, most of them now were overcoming a lot of their early prejudice, getting good educations, and going on up the ladder. Suzuki, at that time, was at the Jet Propulsion Lab[oratory] in Pasadena. He was at Caltech [California Institute of Technology]. Others were all on the rise economically, education-wise, and socially in the community. But they took this thing on as though it was the first political action they'd thought of, somehow or other, and they were able to convince the older Issei leadership of the Japanese-American Citizens League that the Japanese-American Citizens League should take the lead on this thing and get it repealed. There was actually a transfer of leadership

out of this issue, where the "Young Turks" became the leadership, elected leadership. They'd bring young people to meetings, and they'd have the votes and elect themselves into leadership. Then from this, they really were diligent; they were serious. If you want to pass a bill, you've got to pass it. You've got to go and you've got to get 435 members of Congress to say they'll endorse the number of that bill--whatever the number was--and you've [also] got to get 100 members of the Senate to do this thing. I said 100 members; I wonder how many there were in '68. Was Hawaii in statehood at that time or not? I can't remember.

TRELEVEN: Don't worry about it.

WILKINSON: Our literature was used and my contact with them [is that] I frequently attended meetings with young Japanese. A totally new experience, a whole social culture. Socializing and parties, and I was invited socially. I came to meet these people and they were so serious politically. Some of us had been fighting legislative battles in Congress, you know, at that time in my case for fifteen years; to them it was a brand-new issue and they really brought pressure to bear on the nominal Japanese American leadership in the Senate and in the House. They went out. We would have lists of senators and representatives we had to get.

We'd all work on it. They would work on it. We found Japanese Americans in every state that would do something for the first time on that thing.

The way that bill was finally enacted, by the way: We began just before the Democratic convention in '68; we won that battle in November of 1971. The way it was won, taking the Senate as the most classic example, we kept getting the members of Congress to publicly cosponsor the bill. It was probably Matsunaga or Patsy Mink, whatever it was, bill for cosponsors. We got to the point where we had ninety members of the Senate who'd sponsor this thing. In other words, all but-- Why we hadn't gotten those last few, I don't know why. But it wasn't a matter of the liberal/conservative lines falling down because there was a sense of responsibility to listen to the Japanese Americans. I mean, guys like Spark Matsunaga or Senator Inouye are in the Congress with missing arms or missing legs from the tremendous valor they displayed in the armed forces of the United States in Italy, for example, where the Japanese American regiment had the highest number of fatalities of any regiment. These people were recruited from among Japanese Americans in Hawaii who were never interned.

The same work went on in the House. I'll never

forget when the final vote was taken in the House. It wasn't a matter of would it be passed, but when it would be and how would it be done? In the House it came up for a vote and it passed. Then a representative from Illinois [Thomas F. Railsback]--for the record, I could find that name; it's a conservative Republican from Illinois--stood on the floor and said, "This is all very good. We've undone what the Congress did in nineteen-hundred and fifty. What about what [Franklin D.] Roosevelt"--and this is a Republican speaking--"did?" In other words, your Democratic President Roosevelt did without a law, by executive order in 1942, and then he amended it. He said, "I move to amend that no future president may intern, violating the rights of an individual, unless there is existing legislation that is being enforced." In other words, Roosevelt did this against a race without legislation. It was just a war-time measure that Roosevelt did. So the words were, in effect, no president could do that unless it was an enforcement of an existing law. That would make it different, somehow, to avoid what happened in '42, and he moved this and it passed. It was one of these really dramatic moments in racial and civil liberties history where we undid the worst law to come out of the

McCarthy years.

You've got to remember that Title II was passed five years after this nation learned about Buchenwald and the concentration camps in Europe under [Adolf] Hitler. We undid that and then we undid what Roosevelt did in '42. It was a real, real important victory, not a close vote or anything. In fact, the whole thing was accomplished between March of '68 and November of '71. It was that quick. *[Senator Humphrey, the primary author of the 1950 Title II law, and President Nixon, the HUAC originator of Title I, voted to repeal and sign the repeal legislation, respectively.]

But throughout all this thing, the National Committee to Abolish HUAC [NCAHUAC]--[its name] not even changed yet to the National Committee to Abolish the House Internal Security Committee when it changed its name to HISC [House Committee on Internal Security], HUAC/HISC; we initiated it--the Japanese Americans always stayed with us. They never disavowed our thing. It was a strange coalition of a rather small, very small, group working to abolish HUAC--you have to understand that HUAC was not abolished for four

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

more years yet; that didn't come till '75--and in '71, we got rid of HUAC's law as far as Title II, and by '72 and '73, we finally got rid of Title I as well. Those are some of the things that we stayed on to, which goes back to some of my earlier immediate post-prison divisions within our organization, Dorothy [N.] Marshall and others wanting to only abolish HUAC, and I was arguing we have to abolish HUAC's law, we have to abolish the repeal of the McCarran Act, the Internal Security Act. But when we said that, we were talking about the Internal Security Act as more of a political attack on the Left than the Title II, which was not directed to a group but then fatally directed at the black rebellions of the mid-sixties.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I'll assume, I guess, that the Japanese Americans with whom you dealt--these "Young Turks"--to them this was strictly a First Amendment, Constitutional issue. That's the assumption I'm making. On the other hand, were these also politically savvy people, some of them leftists, for instance?

WILKINSON: First of all, it was not a First Amendment issue in their minds, or even in our minds.

TRELEVEN: Oh, really? In the sense that this is--

WILKINSON: The Committee to Abolish HUAC was a First Amendment issue because the unAmerican activities

committee violated the First Amendment. But the law [that was enacted involved] the denial of due process, a denial of Fourth Amendment rights, denial of everything. I mean, the definition of the law allowed the president, in times of an emergency acting through the FBI, to round up and intern all persons who it is believed might reasonably do-- A lot of real vague, overbreadth.

TRELEVEN: Let me restate that. This is a Bill of Rights issue.

WILKINSON: Yes, definitely.

TRELEVEN: It's a Bill of Rights issue. Were any of these people ideologically on the Left, without trying to define right now what Left is? But do you see what I'm trying to get at?

WILKINSON: Not one.

TRELEVEN: None? Not at all?

WILKINSON: Not one. I don't remember any Left contact within the Japanese-- When I went to these meetings I was in a totally new world. Where my associations would have been with Left-liberal--political liberal--people, in the Japanese-American community it was-- socially and otherwise--upper, upper-middle class, what you'd think of today as a yuppie [young upwardly mobile] group, all climbing.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Did any of these Japanese Americans become interested, involved, supportive of the larger issues related to NCARL, related to ACLU as a result of your Congressional victory in '71?

WILKINSON: Not to my knowledge.

TRELEVEN: Really?

WILKINSON: We tried to hang onto that association. We tried to get JACL people on the board of our Committee to Abolish HUAC. We tried to hold onto it. We certainly put a lot of these new people on to our mailing list. I did. I tried every way we could to get them involved. In no way were we successful. We finally got the executive director of the national JACL in Washington, D.C., to attend our meetings occasionally.

TRELEVEN: The national meetings in--?

WILKINSON: In Washington, of the Committee to Abolish HUAC.

TRELEVEN: All right.

WILKINSON: But it was just, at the most, a token presence. No involvement. I can't be specific, but there was some concern among the JACL when I would come to speak before them about what I might say about abolishing HUAC. They thought that might be a divisive issue. Stay on Title II.

I ran into something else that was very, very interesting. At that time, the move to impeach Earl Warren was a growing factor. Because Warren, Black, Douglas, and [William J.] Brennan [Jr.] had been on the right side in terms of the contempt citations against the unAmerican activities committee, I often referred to the need for the leadership of Earl Warren on getting rid of some of the laws that were passed. After all, in the fifties where the court came down against the Smith Act, against any number of speech crimes, and Warren's role in that; we thought of it that way. In San Francisco once, I praised Supreme Court Justice Warren at a good-sized Japanese American meeting, like a couple hundred, and from the floor somebody got up and said, "You apparently are not familiar with the Earl Warren that we know," and then described some of the very, very bad things that Warren had done when he was a prosecutor in Alameda--or Oakland County--up there before he ran for governor, before he was attorney general or whatever he became. Apparently, Earl Warren's record in the Japanese community is very, very bad. Not only like so many people of all kinds did so little to stop the internment, you know, even divisions within ACLU on the question--

Alexander Meiklejohn, my mentor: Recently, I've read material showing that he had the wrong side of the internment of the Japanese Americans in 1942. Very shocking bits of new information are reaching me now, thirty years after my tremendous belief in Alexander Meiklejohn and others like him.

But Earl Warren was a name that was just a bad name. He made a speech--or he did something--about the internment that killed his name forever among the Nisei.

I was answering a question about--

TRELEVEN: The sustainability of Japanese-American membership--

WILKINSON: I stayed in touch definitely with Edison Uno. The family in San Francisco and L.A. inherited a defective heart. Edison and his sister and a brother all died in their late thirties. It was one of these unbelievable things, the most effective leader dying of a heart attack before he was forty. So I lost those.

The great, great exception was Robert Suzuki, and that initially was on my initiative. When he left Pasadena with Agnes, his wife, to go back to U Mass, Amherst [University of Massachusetts] to become a teacher in education-- When I came to U Mass, Amherst, hearing that he was there, I established contact so we

saw each other, had a meal together, talked together. Then, when he came west to become academic leader of Cal State University at Northridge [California State University, Northridge]--he became vice-president--it was his initiative that was picked up when I was invited by the library--

TRELEVEN: Oh, I see.

WILKINSON: --on the celebration of the writing of the Constitution, or something. It wasn't '89; it was 1987.

TRELEVEN: I was going to say because I think I went there in--

WILKINSON: Anyway, I have it on the wall. They have a wonderful library building at Cal State Northridge, and the librarian there got an old-fashioned screw-down printing press from the eighteenth century where you put your wood blocks down, then you put paper on it, then you grind the press down, tighten it, and then unscrew it. You get your press by a wooden vise that presses the paper one by one. He brought that into the library and had original copies of the Bill of Rights--maybe the First Amendment only--there. I was brought out there to be the speaker at the reception on this, on the celebration of the First Amendment. Exactly who invited me I'm not quite sure, some faculty person and

the librarian. But I remember arriving out there not to make a speech, but to say a few words or something about the First Amendment. I think I probably was the only one that any of them knew who'd gone to jail on the First Amendment. That's why they probably brought me in. This is after the McCarthy fears are diminished, you know; this is within the last eight, ten years.

I got there and was told, "If you don't mind, the vice-president of the university has come and he would like to be the one to introduce you." At that time I said, "Well, who is that?"

"Robert Suzuki. He says he knows you." I said, "Oh, yes, I know him." I hadn't seen Bob from Massachusetts till he was out here now as vice-president. So he got up and made this very stirring introduction. I think it's probably the first time that he'd ever talked to a faculty. This is primarily a faculty assembly, a very fancy affair, standing up, no chairs. It was very stirring, I think probably the first time that he reminded people, as the vice-president of the university, that he was Japanese. Not that everybody didn't know it, but he was reminding them of it and what that meant to him. "And the man I'm introducing here today was one who I worked with,

who got me involved in the repeal of the concentration camps in our country." It was a very moving thing.

After that, I was invited back to talk to a student government-sponsored meeting where students were involved. Again when I got there, "Bob Suzuki has asked us to wait until he can come. He wants to introduce you to the students."

Then when he moves out to Cal Poly [California Polytechnic University, Pomona] in Pomona as the president, our friendships continued: Breakfast out there with him soon after he arrived, invited to his inauguration; Donna [Childers Wilkinson] and I were invited. Then how interesting it is that the Southern California Library for [Social Studies and] Research holding their own fiftieth commemoration of the internment of Japanese Americans because one of the spokespeople is Bob Suzuki, who is coming to speak at the request of Donna Wilkinson, who is on the board of the library and has come to know him through my own association.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I've heard of her.

WILKINSON: Huh? You've heard? [laughter]

TRELEVEN: I've heard of her. [laughter]

WILKINSON: You're familiar. You've heard of the library, I'm sure.

TRELEVEN: I'd like also a little more background on how you got involved with the "no-knock" legislation.

WILKINSON: Okay, that--

TRELEVEN: Unless I'm shifting gears too much.

WILKINSON: No, no, that's fine. At the time when we won the battle to repeal Title II, the "concentration camp" act, the "no-knock" statute was beginning to be enforced. The "no-knock" statute had been passed by the [Richard M.] Nixon administration. Remember, Nixon came in in '68--

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: --and his attorney general was John Mitchell. He had this criminal code which he took from something that our former governor, Pat [Edmund G.] Brown [Sr.], had done under the Johnson administration to recodify the criminal law and turned it into what we refer to as Senate Bill 1, this 800-page monster that violated every aspect of the First Amendment and the Fourth, Fifth and Eighth amendments. Everything was involved in it.

At that time, a "no-knock" law was passed by the Congress to authorize police and federal narcotics agents, whoever is involved in enforcing the law against drugs, to get a search warrant allowing them to break into a suspected house without knocking, because

they claimed the doors were locked, and by the time they got in, the drugs had been destroyed or disposed of. Our committee took on that. It was just like it was a vacuum. No one else was handling it.

It was a rather easy battle because the enforcement of the law every week led to some new horrendous, sometimes humorous, violation of Fourth Amendment rights. In Washington, D.C., the chief of police developed a ramrod and a picture was taken of a four-officer thing, like a short telephone pole that four people could carry. You'd get up to the door of the house and without ringing doorbells you would smash through the door. And [laughter] the joke was--I think this was maybe a Herblock [Herbert L. Block] cartoon--but it was something that we all used, at the moment that ramrod hit the first door in certain communities in Washington, D.C., the word was that you could hear toilets flushing for six blocks around as everybody rushed to flush their illegal substances down their toilets, thinking it was their door being broken into.

TRELEVEN: It was that loud. [laughter]

WILKINSON: Then there was a case out in the midwest, or slightly below the midwest, where the agents came and broke into a motel room. A man and his wife were

in bed, and the man kept a gun with him, and he pulled the gun out and shot the hand off of one of the arresting officers who broke in. They got inside there--everybody--with the man and his wife in bed with guns on them, and he pulled a gun on them and already shot the fingers off one of the police officers, and then they found out that they had got the wrong place.

At any rate, we developed literature that did nothing but cite examples of wrong addresses where innocent people were-- It's a very popular thing so you need to be careful, because this law that will allow the police and federal narcotics agents are so sloppy in their pre-investigations, search warrant preparations, that they often get the wrong address. You may be living next door to somebody and you're going to get killed. Then we also had the argument that police officers are going to get killed for doing this thing. So that law was repealed in '71, maybe '72. I think '71; certainly before Watergate, which came in June of '72.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I think it was early '72.

WILKINSON: Yeah.

TRELEVEN: So--

WILKINSON: Sam [Samuel J.] Ervin [Jr.], the senator from North Carolina, one of the personalities that we

associate with the congressional hearings on Watergate, agreed to co-sponsor the legislation to repeal that. His integrity was so great that it was not any great battle. It was just a stupid law that was passed at almost the same time as the anti-riot act of '68. It was passed by Nixon; the Nixon people got it through. I can't remember who sponsored it. Some of the same people who sponsored it were people that also supported HUAC. We got rid of that quickly. That was one of the few examples where a repressive law was eliminated within two or three years of the time it was enacted. It took twenty-one years to repeal Title II, the concentration camp act.

TRELEVEN: So in the case of "no-knock" and getting that repealed, the basic strategy of NCARL is the same? You go at it at the congressional district level and you build--

WILKINSON: Well, let's deal with that now. The National Committee to Abolish HUAC was confronted in the late-sixties, when [Richard A.] Ichord from Columbia, Missouri, became the chair. They decided that the words unAmerican activities committee had become a burden. We'd made it so unpopular. So the Congress voted to change its name from "unAmerican Activities" to the House Committee on Internal

Security, H-C-I-S. It's the same problem there with the House Committee on UnAmerican--HCUA--you have to say "huck-isk." So we changed the acronym to read HUAC and HISC. When Ichord changed his name, the Committee to Abolish HUAC changed its name to the National Committee to Abolish HUAC/HISC. Within two years after that, when we were getting closer and closer to abolishing HUAC--not yet there--when we took on the Title II, then the anti-riot act, we were taking on repressive legislation--at that point the National Committee to Abolish HUAC/HISC was changed to the National Committee Against Repressive Legislation, with a dual goal in its logo: to abolish inquisitorial committees of Congress and to repeal repressive legislation. We hold on to that now. Not the best of names, but you get identified with a name and we rarely deal now with repressive legislation. We're trying to get positive legislation in to end covert operations by the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] or stop political spying by the FBI. But it's a name. It stays with us.

TRELEVEN: Back to the question, regardless of name, of the basic strategy of working at the grassroots level in terms of winning the favor of congressmen on a district-by-district level: That strategy stays basically the same? Or once you establish the

Washington office, is there more done in Washington through a kind of typical lobbying operation?

WILKINSON: Definitely. In fact, the importance of our Washington, D.C., office has grown. Aubrey Williams would not allow us to have a Washington, D.C., office at first, until we'd set up these fifty congressional districts. Then Donna Allen stepped in to keep things coordinated while I was in prison. Everything was done on a congressional-district basis. That's the only way we ever abolished HUAC, to build these committees that way.

When you get into the repeal of Title II--the detention centers act--and the political action we did against Title I--the Nixon registration act--those things moved too rapidly to really establish congressional district committees. Congressional district committees that we'd used to abolish HUAC were still there and we were using them on these peripheral issues. But the Internal Security Act moved very rapidly once we got the congressional leadership of the Japanese Americans in charge of the issue. They did their own congressional districts, or state-by-state senatorial support. When you get a letter from Senator Inouye, and a couple of others, "My fellow Japanese--" asking a senator from Oregon to cosponsor this bill, it

was done. In fact, it went very rapidly. It took us two years, but that's fast in terms of congressional action.

And on the--

TRELEVEN: "No-knock?"

WILKINSON: --"no-knock," other than using our existing congressional district committees, we didn't form new ones on that. See, we developed organizationally-- Well, we had separate congressional district committees in California, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, New York, Massachusetts, etc, and we held on to those people. Those people finally went from being a congressional district to being a regional office of NCARL. We had a Southern Regional Office headed up by Mike [Michael K.] Honey and Martha Allen. We had a New England congressional district [Regional] Committee working out of Boston. We had a Northern California office. We had a Northwest office out of Seattle.

TRELEVEN: Chicago.

WILKINSON: Chicago, of course. It was seven states. So we sort of took the leadership from those groups, [which] became regional offices. When we were not able to hold those together, they [regional directors] literally came on our board as vice-chairs. Today, you have those people on as vice-chairs. Dr. Donna Allen

is a vice-chair of NCARL now. Mike Honey is co-chair. He was the southern regional director of the Committee to Abolish HUAC. He's now a co-chair of NCARL. Lyle Mercer, who was our regional director in the northwest, is now a vice-chair. You'll find that a number of our vice-chairs evolved from the staff position to vice-chairs because the organization wanted to hold them in there even though we didn't have [regional] offices anymore.

TRELEVEN: Okay. I want to come back to that in a little greater detail, but we're about out of tape.

TAPE NUMBER: XLVII, SIDE ONE

AUGUST 8, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on. You were talking about the regional organizations and one region I wanted to get back to was the southern region and a couple questions. First, why did you need a Southern Regional Office when you had a fairly well-organized organization there already, namely SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund]? Why did you need to set up a Southern Regional Office in Tennessee, I believe?

WILKINSON: Actually, it was in Kentucky.

TRELEVEN: Kentucky, sorry.

WILKINSON: Then it moved to Tennessee. The reasons are these. SCEF, which was based in Louisville and New Orleans, had its own program on southern issues, race-related issues exclusively. HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] was a question that they related to. They knew it was connected. They certainly after Carl's [Braden] subpoena and Anne's [Braden] subpoena in Atlanta in '58, HUAC certainly had made itself known there. Then the [James O.] Eastland committee had subpoenaed Aubrey [W.] Williams and Virginia [F.] Durr. Then Jim [James A.] Dombrowski's office was smashed into and stuff shipped to Washington, Senator Eastland,

the Senate Internal Security Committee. So they had knowledge of that stuff.

But it wasn't their issue. HUAC was not the issue in their own minds. What their issues were, were economic and in implementation of [United States] Supreme Court decisions mostly ending discrimination, and taking steps to protect people who had been physically injured or economically injured by the question of race.

Well, Anne and Carl Braden were the ones that suggested that they would pay half the expense if we would name somebody to come down and work with them as the southern director of the Committee to Abolish HUAC. TRELEVEN: Okay, Anne and Carl would pay it, or SCEF would pay it?

WILKINSON: SCEF would do it.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: So they found one person from Connecticut who was down there. She later committed suicide. It was a real tragedy. A lovely young woman that came down to be the Committee to Abolish HUAC's representative in the South. She came from Connecticut, a very brilliant young woman who was out of comfortable upper-middle-class background in Connecticut, and was so shocked by the mistreatment of

blacks in the South that she personalized it so much that she finally came back home and never completely adjusted, and committed suicide after she'd already gone through Harvard [University] law school, or Radcliffe [College], at least.

So after she was gone--and I must remember the name, because--

TRELEVEN: I think we'll find it and fill it in.

WILKINSON: Yeah. Her mother and her sister both came to the seventy-fifth birthday party for me and the thirtieth anniversary of NCARL [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation] in Washington. It just slips me for a moment.

All right, so then we're looking further, and we had contact with Michael [K.] Honey, who at that time was beginning a relationship with Martha Allen, Donna Allen's daughter.

TRELEVEN: Okay, now about what year are we talking about here?

WILKINSON: It would have to be during the Vietnamese war.

TRELEVEN: Okay, so we're in the sixties?

WILKINSON: Yeah. Mike Honey today is a professor of history at the University of Washington at Tacoma, and earned his Ph.D. out of Howard [University] and

[University of] Maryland, and is a good historian on labor history and black history. He's white, but he's developed that out of his experiences working for us in the South.

Michael became available to us when he became a conscientious objector [C.O.] to the war in Vietnam.

TRELEVEN: Okay, now is this before or after he had met Martha Allen?

WILKINSON: I'm not sure when; probably before.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: When he was living in Michigan, going to school in Michigan, he was a C.O. He went to his draft board to be a C.O. and happened to get a very, very liberal draft board that gave him deferment from the draft if he would work for the Committee to Abolish HUAC in the South for one year. Unusual. Very unusual.

TRELEVEN: They named--?

WILKINSON: By name.

TRELEVEN: Specifically that he work for them?

WILKINSON: Yes, right. Very, very unusual.

TRELEVEN: Wait a minute, Frank. That could not have just happened. I mean, did you know who the--

WILKINSON: We'd have to find out from Mike.

TRELEVEN: Really? You really don't know any more of

the details?

WILKINSON: Probably it was, "Find a place where you want to work and we'll give you draft deferment if it's community service," and he might have said, "I'm going to work for the Committee to Abolish HUAC."

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: They didn't pick it out for him.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Had you known Mike Honey at all up to that point?

WILKINSON: Very little. I think I'd met him somehow or other when he was in school. He had somehow got to know Donna Allen and Martha Allen, mother and daughter.

TRELEVEN: Okay, and by this time Donna was working out of the Washington office?

WILKINSON: Yes.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: I don't know the extent of their relationship. They were never formally married, for example. Somehow or other, they didn't bother. They were married, but failed to get a wedding license. Time factors, or something.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: They were married but no one ever signed any piece of paper.

 Their experience in the South was extremely

important. They arrived in Louisville to start their work there. The amount of money we pay, by the way, is unbelievably low. It was forty, fifty dollars a week.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: SCEF provided a car and housing at their place, and ideas and supervision.

Almost immediately, SCEF had them go to a nearby county to investigate some black people in that part of Kentucky who had been arrested on some civil disobedience issue. Mike and Martha came into the town, set up at somebody's house to live there for a while, issued a press release condemning the trial, and distributed the press release widely in a very small town. It was such a small town that they distributed it to everybody in town, so every member of the jury got hold of this press release condemning the trial they were working on.

The government of Kentucky charged them with usury. Are you familiar with that law? Usury is a criminal effort to influence a jury.

They were jailed and faced trial for usury for doing nothing more than walking into town and putting out a press release which the jury got hold of. It was a very hard experience for them--Mike from Michigan and Martha from Washington, D.C.--and I think they spent

quite a while in jail. The charges were finally dropped, but it was quite a horrendous new experience. They hardly arrived there before they find themselves in jail. Well, they got a quick introduction to the South.

TRELEVEN: Geez.

WILKINSON: They moved the office to Memphis and used Memphis as a base because geographically, in terms of the work to be done in the South, it's sort of a central point to do work. Mike began doing field work all over the South on leads given to them by SCEF.

TRELEVEN: Okay, was Memphis a good place to go in terms of--

WILKINSON: Geographical center.

TRELEVEN: Geographical center, but also ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] support nearby?

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: No?

WILKINSON: There was an ACLU affiliate in Tennessee, but they were cool toward Mike and toward the Committee to Abolish HUAC. It was geographic. There were reasons for doing it. They didn't live with somebody else. They actually rented a house and were living there and worked.

Mike arranged field trips for me into Mississippi,

into Tennessee--all over Tennessee--Alabama, Georgia, maybe. He himself went to every southern state. The good leads that we today have in Florida, for example, were set up by a tour that Mike made of Florida trying to line up people to work to abolish HUAC. He found out who the good people were on both the east and west coasts, and from Daytona Beach down to Miami.

Later on, when Mike and Martha ended their work for us, the mailing list we picked up-- By the way, they established sponsors, sustainers to pay for our work. They came pretty close to being self-paying. I mean, the money they got out of the South-- All these offices were supposed to get enough pledges to pay their own way. We'd guarantee forty, fifty, sixty dollars. It was up to them to raise that money, ultimately, because we wanted to start them out and then have them independent.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Are they working as a team? I know that Mike carried the title, didn't he?

WILKINSON: No, I think they were co-directors.

TRELEVEN: They were co-directors? Okay.

WILKINSON: There are problems involved in this because they separated not long after this.

TRELEVEN: Not long after going to Memphis?

WILKINSON: They were there for maybe a few years, but

somehow or other they did break up. Martha continues to be very close to NCARL through her mother, Donna, and Martha and Mike are good friends. Mike came into Washington. When he finally left working for us, he decided to get his masters and doctors [degrees] in history, and so they continued friendships. It wasn't bitter, just a separation.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: I don't know what it was. Not a bad thing; just a mutual agreement that marriage wasn't necessary.

TRELEVEN: Okay. What made them good organizers?

WILKINSON: Well, Martha would be a good organizer out of living with Donna. Donna Allen is one of the best, most efficiently organized people I've ever known.

TRELEVEN: In terms of the logistics?

WILKINSON: Of getting things done in Washington.

TRELEVEN: All right.

WILKINSON: She was very good as a single-focus person to work on the abolition of HUAC. We'd bring in forty, fifty people at a time from congressional districts, or from college campuses, to work. Donna would put a lot of them up at her house in sleeping bags. They'd go on the [Capitol] Hill and they'd work. I just remember one group of students from Ohio--I think primarily from Ohio--that signed up twenty-eight members of Congress.

It was all due to Donna's unbelievably good organizational work with what to say, who to see, how to relate to other people, how to get this person first, then you can get that person, and so on.

Then after their work with us-- I can't give you the length of time because even after Mike moved to Washington, D.C., he continued to be responsible for our southern leadership work.

But that's the story there.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: The seeds they sowed together-- Mike is a good speaker and a good organizer.

TRELEVEN: Well, that's what I was getting at.

WILKINSON: And Mike is a political person. Martha is not a political person. That may be part of their [eventual] separation. Mike became very politicized in the South. He was also partly politicized in some state university he attended for a while in Michigan. Mike comes from parents who are teachers, I think, in Michigan. But Mike continues to relate to the South. His books are on labor history. There's a book that's coming out right now on the history of labor history in Memphis from the 1880's to 1940 [Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers (1993)], all because of his research there.

The FBI and the Memphis police department spotted Mike and Martha early on and developed an enormous file on him similar to what the rest of us had in NCARL.

TRELEVEN: Did he get it through FOIA [Freedom Of Information Act]?

WILKINSON: The circumstances on getting at-- They knew of the existence of the files. They were told the extent that was involved, how much was there. They filed legal action and the FBI and police department in Memphis destroyed the file before the legal order could be enforced. Southern laws are more informal on that thing. In fact, if you hear a court order, you go out to your office and burn everything they're going to come to ask you about tomorrow. It didn't seem to bother the law of Tennessee.

But very, very important work and something we long had needed because for our Committee to Abolish HUAC to have no contact in the South except Carl and Anne--who were already too busy doing all of SCEF's work--was a weakness on our part. Mike and Martha established us that base, established us as a name, and developed contacts for us from Texas to Florida, from Virginia to Mississippi. Really very, very good contacts. Lots and lots of traveling and names, picking up small meetings and talks, and setting up

things so we could arrange a speaking tour when I would come in to sort of capitalize on the groundwork he had laid.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Did SCEF continue to pay half the cost of the Southern Regional Office?

WILKINSON: Yes. They did. SCEF was always very generous. They knew how to raise money. They had as many as 120 people on their staff down there, all at subsistence wages. We were just one of the outlets that was being done.

TRELEVEN: They were quite successful, weren't they, in raising money in New York? SCEF?

WILKINSON: Yes, right.

TRELEVEN: Great. I'm going to ask you one more question before you go.

WILKINSON: Carl and Anne, both of them, were sent north and through Chicago, to New York, to Boston as fund-raisers. Jim Dombrowski had always been a brilliant fund-raiser, and then Jim was able to use the appeal of Anne and Carl very effectively.

May I put in something that just happened to me three days ago that relates to Carl and Anne and this work?

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: My daughter, Jo [Nachowitz], who is now

something like forty-six, was something like twelve to fourteen when I went to jail in '61. (I'd have to figure out those ages.) She lives in Los Angeles, a single parent with two children, and she's moving to another house. This week she was going through some old junk and came to me and said, "Did you ever see this? Do you want this?" It was the picture--a little snapshot--of Martin Luther King [Jr.], Carl, Anne, Jim Dombrowski and myself, which was taken the same night that the reception was held for us at Morehouse College, which we later used in what you've seen around.

TRELEVEN: In the anniversary publication.

WILKINSON: Right. You see, the picture was taken on April 30th, in the evening. Carl and I entered prison May 1. So the picture was taken by somebody and sent to the family. Jo saw the picture and she adopted it as her own. That was thirty-one years ago. I never saw the picture until three days ago when Jo asked me if I wanted it. The thing that's unique about the picture is that it's just Jim, and Carl, and Dr. King and myself, and Anne Braden is standing in the middle. On the left hand side, unfortunately cropped out, is Coretta [Scott] King. We've lost Coretta King. I've had it enlarged for other reasons; to enlarge it would

just emphasize the fact too badly that she was cut out of what you would see. You can see it's Coretta King, but why cropped out?

Anyway, it's a touching bit of nostalgia that came back thirty-two years after the fact. I'm taking the little print and having it enlarged so that I can send one, I thought, to Mike Honey, for example.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: Mike Honey now is publishing lots and lots of work, and he has organized--in April, 1993--a twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King. What have we learned? Where have we gone? What have we learned? It'll be held in Memphis. Mike is organizing it from Washington, with others. But it's so well organized he's got brochures out already in the summer of '92, for something to take place in April of '93, and he just wrote me and asked me if I would participate in it. It must be the twenty-fifth. That's right. If King was killed in '68, it would be the twenty-five anniversary.

There's also an historical journal, a beautifully written thing, and Mike has a major article. Mike is a prolific writer and all his stuff is on the South, labor relations, and civil rights relations, all this coming out of his work for us. Very interesting on-

going thing. That's what he teaches. He teaches that now in Washington. He taught it in Middletown-- What do you call it?

TRELEVEN: Connecticut?

WILKINSON: Connecticut, Wesleyan.

TRELEVEN: Wesleyan.

WILKINSON: Wesleyan [College], Connecticut, and I think it's Middletown.

TRELEVEN: It's in Middletown.

WILKINSON: In Connecticut. Wherever Mike has gone he's-- He's now got a tenured position, fortunately, on the faculty of a brand-new university at the University of Washington at Tacoma.

TRELEVEN: Great. Well, I know you've got some commitments today, so maybe it's a good time to leave it.

WILKINSON: Very good.

TRELEVEN: We'll get back together again.

TAPE NUMBER: XLVIII, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 5, 1992

TRELEVEN: It's September 5, 1992, and I'm back with Frank Wilkinson. Looking at the calendar in the seventies, Frank, HISC [House Committee on Internal Security] was abolished. In '76 the Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] passed. The [Edward H.] Levi guidelines were instituted. Then came William [H.] Webster. So things were looking good for a while in terms of reform of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. What happened after that?

WILKINSON: I agree with the summary of things looking better, and I think it goes back, essentially, to the death of J. Edgar Hoover in '72 and the [Frank F.] Church-[Barry M.] Goldwater [United States] Senate Committee on Government Operations and their 3,500-page report in '75, which led to the Levi guidelines to the FBI. It led to the Rockefeller report on assassinations by the CIA. It led to information that the CIA had violated its 1947 mandate not to do any work on American soil. We got a whole bunch of good reforms at that time coming from quite conservative across-the-board services. I mean, you have Barry

Goldwater and Frank Church chairing and co-chairing a senate committee, and coming up with such critical information in terms of the protection of the Bill of Rights against what had happened. I think you were very right. I think the fact that these reforms were put in place--

You mentioned the Freedom of Information Act in the seventies. I'm not sure that it was the seventies. I had a feeling that it really came in '65, and in '74 Congress strengthened--

TRELEVEN: Ah, I think you're right.

WILKINSON: --the Freedom of Information Act. [Gerald R.] Ford vetoed that and it was passed over his veto, and so that was the strengthening of it. So we got all this information out. We knew about the violations across the board, not just FBI and CIA, but seven or eight other intelligence-related agencies. And we got strengthening of the power so the public could get still more information about organizational or individual records.

So then what does happen? Let's just focus on the FBI. Their COINTELPRO program, which had begun in '56, ended in '75. That's three years after Hoover's death. Personally, the COINTELPRO was where the worst damage was done to NCARL [National Committee Against

Repressive Legislation] and to me. I think, though, that even with the powerful commands of the Levi guidelines under President Ford, they still allowed for the investigation of the Communist Party, maybe the Socialist Workers Party, some radical parties: they were sort of put beyond the pale. It's like the language in the [United States] Supreme Court from the beginning of time, way back in the sixties--certainly in my own case, in '61--it was just a flat statement by people like [Felix] Frankfurter and others in the court. When it comes to the communists, they simply do not have the same rights as others. So they stopped it for everybody except the communists. And I think that continued. We don't know too much about it. In my case, it certainly continued until 1980 under both Ford and Jimmy [James E.] Carter. Even Jimmy Carter, supported by the then [Senate] Judiciary Committee chair--I think he was Ted [Edward M.] Kennedy--began writing new guidelines for the FBI to supposedly improve upon the [Gerald R.] Ford-Levi guidelines. This was under the Carter administration.

TRELEVEN: Okay. So this began before [Ronald W.] Reagan's '81 executive order.

WILKINSON: Right. Carter was in from '76 to '80.

TRELEVEN: Yep.

WILKINSON: Our committee under the leadership of Professor Thomas I. Emerson did a critique of the Kennedy-Carter FBI revision. Even there you find an artificial bifurcation of the powers to be given the FBI. The FBI was to be limited to investigation of violation of federal criminal laws, period, which is correct if parenthetically you've repealed the speech crimes of the [Joseph R.] McCarthy years. But then there was a subsection saying that the FBI shall investigate "terrorist enterprises." That was in the draft of the Kennedy-Carter revision. Professor Emerson did a really stinging job of showing just where this could lead. Prophetically, this was before Reagan came in, and we killed it. We and others killed it. But I think that the literature that we put out on this thing was very instrumental because it was high scholarship and we distributed it very widely. A specific bill was mentioned; it was a critique of a specific bill, and we stopped it.

But I think it's important to note that leading liberals were willing to accede to the beginning of a rationale for violation of our civil liberties under the guise of the word "terrorism." If you read the Reagan years, you read the Heritage Foundation, all of this language is, "We've got to do something about

terrorism." It's comparatively new. [Alexander M.] Haig [Jr.], who had been undersecretary or counselor to [Richard M.] Nixon to the end and continued through that period, certainly, in the first years of Reagan had really launched a campaign to do something about "terrorism." And the right wing developed a whole lot of campaigns, language that was developed. So it was a new guise for it. Communism was gone; "terrorism" becomes the new word.

And I think it's very important to note that it was the Carter administration and it was Ted Kennedy, liberal Democrats, who were willing to play that game. Again, there was a special role of NCARL, and of particular people like Emerson and the leadership sensed the dangers here.

Now, when Reagan did come in, he was under--I'm using the word loosely--a mandate from the Heritage Foundation. This is a foundation funded by Joseph Coors. In physical dimension it's actually a large building in Washington, D.C. called the Heritage Foundation. I've entered it. On the fourth, or fifth, or seventh floor, there's an area called the Coors floor. It's a memorabilia of this man.

But they came out with what they called an Agenda for Reagan. If you look over the first four years of

the Reagan administration, you'll find point after point where the Heritage Foundation's agenda was carried out. The unAmerican activities committee [House Committee on Internal Security] had been abolished in 1975. In 1980, the Heritage Foundation called for it to be revived not under the name of unAmerican activities committee, but as Senate-House committees to investigate "terrorism." The first thing that happened in the new Congress was that the Senate did establish-- You see, the Senate went from Democratic control in '80 to Republican control in '81. And one of the first things that [J.] Strom Thurmond did under the Heritage guideline was to establish a Senate Committee on Judiciary subcommittee on terrorism [Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism], and the man who headed that up was this senator from Alabama. It slips me for a moment. He was a Vietnam War hero, had been in prison for years in Vietnam.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Jeremiah [A.] Denton [Jr.].

TRELEVEN: Jeremiah Denton, right.

WILKINSON: He became the chair of it, and he was immediately asked, "What are you going to investigate?" And I often in my speaking have used the direct quotes that he gave in 1981, right after he was named the

chair. It called for investigation the extent of which the media in the United States were under "Soviet terrorist influences," and it went on through a whole series of things where Mother Jones was labelled that; an attack upon Tom Hayden. You know, I've jokingly said, obviously there was a great need at that time to investigate the "People's Republic of Santa Monica." The way they said it, it was under "terrorist" influences, using that language. Of course, Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda at that time were the nation's leading "terrorists"--as far as Senator Denton was concerned.

But then they wind up on the thing--and I'll never forget this--and they said, "We will also investigate those individuals and organizations"-- and it listed them, business, labor, academic, a whole series--"who are under terrorist influences but do not realize they are under terrorist influences."

That was the beginning of it. The first attack was upon the peace movement, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom [WILPF]. Even Katherine [M.] Graham of the Washington Post acceded to an attack upon WILPF at the very time that the international president of WILPF had been given the Nobel Prize for Peace. The Denton Committee labelled it as a "terrorist organization," this organization that's now

eighty-plus years old, founded by Jane Addams.

Labelled that along with other groups, I think Women Strike for Peace, and some other groups. It took some time to do it. Now, the Denton subcommittee continued its work and it was somewhat ridiculous in the sense that they were going so far. But month after month, if you would go back through the press at that time, you will find that from the administration constantly there was an argument that terrorists were a problem.

Now, here comes Webster, a retired federal judge coming in to head up the FBI. Wouldn't that be an improvement? It's fascinating to read the first hearings of the Senate Subcommittee on [Security and] Terrorism where they called Webster before them, and said, "Mr. Webster, we are now prepared to give you any amount of money you need to step up your campaign against terrorism." Bill Webster said to the subcommittee that terrorism is not a problem in our country. He said that in '81, in '82, and '83. Every time he said, "It's not a problem," and he cited statistically that, I think, there was an average of either one, three or five--not average--terrorist incidents in the United States during that time. Webster said, "Terrorism is not a problem; we have it under control," and they were urged to take more money.

Well, even at the very time that Webster was taking such a positive stand publicly against the Senate subcommittee, denying money--something that J. Edgar Hoover would certainly never have done--Webster himself was beginning to work under the Reagan guidelines of 1981 and 1983 to use the guise of "terrorism" to go after the peace movement, to go after librarians, to go after environmentalists. All those things started.

TRELEVEN: CISPIS?

WILKINSON: CISPIS, for example, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, started in '81 under Webster. You know, it finally ended up being blown out of the water in the end of Reagan's years, '86/'87, when a Freedom of Information Act revealed what had been going on, and [William S.] Sessions at that time had taken over, Webster had gone to head up the CIA, and Sessions said it was a mistake--"Yes, we got out of hand"--and I think five FBI agents were suspended briefly, one without pay, one with some derogatory note in his file, and it's over with. But by that time 190 church, community, and student organizations had been listed as "terrorist fronts" under this guise.

Now, the actual use of terrorism, the thing that

as I've indicated [Alexander] Haig and the Heritage Foundation and others-- I can't think of the names. There's some other right-wing scholars who had developed-- I wish I could remember the name of a couple of the names. They're really anti-Soviet guys who talked about "Soviet active measures," which was a form of "terrorism." It was the new language that came up at that time.

But it was not really until 1983 that Reagan, under the advice of Ed [Edwin] Meese [III], his counselor and then attorney general, actually wrote new guidelines that went beyond the enforcement of federal criminal statutes to go after what is called "foreign counterintelligence/terrorism." Now, the guidelines that came down in December of '81, at the end of Reagan's first years, as we've studied it threw out many protections that we got from the Levi-Ford guidelines: weakened the definition of where an investigation could begin, weakened in terms of how long an investigation could continue, weakened whether an investigation could be restarted after reanalysis. All these things were in the '81 guidelines. Worse than that, it allowed the FBI for the first time to work with the CIA overseas, and allowed the CIA working overseas to come to work on our soil with the FBI.

That was a direct violation of the mandate of the CIA that was written down in 1947, that no part of the CIA [mission] was to be done on American soil. This was a demand made by a leading Republican from Minnesota who saw the dangers of the CIA at the time it was established in 1947.

So that weakness that began in '81 gave some openings, but it didn't really allow the FBI to do as much as they wanted to do. But it did allow this work with the FBI and CIA. It allowed [Frank] Varelli, the informant of the FBI, in 1981 to be assigned out of the Dallas office of the FBI to set up a hotline with the national guard in El Salvador whereby from '81 forward every Salvadorian denied refuge in our country in violation of very clear refugee rights laws that had been passed. We were allowing about 98 percent of Poles who were refugees from communist Poland to come in, and we were denying 98 percent of the Salvadorians coming in, claiming it was economic or whatever it was. It allowed this hotline to be established whereby every time the immigration authorities would pick up and deport a Salvadorian from Los Angeles, or Texas, or San Diego--wherever you're doing it at these border points--they would notify Varelli and the FBI office in Dallas, who in turn would call their hotline--which was the

national guard, and actually, as he himself characterized it, a duplicate that he sat in with meetings of the death squads' leadership in the military in El Salvador when he was down there--so that these deportees were subject to immediate arrest and many executions on their return. That was all done under the CIA/FBI part of the Reagan 1981 guidelines.

But in '83, we then added this new formula which we know better empirically than we know from the record because when Reagan signed it in April of '83, he also classified it as top secret. In 1982, he had also increased the degree of secrecy in the executive order on secrecy. So we know what has happened since then under the guise of this. Certainly the domestic attack upon CISPES and so many Catholic churches that became concerned about El Salvador after the death of the nuns and Archbishop [Oscar] Romero and all, were classified as "terrorist fronts" simply by a loose association with CISPES.

In summary of all of this, what happened in the positive things in the seventies by '83, I think, all the positives had been reversed. If we ever get a copy of the Reagan executive order in 1983, we will find that the results which we know empirically are borne out by the exact words "sanction" or "allowance" that

were written in that allow identical things that went on under J. Edgar Hoover; to continue the very things that were condemned by the Church-Goldwater committee in '75, are sanctioned again by Reagan.

Just a footnote there: the role of Edwin Meese as attorney general is something which needs to be explored whenever we can get the data on it because of the change from investigation of communism. In other words, they're restoring it again. As I've already mentioned, Senators Jeremiah Denton and Strom Thurmond changed it from "unAmerican," which really meant communist, to "terrorist." In '83, it went officially from "enforcing federal criminal laws" to "terrorist activities or terrorist conspiracies," and there's very good reason for that legally as an attorney general and as chief law enforcement officer of our country. Edwin Meese knew that the laws that the FBI had-- The FBI always claimed they were making investigations pursuant to possible violations of certain federal criminal laws, and they would cite-- Take my own case, they'd cite the Smith Act, they'd cite the Internal Security Act and the Communist Control Act. Whenever they began one of these things on me, it was not just out to get people like me or NCARL because I was working to abolish HUAC or working for integration, but always

that I was possibly violating a federal criminal law-- and they'd cite seven or eight of them. So those laws, beginning with the Smith Act attack by Justice [John M.] Harlan in '56, '57--whenever it was--and on through, each of these speech crimes of the forties and fifties was declared either unconstitutional or unenforceable. So Meese could not tell the FBI under the new 1983 FBI guidelines, "Now go out and investigate communism," which is what these were based upon, was totally out of line with reality because if they did find that somebody was violating one of these laws, the courts had already said, "You cannot prosecute under these laws."

So the move from communism to terrorism was not just to keep track of the world situation and the popular fears of terrorism as we knew it in Europe and the Near East, but to give a legal rationale that would make it logical for the FBI to carry on the same kind of investigations without being stuck with the fact they're investigating under laws that can no longer be used.

TRELEVEN: Okay, a couple of follow ups here. When the "police spy case" was unfolding in Los Angeles, was there evidence to show that there was still a tie between the FBI and the L.A. Police Department?

WILKINSON: Definitely. That, I think, is pretty clearly in the record now, where the police department agents in the anti-subversive detail, or whatever they called it at various times--it was the anti-subversive detail that was involved as a stake-out in the effort to assassinate me back in '64, whatever we called it--had arrangements whereby they didn't directly deliver documents to the FBI or pick up documents from the FBI, but they were left on, as I recall, almost like a windowsill or a certain place at a certain time and then somebody--one agent to the other--would pick them up and get the exchange so that it wouldn't be done one-on-one, but sort of secretly.

But then at that time, you also had the situation where the private sector did not trust the FBI to do its whole job. They didn't trust the Denton subcommittee to do its job because it was getting to be more and more unreal. Incidentally, and parenthetically, the Denton subcommittee lasted exactly the Senate lifetime of Jeremiah Denton. He came in with the Reagan landslide in '80, supported by the "Moral Majority," and Reagan, Nixon, people like that, and it went out as soon as Denton was defeated. Interestingly enough, I haven't brought it in here enough, the investigation of the FBI in Alabama in '85

and '86 into voter registration fraud, all of which were found to be without merit. But it was harassment of African American elderly voters, absentee voters, trying to prevent them from voting in '86 because Denton would never be elected if the black voters of Alabama had voted. The only hope was to harass them, to intimidate them, and it failed. So Denton was defeated, and with that the Senate again goes back to Democratic control. It's very important. As critical as we should be of the role of liberals in the Democratic Party for the-- Well, I've already indicated in the seventies and earlier, certainly Hubert [H.] Humphrey and the others in 1950, is that when they reestablished themselves in January of 1987, I guess it had to be; Denton went out--

TRELEVEN: Reconvened?

WILKINSON: January of '87, the Democratic Party went into control again. Joseph [R.] Biden, Jr., at that time became chair, and here we have an established inheritance of the Senate Subcommittee on [Security and] Terrorism. Biden asked each Democratic member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, "Would you like to be chair of that subcommittee?" Now, those are usually plums--they include staff, they include power, they include space, they include a lot of money for

investigations--and not one Democrat wanted to take over that subcommittee. Certainly Biden is not going to allow a Republican to become chair, so the subcommittee died at that point. That first effort to put legislative form around the word "terrorism" died after six years.

But I'm getting back to the fact that the right wing just wasn't trusting enough, and they set up a special filing system in the South, in Georgia, South Carolina, called Western Goals.

TRELEVEN: Oh, yeah.

WILKINSON: Western Goals was chaired by the member of Congress who was killed in that flight over Korea that went down, the Soviet-Korean disaster.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: What's his name? Matthews? No, McNamara, Matthews, something like that.

TRELEVEN: We'll have to fill it in [Lawrence P. McDonald].

WILKINSON: Anyway, whatever it was, whatever his name was, he was the chair of that. They began getting information from the FBI where they could, from the police files where they could, and then they played a kind of a private leaking system. Just like J. Edgar Hoover would leak stuff, Western Goals did the same

thing. In the L.A. Police Department not only were they mostly giving to the FBI--the FBI rarely gave; they usually received materials--but this member of the L.A. Police Department was allowed to take the anti-subversive squad's files home to a garage that he maintained here in L.A. with a computer, whereby the anti-subversive files of the L.A. Police Department were computerized and directly hooked up by computerized telephone link to Western Goals, whereby all these files were shipped out.

When I arrived in Tampa-Saint Pete[rsburg] to speak in the mid-eighties--I was speaking at the University of South Florida and it was during African American History Month; I was the only white person invited to come and speak--it was really a great honor. They had the great black scholars of our time and here I'm one guy coming in talking about how HUAC and the FBI had attacked the civil rights movement. But three days before I arrived, based on Western Goals information, the Turner Broadcasting Company in Florida broadcast that "Frank Wilkinson is coming to town and he is known as such-and-such and such-and-such," the very kind of thing that used to be leaked by J. Edgar Hoover when I went anywhere to speak in the fifties or sixties or even seventies. So there was that ongoing

thing.

I think that, realistically, we now know even since Willie [L.] Williams became our chief of police, there was word, a report, that this L.A. police spying which was supposedly stopped by a lawsuit and a payment of many millions of dollars of damages--I think I myself received something like \$6,000 in damages because of what was found in those files. There were 200 of us that were part of a class-action suit, and the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] was given the power to monitor and the [Los Angeles] Police Commission was given the power to monitor, to check every single investigation. They didn't call it what it was called before; it was given a new word. I'm afraid it might have been related to terrorism itself. I'm not sure yet. They may have gone from communism or subversion to terrorism. The ACLU has, I think, been unable to do the review, to do the followup, and the police commission has been too absorbed with fighting Chief [Daryl F.] Gates to really do something about it. So at the very time that Willie Williams comes in, there's a report by this renegade--whatever you want to call it; he's a good guy--police officer talking about this surveillance on political activities in L.A. Now, they happened to mention members of the City Council

and prominent people. But that always was somehow to make it more legitimate to attack them than to say they went after the Left again, which probably if you look into it, they weren't after [Zev] Yaroslavsky so much as they were some left-wing or more progressive elements in the civil rights or civil liberties community.

TRELEVEN: You mentioned immigration in the context of El Salvador. You mentioned that about ten minutes ago. What's the connection between that and NCARL's strenuous lobbying against [Alan K.] Simpson-[Romano L.] Mazzoli?

WILKINSON: We did not know when we were fighting Simpson-Mazzoli that the FBI under Varella was starting this attack upon CISPES. I remember working and speaking around the country on Simpson-Mazzoli, and having people in the audience who were members of CISPES reporting how FBI agents had called upon their places of work or their homes, making inquiries about them. That I encountered particularly in Wisconsin, I remember. So we knew something was going on, but we didn't have the detail until the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York lawsuit won that information in '86. The Simpson-Mazzoli bill was-- Well, let's go back. The immigration statutes from a

civil liberties standpoint stem from, first of all, the original [Patrick A.] McCarran Act, the Internal Security Act of 1950, the Nixon-McCarran Act, certainly the [Francis E.] Walter-McCarran Act of 1952 and the amendments to that in '54 and '56, all very, very bad for civil liberties. Thirty-five criteria, if I remember the figure, were set up whereby a person could be denied a visa to enter our country if that person was "undesirable." Then it would list everything; it went from everything from membership in the Communist Party, almost a bill of attainder by name, to being lesbian or gay, to having a member of the family who had some mental illness, very loosely defined. It was a very broad thing. It was very damaging. It was used here in Los Angeles during the forties and fifties. The L.A. Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born and the American committee of that in Chicago and New York were in constant battle trying to prevent deportation of progressive persons who had been granted a visa--even granted citizenship--and then challenged on that because they had not told accurate information at the time that they won their citizenship.

So Simpson-Mazzoli was--I'm trying to clarify it in my mind--brought about in order to stop the influx of Central Americans into our country, growing

essentially out of the war conditions in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, but also related to the poverty of the area. There always was a strong element of economic necessity to try to beat it across the border. These were efforts that were being-- New legislation was set up to punish employers who would knowingly hire an undocumented person. We fought those things but the language that was in the law continued the-- You know, there were provisions that yes, you could get a visa, you could get in here, if you came in a certain way you could be admitted under some quota. But we then knew that you'd be subject to the same thirty-five threshold things that they could rule out anybody.

It's so important to note that Eastern Europe and the right-wing Asian community: Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea-- there was a great influx of Asians and anti-communist Eastern Europeans--who were allowed into our country under the terms of what amounts to the Simpson-Mazzoli bill. They were allowed in because they were anti-communist, wanting in here for various reasons. You had a reason to claim asylum from Poland before Poland overthrew its communist leadership. Contrary to that, in Central America, if you were related to the Contras, if you were related to [Robert] D'Aubuisson; he was

related to the death-squad leadership, the right wing, in El Salvador. If you were anywhere related there you could get in. But if you were the widow of [Salvador] Allende [Gossens], who was overthrown by the [Augusto] Pinochet [Ugarte] regime in Chile and you were living as an honored guest in Mexico who always honored these political refugees, if you were invited to come to the United States to speak as Hortensia Allende was invited in 1981 to come here and speak, Reagan denied a visa to her and others like her to even come in to speak. Likewise, if you're either trying to get in secretly, crossing the border or otherwise, you'd run into problems. So I just think that if our time is running out on this particular tape here, I want to emphasize that we fought the Simpson-Mazzoli bill and there's a lot about that that I think is important to dwell on.

Just let me pause a minute. Have I got a couple more minutes?

TRELEVEN: Yeah, about two more.

WILKINSON: All right. In our fight against the Simpson-Mazzoli bill-- Now, for NCARL to get involved in that, you know, it was not our priority. Our priority was the FBI and CIA, but we felt we had to relate because certainly the anti-communist laws were related there and the FBI-CIA involvement did that.

But in the protest--and I worked with them for several years--time after time we marched up Broadway [in L.A.], sometimes three, five, seven-thousand people and then meeting on the city hall steps. Other than one or two Catholic priests, one or two ACLU people and myself, we were the only Anglos that were in those marches. It's a real tragedy to note that at the time you're fighting for the rights of Central American people who are struggling for the good things in their part of the world, that they had to fight their own battles. The INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]--the "Migras"--stood on the sidewalks taking pictures, and up the streets came people all of whom were subject to deportation but sticking their necks out, coming out of the closet as we're marching up Broadway. Our efforts to try to get liberals, whites, Anglos more involved in that were never really successful.

TRELEVEN: Okay. Let me turn this over.

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SEPTEMBER 5, 1992

TRELEVEN: Well, I know who Simpson is. I have a close friend in Kentucky who I see once a year at a meeting.

I said, "Who the hell is Mazzoli, anyway?"

WILKINSON: He should know.

TRELEVEN: He didn't know.

WILKINSON: Really?

TRELEVEN: I said, "Why is Mazzoli so hep on this bill?"

WILKINSON: Well, first of all he's got seniority.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: The committee, that was a plum, you know, and you get so you become expert in an area. Now, I think before we leave this, I'm not the one to really know this as well as so many others are that have become very actively involved in it, like the Rodriguez brothers and Pete [Peter] Schey and some of the ACLU and Asian rights immigration lawyers who've done so much--El Rescate and others.

But it is important to note that a bill was passed by the Congress two or three years ago that supposedly improves on the Walter-McCarran Act, that threw out some of these thirty-five categories, and it was

jointly sponsored by the gay member of Congress from Massachusetts. There's two up there, I think, but one of them.

TRELEVEN: Barney Frank?

WILKINSON: Barney Frank, that's right. Barney Frank, Ted Kennedy, and others put this thing through. It was supposedly a great reform like we were winning something. The negatives were out, supposedly. They're going to have what do you call it? [amnesty] They were going to forgive. They were going to allow people here to apply. I can't think of the right word there. There was a long period of forgiveness and money was provided trying to get the people here who are hiding out a chance to apply, and with more liberal opportunities to apply you could remain. But in the very last moments of the passage of that bill, the language that was inserted there which dropped communism and dropped a lot of the other negatives of the Cold War era did allow the blocking of people involved in "terrorist enterprises." There you have the power of Near East lobbyists of various kinds fearing terrorism. For example, under the Frank-Kennedy bill a member of the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization] could not come into our country because they are related to a "terrorist

enterprise." Totally unjudicated statement that the PLO is a terrorist organization, but allowing that. To this day the trial that's continuing right now in Los Angeles of the Palestinian seven and the Kenyan woman is all caught up under some of this very language that the liberals put in in that bill. They are people who I know personally. They're seven Palestinians--my closest friends, Khader Hamide and Julie Mungae, a Kenyan woman--were graduate students, visitors in our country. You know, there's 125,000 students in our country with visas from so-called Arab nations beginning with Morocco, Algeria, all the way around to Lebanon and Syria who are allowed into our country. They were here on visas. They were getting their masters in business administration, doctorates at the University of Oregon, some of them, and were scholars, teachers, small business people. Possibly in one or two cases they may have slightly overstayed their visas, but student-visa overruns is an open hemorrhage for every country, including England, or Ireland, or you name it. Yet, they were rounded up because it was believed that they openly supported the PLO, which according to somebody's definition was a terrorist front. That goes back. So the victory that was won, the liberalizing of the original Walter-McCarran Act of

1952, which was done in 1988, probably '89, allows the same things to go on. But again, it's using this language of terrorism that comes in to undercut every part of our Bill of Rights.

TRELEVEN: Well, liberals in another context are partly responsible for another bill that you've been fighting for years, S.B. 1. What's so bad about S.B. 1?

WILKINSON: Senate Bill 1 was originally introduced in 1973 by Strom Thurmond and the late-senator from Arkansas, McSomebody. (You know these words are important.)

TRELEVEN: [George B.] McClellan?

WILKINSON: McClellan, thank you. It was put in by McClellan and Strom Thurman, and it was an 800-page bill which had been drafted by John Mitchell when he was attorney general under Nixon.

The history of the bill is very positive. Back in the period of time of Lyndon [B.] Johnson, it was recognized that the criminal code of the United States was a mess. It's just a collection that had never been really indexed from around 1920 forward. So you'd have forty different definitions of a crime of robbery, which would vary from getting you six months to sixty years without any real efforts to make it uniform or logical, or whatnot. In other words, the laws kept

coming in, and in, and in and never related to each other. So Lyndon Johnson named former California governor Pat [Edmund G.] Brown [Sr.] to develop a commission to reform the federal criminal laws, and on that committee were good people like Governor Brown and a few other prominent Democrats, a few liberal Republicans, and some ultra-conservative Republicans like McClellan. They were making progress between '65 and '68 and probably would have come in with a revision of the federal criminal code that would have been useful. But then you have the defeat of Hubert Humphrey in '68, Nixon coming in, and Nixon turning over the Johnson and Governor Brown commission report and saying, "to rewrite and revise to reflect my concern for law and order." I've got the direct transmittal letter from Nixon to John Mitchell. So he takes over. Mitchell turns it over to a fellow by the name of [William H.] Rehnquist, who was working in the Justice Department.

TRELEVEN: Never heard of him. [laughter]

WILKINSON: He tells Rehnquist to rework these things to reflect Nixon's concern for law and order.

Rehnquist worked on it from probably '69 or '70, until he left to go on the Supreme Court himself, in '72 I think it was. Then Mitchell put his name on it as the

attorney general who fostered it, and finally it went in as one version--the Thurmond-McClellan bill of '73.

NCARL--again very much to our credit always looking for the "cutting-edge" issues--recognized that in this 800-page bill that there was just dynamite there to blow apart the Bill of Rights, codifying legally many of the Cold War ideas and many of the worst things out of the Nixon era. So we began attacking. Well, it's an 800-page bill. I've already indicated that our constitutional law advisors like Emerson, Vern Countryman at Harvard [University], Carole Goldberg-Ambrose at UCLA, recognized the dangers, but to sit down and analyze an 800-page bill is beyond anybody's ability. So I turned to the ACLU in Washington, asking if they'd give us a critique of the '73 S.1--it was already called S.1.--and a staff member for the ACLU in Washington at that time was Meg Gale, who is today a professor of law at Whittier law school [School of Law], has been a president of the ACLU of Southern California, and been on the national board of ACLU since she moved from Washington out here. She did a ninety-page critique of this 800-page bill--just what we needed--just going through and pointing out the obvious pitfalls in this thing. I said, "Wonderful. Will you reproduce it and let's get in

into the mail, get it out to people?" Well, Meg did the work on it sort of unofficially, and then reported that the ACLU did not have the facilities to reproduce her analysis or the postage to mail it out. So NCARL reproduced this ninety-page document, Xeroxed [photocopied] it somehow. (Probably got the ACLU of Southern California to Xerox it through their generosity in allowing me as a board member to use some of their facilities there.) Then the question of postage: I said, "Here it is, Meg. I've got them. Now will you get it out to every affiliate?" Meg is still in Washington. She said, "There's been a cut-back in postage. Everything is cut back. ACLU is having a financial problem." So NCARL mailed out this thing--we're talking about a few dollars--to the fifty affiliates. We got it out and then began publicizing it. That's the way we went through '73, '74.

Then comes January of '75. Nixon has resigned in disgrace in July of '74. Ford is in as president and John Mitchell is then convicted in the federal courts for all kinds of the legal malfeasance that goes toward an elected federal official. Perjury? I don't know the words; we can look them up because they're important words. Obstruction of justice and perjury, I believe. So what I'm emphasizing about what these

words are is that here's a man that's convicted and sentenced to five years in prison as the chief law enforcement officer of our country for having violated all these laws, and yet his name ratifies Senate Bill 1 in '75. A new Congress coming in, and it goes in then as Thurmond's. What happens at that very point but McClellan dies, and the ranking guy on the Judiciary Committee at that time becomes Ted Kennedy. So you have the unbelievable thing of John Mitchell turning over legislation--he went to jail on January 5th of '75--and the bill was introduced by Kennedy and Thurmond on January 11th of '75. It's S. 1, an 800-page thing exactly as it was back in '73, the way Rehnquist put it together.

So we then had to take it on. But it was a much more difficult thing because here's the leading liberal, Ted Kennedy, and the leading reactionary, Strom Thurmond, co-sponsoring a bill that is written by the Nixon administration, albeit coming out of a liberal push from Pat Brown and a few other good senators back in the Johnson era. We then formally started this campaign against S. 1, and there's no question about it that our literature and our analyses, which we then were working now only from what Meg Gale had told us, but Tom Emerson gave us a great deal of

critique on the thing and Dick [Richard] Criley prepared a layperson's analysis. We really had great information. We tried to summarize 800 pages down to one piece of literature that would be the equivalent of a sheet of paper that was 22 x 17--something like that--on both sides where you could print, "Would You Believe Senate Bill 1?" in big words, you know. We started to call it the "notorious Nixon-Mitchell Senate Bill 1," now sponsored by Kennedy and the rest. We did a critique of Kennedy on the whole thing, showing how he went along. He not only chaired it because he inherited McClellan's seat, but he really endorsed it. Kennedy had his own ambitions strongly for the presidency at that time, and obviously was trying to overcome the Chappaquiddick reputation and his own liberal reputation as contrary to law and order. Here would be Kennedy with Strom Thurmond on a real law-and-order bill.

We had some real problems fighting it because Kennedy could bring together some pretty important bugles to support his position. Where Vern Countryman and Emerson would condemn it, Kennedy would produce this guy from Harvard who was an office-mate of Vern Countryman, Alan [M.] Dershowitz. It's very interesting. I often go to visit Countryman in his

office at Harvard law school. Here's Countryman, who's an authority in bankruptcy law, but whose love is the First Amendment, writing this wonderful critique of the Kennedy bill. Right, literally, through a pane of glass you go into Dershowitz's office--they're using common secretaries--and he's writing praises of the bill for Kennedy. Kennedy is a certain-- I don't know what you'd call it. The Kennedy cult that surrounds and gives good names to things when he does some things that are wrong. We fought that, '76 through '80, and I think we were very successful.

While it went through the Senate overwhelmingly without debate, on the House side it came before a committee that had on it Elizabeth Holtzman. The House committee was a very, very conservative committee, not a good one at all, but Liz Holtzman--who now is running for senator in New York and at one time became a prosecutor in Kings County--was a freshperson in Congress on the House Judiciary Committee, assigned to this subcommittee that received S. 1. I was present in the hearing room when it took place. She sort of stood up and said they were ready to-- If can just remember the name of the chair, whoever it was. It was a sycophant who would just go along with anything: "The Senate has studied this thing for seven years. Why

don't we just give it a go and let it get out to the floor? It's already passed in the Senate." By the way, it passed the Senate overwhelmingly. I don't know what the vote was, something like a handful of votes against it, because it's Kennedy. If Kennedy says it's all right and Strom Thurmond says it's okay, Republicans and Democrats right and left go along with it. Liz Holtzman stands up, holding this 800-page bill, and said, "Gentlemen, I suggest we read it before we pass it." So they began a series of sessions where they read it. As they read this bill together over a period of months, they just couldn't believe how bad this bill was. So at the end of the time where it was [originally] like 6 to 1 against Ms. Holtzman, they finally voted unanimously to condemn the bill as violating the Bill of Rights. All because Liz Holtzman just got them to read the bill. That's the language: "Gentlemen, I suggest we read the bill before we pass it." So we stopped it in '80. And then the end of this thing--

TRELEVEN: Who was in touch with Liz Holtzman?

WILKINSON: Who was working with her?

TRELEVEN: Yeah. I mean, who from the civil liberties organizational side? I take it someone put a bug in her ear about this bill.

WILKINSON: Well, I am trying to see if I know. I don't think that NCARL can claim credit for that. I came to know Liz Holtzman through her mother, who's in retirement homes in Florida. I would come up and speak about how great this one woman-- It's the whole idea, you know, that Liz Holtzman, on the CIA appropriation one time, stood up and said, "Shall we announce the appropriation for the CIA?" Everybody says, "It would violate national security to give the figure." And Liz Holtzman got up and said, "I don't think it would violate national security to really tell us what the dollar figure is. Is it \$25 billion? Is it \$5 billion? What is it?" Then she quoted from the [United States] Constitution--section I, title IV or whatever it is, saying that "The Congress shall be responsible for the maintenance of the financial records." You know, the expenditures and the revenues. They're responsible for it. "We have to do this; we're required to do this." She was voted down. I think we picked up forty votes on that. But Liz Holtzman played that role there, too. So I would praise her. Then, unknowingly, the proud mother in the audience would stand up and everybody would cheer. That's the way I ultimately came to know Liz Holtzman.

Anyway, we stopped it in '80 and I think

essentially all of the patently anti-First Amendment activities in it, the attack upon freedom of the press, the attack upon the rights of assembly. I'd have to go through again to enumerate from our literature. We identified about twelve different things that were violating the First Amendment and that we won on. But other aspects of it, like the sentencing section, the preventive detention section which Kennedy himself authored (that's very interesting; I'll come back to that in a minute), those things finally came through. The way they came through--I think it was in '81 or '83 when Reagan was riding high. On the floor of the Congress in the very last hours of a session, [Daniel] Lungren of Long Beach, who now is attorney general of California--

TRELEVEN: Yeah, Dan.

WILKINSON: --stood up and said that the "Democrats are soft on crime. I move that we pass this bill." The Democrats panicked again and they got the necessary votes on preventive detention, the sentencing sections, other very bad things from the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments, did get through at that time and we're still living with them. Our federal prisons are jammed and the budget for prison construction is way behind. When all the prisons on the drafting boards

are built, we'll still be overcrowded when they're completed three years from now. That all comes from that bill.

The discretion of judges to mete out punishment according to the individual rather than just to the crime is taken away. A person is convicted of a crime ABC--and this is all saying we are getting away from forty-two kinds of burglaries down to three kinds--and you're convicted of that crime and then you look at something--like a tax book. What is the penalty for that? Well, that crime with extenuating circumstances but no mitigating circumstances is automatically ten years. There's no probation. There's no parole. So the judge just literally doesn't look it over. He has his probation report. He hears you are a good person, you never did anything wrong before, etc., etc., etc. But that doesn't help you because the mitigating forces do not outweigh the aggravating forces, and so you get your ten years where the judge automatically might have given you probation with no [prison] time or community service, or something like that. Anyway, that was Lungren's role.

So the S. 1 summary is that the First Amendment aspects of it, the things that paralleled so closely the dangers under the British secrecy laws which are

very, very bad, were defeated. I think we did stop those. The campaign on S. 1 worked. We certainly mobilized a national campaign on that one. But preventive detention, sentencing, denial of parole, probation, other criminal law procedural protections, habeas corpus, are still not knocked out although the Supreme Court-- This is very interesting. Rehnquist, who wrote the limitations on habeas corpus--it's the third area I'm mentioning here--Rehnquist wrote that when he was putting it together when he worked for the Justice Department under Mitchell. When the Congress does not act on habeas corpus, he gets a majority of the Supreme Court to limit the rights of habeas corpus on even capital crimes. If you've had one full hearing in the state courts, you get one appeal and then that is it, no matter almost what the evidence may be thereafter. So they're winning on that; habeas corpus is definitely weakened.

That's very important to point out. It's weakened. Habeas corpus is not a law. It's not even one of the Bill of Rights. It's a part of the Constitution. It's written into the body of the Constitution itself. It is restricted right today, so that is the reason we have nearly 3,000 on death row. The only way those people can be protected is when they

finally get up to their last appeal and we find ACLU civil rights lawyers ready to get in, and they step out and find this guy that had a public defender named the morning of his trial, he spent two hours with him, he was drunk when he came in, he handled the thing very poorly, and the guy in one day is found guilty by an all-white jury in a town that's 50 percent black, and you don't discover this thing until now he's on death row. He's finished all of his appeals in Mississippi, or Arkansas (shouldn't use that word right now, I guess). [laughter]

TRELEVEN: Alabama.

WILKINSON: Alabama or Florida. So it's a terrible, terrible loss. The sentencing provisions just are not working. To begin with, you know, imprisoning somebody is not going to reform them. If you've committed some crime when you go into prison, you'll be more likely to be a lifetime criminal by the time you get out. My own brief experience with the federal prison system taught me that.

TRELEVEN: [laughter] You are unreformable.

WILKINSON: Well, if they'd given me another five years in the federal prisons, I think I would have come out quite different. I know that I already was giving up some of my beliefs just from the standpoint of being

willing to almost kill a guard when my daughter confronted me with the Birdman of Alcatraz film when I got out of prison.

TRELEVEN: Well, to bring NCARL up to date, [there's been] a lot of effort and activity relating to something called the FBI Charter Amendment. I guess my question to you is why should I as a citizen want to have an FBI Charter Amendment? What will it do for me?

WILKINSON: Well, first, let's be clear that whatever amendments we get for the FBI we hope, by example, would go over to other intelligence agencies:

[Alcohol], Tobacco and Firearms [ATF], the IRS [Internal Revenue Service], and some of the other agencies that do work similar to the FBI. There's probably twelve of them if you include the army, navy, and marine intelligence agencies, and all those things.

You would think you don't need a charter. You'd think if you were coming from Mars you have your attorney general of the United States as your law enforcement. He sets up an investigative bureau, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to investigate possible violations of law, which then submits objective information to grand juries and then the judicial process takes place. Why do you need any charter? It's just a matter of seeing if people have

violated a specific federal criminal statute.

Without repeating what we've done here for sixty hours, beginning in '24 when J. Edgar Hoover was named by Attorney General [Harlan F.] Stone to head up the FBI--coming out of the violations that were apparent during the [Alexander M.] Palmer raids at the end of World War I--powers began to accumulate. What was promised to be a very business-like, efficient federal investigating police force--Federal Bureau of Investigation--accrued power, power, power, and Congress kept giving more and more money to it. And no guidelines. No guidelines were ever given to the FBI other than the enforcement of the federal criminal code. Meanwhile, every president by executive orders granted the FBI the powers to do more and more things. J. Edgar Hoover, who sat there for almost fifty years from 1924 till his death in 1972, accumulated these powers while claiming to build a very professional organization and spending millions and millions of taxpayers dollars on a public-relations campaign of how effective the FBI was, and the G-men getting their men. Meanwhile, it was moving more and more into the political area where instead of investigating federal criminal laws, they began investigating the political activities of individuals where there was no allegation

of an overt act that would be punishable under a federal criminal law. All presidents, I think, gave that power to Hoover. Certainly it should be noted that Franklin [D.] Roosevelt gave Hoover much power. But that was during World War II, so we've got to catch the Nazis. We've got to know that the American communists are not doing something they shouldn't do. During the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the Nazis and the communists were equally dangerous American forces, so Hoover was given the power to keep track of communists as well as Nazis and Silver Shirts, mostly Nazis. Then Roosevelt dies and Hoover has that power and he never relinquishes it.

Some presidents tried to cut back. I think even [Harry S] Truman tried to cut back a little bit. [Dwight D.] Eisenhower, it was never clear as to whether he ever did much cutting back; I don't think very much. Certainly the Kennedys were committed to cutting back on the power because by that time it was known that Hoover had data on personal lives, not only political activities but personal lives. We now know from the record, Hoover just had to remind the Kennedys that he wanted to work with them; it would be unfortunate if he had to release a tape recording of both Kennedys in bed with Marilyn Monroe. It was

hardly the picture that the Kennedys wanted to paint themselves in, and so they did not move in on Hoover. Certainly Lyndon Johnson used Hoover. He asked for and received some of these tape recordings of the sexual proclivities of some of his opposition people in the Senate and in the House.

Nixon certainly didn't do anything about it. No president did anything about it. So we get down to Watergate, where finally the smell of Watergate is so great Hoover is not there to defend his power. He's gone two, three years, so a legitimate committee is set up to investigate and a liberal like the late-Senator Frank Church was an ideal person for it. It was comparable to the earlier [Robert M.] La Follette [Jr.] committee hearings, where some of the abuses of economic power were brought out by Senator La Follette. The Church committee served the same purpose. They had the power of subpoena and they found out that a million Americans or more were under political surveillance. I myself didn't really take a look at that thing because I think we were all a little bit naive. I was surprised when I learned about my own file. Yet here was sworn testimony. In '75 there was sworn testimony that the committee had used COINTELPRO investigations against a committee seeking to abolish the unAmerican

activities committee. That was in the Church committee report, buried somewhere in those 3,500-pages. I never heard about it. I didn't really begin getting my files till the mid-70s, when, as I've told in other parts of this record, how mine started.

So we finally get the good thing--the FBI guidelines--from Gerald Ford. I'm repeating by summary that it's amazing that after fifty-two years--from '22 until '74--the FBI is not restricted. Finally under the Gerald Ford and Attorney General Edward Levi guidelines, for the first time the FBI is told they shall only enforce the federal criminal statutes and so the thousands of cases that were still pending in '76 when they were investigating political activities dropped to about twenty in one year's time. So there was a period of Ford and Jimmy Carter where it was over. Then another president--Reagan--comes along and throws it out.

So the answer to your question: we have learned historically that we cannot rely upon the whims of an FBI director to control himself. We cannot rely upon a good Gerald Ford to undo some of the things wrong done by a Franklin Roosevelt and others, and then only to have another Republican, Ronald Reagan, come along and throw it out. I mean, one could argue, well, now

Reagan is gone, [George H. W.] Bush may be gone, maybe [William J.] Clinton will write good guidelines for the FBI again. Who knows? It's very doubtful. There's very little in the record of Clinton that shows his concern about the FBI, to my knowledge. But even if he did write something good and carried it back to Gerald Ford, what does that mean?

What we need is a firm law, a law of the land, that says to the FBI, to the attorney general of the FBI, you shall only enforce the federal criminal statutes. Even before you begin doing that, Congress must repeal eight or ten of the speech crimes of the [Joseph R.] McCarthy era. That way the FBI will be what it wants to be. That's why we need that mandate. And, finally, let me be sure that should we win that mandate in '93 or '94--which we hope we will--I'm sure that within a year or five years thereafter Congress in a slightly different atmosphere will move to claim that the FBI's hands are being tied, they cannot really investigate some new problem. Not communism, not terrorism, but some new x-word that's got to be investigated, and there will be a move again to give the FBI powers to rescind a positive federal criminal code and by law to allow the president to allow the FBI to do certain things to protect the "national

security," quote unquote, of our country. It's an endless battle; it's a Jeffersonian battle. "The price of your freedom is eternal vigilance." It's everything we've learned in our lifetime. It rings out at you clearly. You never win these battles. It's a constant battle.

TRELEVEN: Well, perhaps the issue will be subversion in the television industry or the recording industry.

WILKINSON: I get your point and I just think that you-- We've won battles. I mean, take just NCARL in my lifetime. You know, we did abolish the unAmerican [activities] committee, we did repeal the concentration camp law, we did repeal the SACB [Subversive Activities Control Board], or at least weakened it. We stopped the worst parts of the criminal code. We've done a lot of things. Yet, take the unAmerican committee: We abolished it January 11, '75. Exactly five years later, Strom Thurmond named Jeremiah Denton to head up a new subcommittee called security and terrorism. So it's an endless procession. The First Amendment will always be under attack and it's going to require constant efforts to defend it, and a pretty absolute defense of the First Amendment in the political sense of the word.

TRELEVEN: How is that going to be done in a situation

where you have a very tenuous budget in NCARL? You now have a First Amendment Foundation to assist with the IRS status of taxes not paid, at least by the foundation. But it seems to me that that vigilance is going to require a hell of a lot more than the financial resources that NCARL has had--and probably will have in the future--are going to be able to cope with. How would you respond to my concern about lack of financial resources?

WILKINSON: Well, certainly, if you'd ask me this question July 1st you'd get a different answer now that you do here on September 1st because we're coming out of another financial crisis. But I'd add something that's more than resources, and that is how do you by affirmative action bring younger people into this leadership? Dick [Richard] Criley is now eighty. I'm seventy-eight. We have tried for fifteen years to bring young people, young women particularly, into leadership. We've gone through a series of efforts. So our lack of resources this year not only gave us a real threat to our ability to carry on this eternal vigilance that we do, but it also knocked out the latest of our younger leaders, Rachel Rosen DeGolia, who was very carefully groomed after Esther Herst, trained by Dick Criley to become acting director and as

director of NCARL so that if Dick and I retire or die, that this work carries on.

Let me, first of all, give you the momentary thing on finances. NCARL, from the time it was founded as the [National] Committee to Abolish HUAC in 1960, and before that when it was the Los Angeles Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms, always considered itself a subsistence organization. It always considered itself a temporary situation. One reason why I broke with the [National] Emergency Civil Liberties Committee [ECLC] is that it became a permanent, ongoing organization. I started out at thirty-five dollars a week after my blacklisting and worked up to ninety a week in take-home pay; no health benefits, no pensions, no nothing. We went through that from 1953 to now.

TRELEVEN: We're going to have to pick it up in a minute, Frank. We're at the end of the tape. Sorry.

TAPE NUMBER: IL, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 5, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, you were beginning to respond to my question about how NCARL [National Committee Against Repressive Legislation] can remain a key vigilant organization on the very limited financial resources that you are able to acquire.

WILKINSON: Let's pick up there to indicate that it has always been--and continues to be--a real problem because of the nature by which we set up our work. When we set up the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms, we were building a strong ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] affiliate in Southern California, at the time under Eason Monroe. Eason Monroe was one, together with Reverend A. A. [Aaron Allen] Heist, who set up this citizens committee to do things that ACLU was not strong enough to do. There was too much red-baiting on the board of ACLU. They still were under a loyalty oath program nationally, where you couldn't join unless you swore you didn't belong to a communist, Nazi, or fascist organization, and so on. So we just set up minimum-- I mean, we were all blacklisted people. I was the only staff person and minimum staff, and the organization grew by

a handful of liberals that were the mainstay of it starting out with Heist, people like Dorothy [N.] Marshall, Phil [Philip P.] Kerby, Betty [Elizabeth Poe] Kerby, people like that, Bob [Robert S.] Morris [Jr.].

Then the board grew out of each HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] or California state ["little HUAC"] hearing, that would be a "Class of"-- we'd say the spring of '56 or the fall of '56. When we got through that hearing fight-back, we'd ask that group of ten to forty people, "Will you pick one person among you to be on our board?" So by 1960, we had a board of about twenty-five doing just that. But without any security whatsoever--definitely no pension, definitely no health benefits--always building ACLU as the answer. So you not only build ACLU but you encourage your public, "Give your money to ACLU. Build a viable ACLU. Give what you can to us for this emergency." So we always squeezed by, no angels, small monthly pledges that sustained our work.

I've indicated on the other tape the need for affirmative action. We, just at this point now, are at a position where financially we are coming out of a crisis, but we are face-to-face with the fact that we do not have younger people in leadership. Rachel Rosen DeGolia, who we hoped would become director, first of

all had to move to Cleveland when her husband finished medical school in Chicago and had his internship in Cleveland. So we tried putting her on salary as sort of an acting director with limited salary, but there's no base there; there's no volunteer base; there's not a financial base.

Meanwhile, the Chicago Committee [to Defend the Bill of Rights], which Dick [Richard] Criley had helped to form in 1959, has lost its leadership and lost its funding and has a sustainer base of several thousand dollars a year, but not enough to do it. So we're losing in the one place where we really had a board and an officer that operated like a committee. It's a very bad time for us that way. That is more serious than the financial problem because Dick and I, just to name the two of us, can continue to do our work but if either of us should die or become enfeebled so that we're not able to work, there's nothing there. The mere fact of our track records in civil liberties, the fact that we were such major victims of HUAC, has given us a status that makes our organizational work more effective. In my own case in the writing of the book [The FBI v. The First Amendment] about the lawsuit, is that-- I'll give you an example: I got a call this week, would I come to Emory University in Georgia to

speaking both to a [National] Lawyers Guild chapter and a Methodist theological group down there? They'd heard about it. I'd wanted to go down there because they're celebrating the life of Reverend C. T. Vivian.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: He is one of our original founders of NCARL, so I wanted to do some speaking there to pay for my travel down there. Well, the woman who called me up with this heavy Georgia accent, I'd sent her a lot of stuff about what NCARL is and who I am, and she called back and said, "Oh, you are so humble! I can't believe we're so fortunate to get people like you to come.

Yes, we want you. We haven't got much money; we'll pay \$200, but please come." The word humble was used three times. What she's talking about is the fact that here she is a progressive law student in a conservative good law school like Emory University. She knows about rights from the youth standpoint, but the [Joseph R.] McCarthy era is just that bad period and the people who fought back were the good guys. She'd never met a good guy before, and so the fact of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] file-- So I'll get down there and I will be greeted very effectively.

The same thing has happened to me up at Davis at the end of the month at the [University of California]

I. Emerson--Ruth Calvin Emerson--saying that out of the legacy she has from Tom Emerson's estate, that she'd loan \$5,000 at one time if somebody would repay it. So a person put in \$5,000, you know, and then whenever the estate is settled, that person will be reimbursed. Then Dick Criley put in \$4,000 with the understanding that it would be paid back. So we've had these big debts, but it's protected by an ultimate legacy. But we got by with that sort of borrowed money. Then by the end of December, within a month after our conference, we were not able to pay our acting director--our hopeful national director--Rachel Rosen DeGolia a simple thousand dollars a month because we did not have it. She was getting behind. In fact, when she finally stopped receiving pay we owed her \$2,500. Kit Gage, who was our director, we fell behind on her in January, February and March till we owed her \$3,000. At that point, Kit went on unemployment [compensation] with the idea that she'd go on unemployment effective April 1st and if by August 1st we could get ourselves solvent again, she would return. Now, without a Washington representative you just don't have a viable national organization. You can do an awful lot from an L.A. base, but you've got to have a voice there in Washington.

So we did a series of things between April and July: We consolidated our offices, got other people in our office to share the rent. The First Amendment Foundation sharing the rent here means we get space now here for \$300 a month for NCARL. In Washington, we went from \$500 down to \$225 a month by relocating. So we got our rental income for the whole national movement down to \$550, which is unheard of for a national organization.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: You think of ACLU here with a budget of \$3 to 4 million. We're talking about \$500 a month, yet we're the ones that are on this cutting edge of the FBI issue. Then we just started doing what we could to raise money. We cut our overhead down to zero with Kit off the payroll and Rachel off the payroll. I don't receive any money. I had been paying all the petty cash expenses of \$500 a month out of my own pocket. So the committee owes me several thousand dollars, which at one punch would be a blow but when it trickles out at \$200 a month, \$300 a month, \$400 a month it's there, but it isn't quite as hard. The First Amendment Foundation does pay me \$1,050 gross--about \$800 take-home a month--so I've had some money with my Social Security [income], and now Donna [Childers Wilkinson]

has her Social Security, so we squeeze by. We own our home.

But we're getting down to July 1st, and Kit had said, realistically, she didn't want us raising money on just her being out, making that a personal appeal; it's got to be from the strength of the movement and the organization. So we agreed that on June 1st and August 1st, we'd take a look and see how solvent we were, and if at that point we weren't solving the problem then we would have to face the realities. The realities were never said in so many words but it literally could mean the end of NCARL, or at least nobody but this office out here and my working in it, which is hardly a national organization.

I put out a memorandum setting forth these things to our own officers and to our sustainers on July 1st, saying that by August 1st we had to have at least \$500 a month in new sustainers and \$5,000 in resources. Incidentally, we also owe money to the printer out here that let us go in the hole by \$3,000, and the travel is on my own personal American Express card. That got up to a \$2,000 debt. So I carry more debts in my mind than the movement knows are there. So we said we had to have \$5,000 in reserve so we could do something. You want to do a major mailing of fifteen, eighteen

thousand [pieces], you've got to have three, four, five thousand [dollars] on hand to do that, hoping you get it back. I put this thing out very straight-forward and the results have been very, very encouraging. As of now, I think, we have \$450 in new monthly sustainers.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: But it's, we told them, from July 1st through December. You know, maybe they will stay longer, some of them, but that's what our appeal was. I'm sure some of them will stop in January. Then on the \$5,000 I think we got up to close to \$7,000 that came in. Meanwhile, between April and July, we were paying back the money we owed Kit and Rachel. So Rachel is paid up in full; we paid that \$2,500. We paid Kit \$3,500 during this period where we were without staff. So our debts are down except for what people don't know, our printer and our travel--American Express. Then this money comes in. We paid up the last of what we owed Kit and we had about \$5,000 in the bank somehow after we paid things up, except these things mentioned not paid. Then Ruth Emerson came through with the legacy, and instead of just paying the \$9,000 that she'd promised to repay to Ginna [Virginia] Wilson in Princeton and Dick Criley, she sent through

\$15,000. So we paid Dick, we paid Ginna, and we had \$6,000 extra. So suddenly, we have \$10,000 in the bank.

Then I get a call from a retired professor of psychology at Stanford [University] who got one of these routine notices. "I had no idea that things were so close for you. I'm giving you fifty shares of"-- something called Psychologists something, Incorporated. It's a publishing company. We turned that in and a check for \$750 arrived two days ago. Then on top of that, when we sent Dick his check for \$4,000, he called me and said, "You know, I'd even forgotten that I'd loaned that to you." Dick isn't that wealthy. He'd forgotten he'd loaned it. He said, "I'm mailing it back to you." So suddenly we have--

TRELEVEN: An embarrassment of riches. [laughter]

WILKINSON: --between fourteen and fifteen thousand dollars in the bank. Kit goes back on the payroll August 1st. Meanwhile, she's picked up some other part-time jobs on a film on some Central American thing, so her cost to us--her take-home charge per week--is down to about a \$150. Rachel is not available; she's got another job, which is bad for us, but she's acting coordinator of the coordinating committee. So I paid back \$1,000 to our printer, and I

paid back \$1,500 to American Express. We still have about eleven or twelve thousand and money coming in.

So what it means--and I think for a record such as this--it means this: that after the forty years that either the Citizens Committee to Preserve American Freedoms, or the Committee to Abolish HUAC, or NCARL have existed from 1952, '53 to 1992, we have developed a reservoir of good will. People know that we operate essentially by volunteers and essentially with a subsistence budget. No one is paid a living wage. On the other hand, our cutting-edge work is always clear to people. The FBI is an issue; the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] is an issue that we're doing. So people have responded; we rarely call out. It was a one-page memorandum just setting forth the facts and saying what we needed and it brought in the returns. But this is just a moment in the history of the organization.

We're dependent primarily upon my health to continue and I hope to be on the road 165 days this year and to thirty-one states. The way the record's going now, I'll probably do something like that. My health is very good, but I'm seventy-eight. Dick Criley will continue to write and think and be a great help to us, but he's eighty and Dick has recently

learned he has prostate cancer and that is an unknown factor. So we're all on very shaky ground. We've restored ourselves financially and we will go ahead with the movement.

Finally, you're in an election year. We wanted to get 100 members of Congress on record to support H.R. 50. We've got up to fifty-one now, but with the Bush-[William J.] Clinton [presidential election] campaign where it is, no member of Congress is going to come out and take on one more controversial issue. There's no great voting constituency out there that says, "I'll vote for you if you will vote to control the FBI." It's the economy; it's freedom of choice; it's the [United States] Supreme Court; it's the racism of our society that concerns people.

We've had some problems among some of our offices of NCARL that are a worry. I've had two personal letters recently, one from our co-chair Michael [K.] Honey, another from Lyle Mercer who used to do our work in Seattle, and both of them arguing that the time had come to gracefully close down NCARL, and say, "We've done our good battle and let's close it up and wrap it up and let others take over." Lyle is retired and is uncomfortable with seeing-- (I'm saying something very subjective here.) I think I've found other people say

this, that Dick and I continuing as we have somehow, I think, causes a reaction, a negative reaction on the part of our peers who are saying, "Why don't you wrap it up? Enjoy yourself or get some money; take care of your family, your needs, your retirement, whatever you're going to do." Those letters both reflect that. Mike Honey, on the other hand, is an historian trying to get tenure at a University of Washington campus in Tacoma. He agreed to step in as a co-chair just because Ruth Emerson felt she couldn't do it with Tom on his death bed. Ruth is very strong and supportive and Mike is privately writing to me, "It's time to close down." So I think if you polled our officers-- what little we call upon them--if we said, "We think it's time to close," there would be very little argument about it because there's nothing much they can do about it. If I said, or Dick says, we should close, we're the ones that keep it alive, essentially, with our labors. So I'm confident that we will go on into 1993, carrying on the campaign on the FBI, a little broader argument than just the FBI into the national security state issues that we faced under Reagan.

Meanwhile, the First Amendment Foundation has had great success with the Criley book, The FBI v. The First Amendment. This week we're now publishing a new

book called Thought Control and Repression Under the Reagan-Bush Era. We'll have that out to have some impact on the pre-election campaign. We will continue as far as we can see. Financially, the people--even our younger people particularly--are a little dumbfounded by the financial response that I got from a letter. Some of them had been trying and they are very critical of officers who have their name on a letterhead and don't give enough, and they use language and pressures they shouldn't. We never have used pressure. People do [give], and so people like John Shattuck of Harvard University sends through \$150. Other people have sent through \$500, something like that. The older people, if you don't press too hard, know the importance of what we do and they want to help. But I think that we have once again demonstrated that NCARL is needed, and while it is weakened by age, as long as it keeps hammering away on a cutting-edge issue and doesn't spread itself into too many other issues, that it has a role to play, and continue. I hope it can continue until we can get Congress to pass legislation, a charter on the FBI that we talked about. I would like very much to see that. As far as my own role is concerned--if my health holds up--I hope I've got enough energy in me to provide leadership to do

things. As far as recruiting younger people, still, I'm not as sure about it. We've tried really hard for fifteen years one after the other to get younger people into leadership and so far we haven't really been able to afford younger leadership, and we haven't been able to build a financial base to make it secure.

TRELEVEN: Okay, by the year 2000 you'll be eighty-six. Do you expect to have chiseled Hoover's name off the FBI building by the year 2000?

WILKINSON: Well, we won't have to chisel it off. It can be taken down by government agencies, carpenters, masons. But I made it a light point, I think earlier, when I talked about my statement on radio to Studs [Louis J.] Terkel that if by 1995 we have not got this mandate to keep the FBI out of the First Amendment, that he and I at the same time--because I was on his radio program--should get a couple of long ladders, climb up on the FBI building in Washington, and chisel J. Edgar Hoover's name off that building, for which we will serve a lot of time. You can call that civil disobedience, but you can't holler, "Henry [David] Thoreau," and walk away free. So we will serve a lot of time for that, and I suggested to Studs that at that time we not rely upon a Dick Criley to write a book, but we sit down and go through our FBI files, and

Davis law school. I've spoken there repeatedly. But there's a whole new group of law students that are so excited about having one of us up there, whether it be Dick or me, and it has to do again with our track records. It's very hard to give that over to younger people. It's not a matter of just somebody willing to do the work, but we are examples of how the FBI attempted to neutralize and failed to neutralize, and we know the record. We've outlived the bastards, as it were.

TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: On the financial end of it, we've had never, never, never any large sum of money in NCARL, or even the First Amendment Foundation. In the First Amendment Foundation, it's been a little more secure always because it's tax exempt, it's a 501(C)(3) [Internal Revenue Service code], and people who want to give there and get a tax exemption can. Some people who would not have given a sizable sum to NCARL will give it to the First Amendment Foundation. So it's not strong, but it's stronger.

But the depression we're now in, to use the word correctly--

TRELEVEN: That's correct.

WILKINSON: --recession as [George H. W.] Bush would

call it--

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: --hit us at the very time of our greatest success in building the campaign on the FBI. Last October, eleven months ago, Kit Gage, one of our younger women leaders who I don't think thinks of herself as going on to become director of it (she could conceivably; she would be a hope that I would have in the back of my mind), but mostly she is doing our Washington, D.C. work, lobbying representatives. She brought together forty national organizations, not from the McCarthy years but groups that know now that they have been targeted by the FBI under Bush, under [Ronald W.] Reagan. They're there and they're supporting H.R. 50. It's a real kick-off when we end up now with fifty-one members of Congress on H.R. 50, the bill we want. At the very moment of that success, our income just is cut off. We lost 70 percent of our general contributions. People just are unable to give. With 9.8 percent unemployment here in California alone, less and less people are able to give a contribution to a civil liberties cause.

The recession had hit us pretty well by January, right at the end of our conference, and we got through the conference in part by the widow of Professor Thomas

finally write an autobiography using the expert
inexhaustible information that the FBI has brought
together for us to check our memory. Amazing amount of
accurate reports in the FBI reports.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: It would make a couple of good
autobiographies.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: We could do that while we're serving our
prison terms. That's a joking way I'd like to go out.
I hope it will not be necessary to do that.

TRELEVEN: Going way back, you wanted to be a minister.
Isn't it true in a way that you did become a minister,
preaching the gospel of the First Amendment?

WILKINSON: [laughter] Please, let this record show
that I belted out a laugh on that one. First of all, I
think there's entirely too much attention on this
record and in the public concept of myself, too much
attention focused on my role or my anything. I really
think that when I gave up plans for the Methodist
ministry, it was for good and proper reasons. I saw in
the Holy Land factual information that convinced me
that the miraculous conceptions behind Christianity
were simply not viable, and I could no longer believe
the Biblical story about Christ are as solid now as

they were then. Having been brought up in this wonderful Methodist home and sense of a social gospel, I think that when I dropped the plan for the ministry I merely impelled forward to carry out what got into my conscience as a child, into the first twenty-two years of my life. I think the only thing that's significant about the ministry business--not really quite the way to word it--I think you could say this: I have put the same zeal into civil liberties, or before that into slum clearance, that I would have put into the Methodist ministry. So that is a factor, a zeal. I continue to have that zeal. I often worry that I'm losing the zeal. It does trouble me from time to time. I'll stop and feel that I don't feel quite as passionately and angry about oppression as I did when I first saw poverty in Bethlehem or Jerusalem or Chicago when I was twenty-two. But I think essentially the zeal continues.

Beyond that, I think all I represent--and something that Anne Braden, Carl Braden's widow, often talks about--is that when I have sensed personal wrong or organizational wrong, abuse of power, I have fought back. And I think that fighting back is part of that zeal. It's part of this idealistic concept of religion that I have in the sense of that backward old-time-

religion sense of my upbringing. When they tried to segregate the new housing, we fought back and we integrated it. All the way through my experience in the housing days, I fought back individually and with others to insist on integration of the program. When I was attacked in the eminent domain proceeding and was really knocked out, really made a pariah--I mean, very few people had a worse record than I had in '52 in Los Angeles--at that time I really felt my days were ended. I remember feeling that I was useless when Reverend [A. A.] Heist, Eason Monroe, and others came to me to get me to work on the Citizens Committee. I said I would destroy it. "Anything I touch I'll destroy."

Interestingly enough, it was my foster sister Margrethe Petersen, Republican conservative who lived with our family and my sister [Hildegarde] for so many years who had argued, "You just stay in there, Frank. The pendulum has gone this way now. In time the pendulum will go the other way." I'll never forget her saying that. At the time I couldn't see the pendulum returning. In '52 it really looked like the end of the end of the end for me. I was finished.

But by '53, I was fighting back and given the opportunity to defend the victims of HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities]. The old zeal came

back and I became a good organizer again, fighting back. From that we go on up to really building a national movement. The same zeal-- All of us-- Really, the fight-back against the unAmerican committee was not done from outside. It wasn't done by ACLU because it's a First Amendment issue; it was done by those of us that had been most seriously hurt by the committee. We built our committees on those of us that had been subpoenaed before the committee. We fought back.

The lawsuit [Wilkinson v U.S.], the First Amendment challenge of the committee, is part of the answer here. My own growing concepts of the First Amendment are a concept here. I really had no concept of the First Amendment when I went out of the [City of Los Angeles] Housing Authority. I signed loyalty oaths, as you know from this record, from 1942 forward. Just before I joined the Communist Party, I took a loyalty oath for the federal government, saying I was not a communist. Then on the [California Howard K.] Levering oath, which was not strictly anti-Communist Party but "advocating the overthrow of the government by force and violence," I signed those every year from '42 to '52. I'm out and down and feeling really finished and I begin to rebuild, and as I rebuilt the concept of the First

Amendment came into my mind: that you cannot undertake a major social change, whether it be for decent housing, in my case, and certainly in terms of today's world, you cannot build socialism, or a better society, a better economic structure without the First Amendment, the political sense of that word.

[Alexander] Meiklejohn's influence on me was as important to me, probably, as was my family or the church. He really gave me the sense of the critical importance of the absolute defense of the First Amendment. After I read his stuff and then reviewed what I'd been through from '52 to '56, I decided that if I ever should be called myself before the committee, I would go to jail if necessary on the First Amendment. Not as a tactic--in fact, everybody argued against the thing as a tactic--[but] it was a matter of personal conscience and responsibility. That's what I felt. That is part of the fighting back. It's part of the zeal, you might say, that is somewhere in me, that I was ready to go to jail. Before this record is over, I want to pay reference to my decision to do these things and the impact I had upon both my first wife, Jean, and Donna, and my children and her children. I made a decision, but their impact is another thing I want to mention.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, which I do want to get back to.

WILKINSON: All right, it just seems to me that when you fight back, when you really try to, in a Biblical sense, carry out the most socially significant teachings of our religions of the world--primarily in my concept of Western religions, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Christianity--when you do fight back, you obtain respect and you get an inward drive that is very satisfying, is a good way of life. Going to jail was not a tactic. From my standpoint I felt very comfortable about going to jail. I felt when I was there in the [United States] Supreme Court and heard Hugo [L.] Black talk about Carl [Braden] and me and Lloyd Baranblatt and Willard [E.] Uphaus, in terms of what the First Amendment is all about, I felt very proud. I found myself crying not from fear--which was there--but sort of a pride that, somehow or other, history had brought me around to the point where I was taking a stand which is basic to the First Amendment, to the survival of the democratic process. I felt good about it. To some in the public it's another thing. Some saw it as a tactical thing. *[Some, I'm sure, had a

*Mr. Wilkinson added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

difficult time understanding what we did was a matter of conscience and personal responsibility.] They didn't see it that way; it worked that way because we couldn't talk to enough audiences on our way in or the way out of prison to people who wanted to support a cause for which people were willing to go to jail for.

At any rate, the fight-back is there and then finally-- Let's go back a bit. When I was out of the housing authority, I could have folded up my tent and gone into private business. Many of the victims of HUAC went into private business and became successful in some commercial venture. There's nothing wrong with that. They had the ability. The ability that made them good progressives also made them good business people. I could have done that and I for some reason or another chose to stay in there and to fight. When I could have overcome-- I probably would never have had a-- I think the FBI surveillance of me, which turned into COINTELPRO [counterintelligence program] which began in '42 and continued to '80, if after '52 I had just gone into business of some sort, they might very well have left me alone as long as I wasn't speaking out on social issues. It's when I really became effective as an organizer against HUAC, they started the COINTELPRO and really gave it the real, dirty,

hard, miserable treatment. But that's one thing.

When I learned of the FBI file in '80, here we've abolished HUAC and we've done these other things, we've got a record, I mean, I'm even being given the ACLU's "First Courageous Advocate Award." I mean, it's sort of a time to lean on your laurels by 1980. In 1980, that's twelve years ago, I was sixty-five-plus and I could have retired and found something to add to my social security that we could have survived on. But there's something about getting the FBI file and seeing the damage that had been done to NCARL, to me--and I think too often I get the two mixed up because the focus was primarily on me because I was the director of the thing--but the real target was NCARL and the [National] Committee to Abolish HUAC. When I saw that, I could have just taken those first 4,000 pages, and made a little space in our library, and said, "God knows what else they've got on me, but here's that." Instead of that, I went to the lawyers, to ACLU, to Loeb and Loeb, and said, "I think I have a justiciable case. I want to know what's going on." I brought out all this FBI attack--132,000 pages--brought it out and when I got it we were fighting to end it for all people. We were not just a "Stop Attack on NCARL." The motive of the lawsuit was not damages; it was to

stop the FBI from violating the First Amendment.

When we got it, again, what do you do with it? I swear that when we got the 132,000 pages in 1987, trickling in after that, no one really knew about this except the lawyers and even the judge, and a few of us like Criley and myself in NCARL, and you as a recorder of this history. Again, we could have-- We didn't stop them from doing it, we just got the-- We protect ourselves by getting the files away from them and getting a judge to rule that if they ever did it again, they would pay monetary damages without further litigation. But the material: What do you do? Do you publicize the fact that you've got the largest FBI file? Do you build the pariah period of your history into a book? Do you broadcast it? Do you send it out? We decided, "Yes, the whole public should learn about this thing. We shouldn't keep it to ourselves. We should publicize it. We should use our lawsuit."

TAPE NUMBER IL, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 5, 1992

TRELEVEN: Go ahead. You were talking [off tape] about what the FBI is doing under Reagan and Bush.

WILKINSON: Reagan and Bush. That's the record we-- Just as going to jail helped to add to the campaign to abolish HUAC, I think we've used the lawsuit and the knowledge of the FBI's violations of NCARL's and my rights as part of a campaign to get a law passed by Congress that will stop political surveillance, disruption, spying by the FBI, stop the FBI from violating the First Amendment. That again is part of fighting back. I close this long statement here to you. You asked about aren't you in a sense a minister of some sort, a religious minister.

TRELEVEN: Secular minister.

WILKINSON: Secular, whatever. I don't think I've evaded your question. I've tried to indicate this: I think, as Anne Braden has often said, the thing that distinguishes her work, and Carl's, and my work, and of course many, many others like us, is that when we were under attack we fought back. I think that is to our credit. That is very much to our credit. But if Donna, my wife, were here she would say that "Frank was

never much of a communist, never much of a materialist. In his guts he's still a Methodist." It worries her when I go to speak to these teachers in Oklahoma, Nebraska, Arkansas on the FBI versus the First Amendment today, these are very profoundly religious people. They are exactly where I was fifty-five years ago. These hymns come back into me. I mean, I wake up in the middle of the night with hymns that I learned in the Epworth League at the Hollywood Methodist Church when I was twelve years old. They're in your gut, somehow; they're in your brain, somehow, and they come out. But am I in any conscious way trying to continue a frustrated role in the ministry? Hell, no!

[laughter] I am an atheist and I have absolutely no belief in anything that is supernatural. I believe in the teachings of a better world, whether it comes from Mohammed, or Christ, or a Hindu, or any of the many Asian religions. The teachings are great and I think they're essential to making the kind of world which will be better, and which if you practice it isn't just because you want to do good to another guy, but because you want to be safer and more secure in your own life by building a better world. You make yourself something. All my drives have been essentially selfish reasons, not noble, not whatever [J. Edgar] Hoover

referred to it--martyring reasons.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, martyrdom.

WILKINSON: But I mean, you get down to it, you want a better world because you yourself will be better off [when] we've ended poverty, and racism, and sexism, and all the other acts that violate the human spirit.

TRELEVEN: Okay, a few more questions here. As of September 5th, 1992, if you label yourself politically, what would that label read?

WILKINSON: What I am? Label?

TRELEVEN: Yeah. Or shall I rephrase that?

WILKINSON: Yeah.

TRELEVEN: Are you still an independent communist?

WILKINSON: I think so. Let me expand upon that; standing by itself would not describe what I'm saying. This gets into the whole concept of our nation at this time proudly claiming, "We've won the Cold War." And I answer you when you say, "Are you an independent communist?" and I say, honestly, yes. As I look back over my politics, including membership in the Communist Party, I think I was right to join it when I joined it, and I also think I was right to leave it when I left it in '72, because domestically I found that the American Communist Party was opposing my respect in the First Amendment. I by '72--certainly by '56, sixteen years

before that--had already reached the point where I felt that the protection of the First Amendment in the Meiklejohnian sense of the word was a political absolute. It's often hard to take those stands. There's always pressures to the contrary. So when I left, I think I was correct because membership in the Communist Party was incompatible with the First Amendment. I put the First Amendment ahead of that particular organization.

I think the failure of the American Communist Party stems very directly from the fact that it violated our own American Bill of Rights in so many ways, we now know privately. It was never so much known to me. In fact, a lot of things were unknown to me, as they were to probably other individual members of the Communist Party. We didn't know these things. I have often said if I ever heard that we were getting money from the Soviet Union, I would leave the Party because I knew the weaknesses of the Soviet Union. I'd seen it. I had hope for them, but I didn't want that here. I felt that we had to have democracy. You only build a good socialist government anywhere in the world with democracy. I was a democratic socialist always, I think; certainly from '56 forward. So I left for good reasons.

I'm not a scholar in terms of the economics of socialism and all the reasons it failed. I think when you look at the worldwide scene today in terms of the so-called failure of communism, the collapse of socialism, I think to me that failure comes apart by one starting out initially to build a socialist state without democratic principles. I think that goes right back to the Russian revolution from the beginning.

I think that I could understand some of the things they did because from the beginning the Cold War didn't start in 1946 with some speech by [Winston L. S.] Churchill or Joe [Joseph L.] Rauh, Jr., who died today; he founded the ADA in 1945, whenever it was--Americans for Democratic Action--and doing it to fight, as he said, not just the right wing, but the Progressive party, which is part of the Cold-War language. The Cold War really began in 1917. I was three years old. I was born into a cold war the third year of my life, living down there in [Douglas] Arizona, the Russian revolution. What happens after that? The Russian revolution was an outcry of the dispossessed, the poverty-stricken, the illiterate, the poor people of the masses of Russia. All the things, the anti-Semitism, everything, were so horrible over there under the Czar. Well, what happens? We send in the white

armies, you know, from [Great] Britain, America, and other countries to put it down. While they establish a socialist USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], at that point they immediately had to send their forces out to defend from attack. Our CIA of 1947 was already in there--as another form--from the beginning in 1917 and trying to disrupt, to destroy, to sabotage their efforts. So they set up all kinds of structures in their system which were defensive, to protect the new socialism from the attack from the West or from the capitalist world. They did that, and I understand that. I think if they hadn't done that the Soviet Union would have been destroyed by 1920 or 1925. So I understand that. I don't think it was right.

Earlier in this record I indicate going to the Soviet Union in 1936, '37. I went in there with the whole cold-war mentality of the Russian revolution forward, where even my family--I've thought more recently--campaigned against Upton [B.] Sinclair because he had these anti-religious attitudes, and Russia was anti-religious. When I started out for the Holy Land, I was religious. By the time I get to the Soviet Union, I see through that part of it. But you know, I was appalled by the poverty. I saw the positive things in Russia, for sure. I saw the efforts

to end anti-Semitism; I saw the efforts to give everybody a job; I saw what I thought to be a better treatment of women, which was important to me; from 1935, '36 forward it became important to me. Yet, I could see the backwardness of that whole country. I saw what apparently were some kind of slave laborers marching through the streets of Moscow in 1937. I saw these things. I saw the a lot of things. I took a picture, entering from Finland into the Soviet Union on a railroad train, and was immediately hauled off the train and had my film confiscated. So I had first-hand experiences with the negatives of that. But I was prepared to not accept it or to approve it, but to understand it because the pressures were on so great in the forces of fascism that were moving. I had just before then spent three months living under [Adolf] Hitler, and three months living under [Benito] Mussolini, and I saw the powers there, and also [Antonio de Oliveira] Salazar in Portugal and in fascist Spain. I'd seen those things. I'm one of those who thought that the Soviet Union would fall within six weeks when the Nazi armies moved against them, because I saw their weaknesses. Therefore, I was ready to understand why they did some of the things they did.

But in my country, I never had looked upon Russia

as a place where the streets are paved with gold. I mean, a lot of American communists who I've known had never been over there, but they just had a concept of the Soviet Union as the ideal place. It was never the ideal place. Backward in so many ways.

So I think that when you talk about the Cold War, which I now challenge when we say, "We won the Cold War," as though that is good. I think we have to realize that the Cold War made Russia, made the Soviet Union, made the socialist European countries more and more anti-democratic, more backward, than they would have been otherwise. If they'd been left free to develop socialism--having had their revolution which was desired and the right of revolution is something that must be fought for--having established it, they could have been left then to work it out in their own way without constantly being under attack, constantly being sabotaged, constantly sanctioned against in terms of getting products, or whatnot, and then even trying during the first years of World War II to direct Hitler and Mussolini against Russia rather than the war that it finally became against England, France, and the United States. I think that the Cold War is to be condemned for having prevented democratic socialism from evolving in the first socialist country,

preventing democratic socialism from getting started in Eastern Europe. Literally, Eastern Europe was set up as one further step by the Soviet Union as a buffer against anticipated further attacks from the West and the powers that wanted to overthrow the Soviet Union. So Germany, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, all these countries, are buffers in their mind, part of the Cold War. So that damage I think I'd like to make clear.

But look at our own country, what the country is doing. We now say we won and we look at how the Soviet Union has fallen, how the people now have their lack of democracy over there, their lack of material goods of the simple kinds, and have turned against the Soviet Union very understandably, but we caused that. But look at our own country. We now have a four trillion-dollar debt, three-fourths of that created in the last ten years, and we've not destroyed our country, but we have weakened our country. We've got a deficit unprecedented that makes it impossible to pull out of another one of these cyclical, anticipated, forecastable depressions of capitalism. We've got a problem we can't solve. We can't do like Roosevelt: we'll spend money like Japan is doing. We're putting eighty-six-billion dollars in to prop up Japan. We don't have that. We've got trillions in debts. So, we

won the Cold War? What did we win? We destroyed ourselves domestically; we weakened capitalism. By our military build-up, we forced them to put their money into the military.

The L.A. Times this last week showed these unbelievable pictures of the environmental damage that the atom bomb has done to the Soviet Union. All over that country they have polluted their streams, their lakes, their lands. The Soviet Union is an environmental quagmire. It's unbelievably destroyed. It will take tens of thousands of years to clean up the Soviet Union again to where you could even go to the bank of a river and fish for something--to say nothing of eating the fish--just sit there under a tree without having your thyroid turn to cancer. We did that by forcing them; we had the hydrogen bomb, they had to have an H-bomb, so they did everything. They got a bucket of atomic plutonic material? You just throw it out the window into the yard: "We've got to get this thing built; we've got to get one built by 1950. We've got to do that or they'll use one on us."

What we did to our country, we weakened our own system economically. We polluted, we caused Russia to pollute their country. While we've been much more careful about our atomic stockpiles in this country,

every day there's new information that we're not as crude in our disposal of atomic wastes, but we have our own huge atomic wastes in this country and dangerous to our environment here. It's very true there.

So who wins the Cold War? Finally, in terms of my story, what would have happened in my life if there hadn't been a Cold War?

TRELEVEN: Well, before you move on to that, is the Cold War really over, Frank?

WILKINSON: The Cold War is not over and I think the Cold War will continue well into the twenty-first century. Who knows when it will end? Let's just take one reference that is personal, again: NCARL's and my own lawsuit against the FBI. We used the justice system; we used the laws of the United States; we used the courts to prove that it was in violation of the First Amendment. We put in twelve years and win all the battles, down to the end where we have the clearest evidence that I would never have gone to jail if the FBI and the federal government had not withheld exculpatory information from the sole witness they were able to find--not that I wasn't a communist--but their witness that they had found had lied. They didn't know themselves whether I was a communist or not, so they

used this Anita Bell Schneider, knowing that she was emotionally unstable. So we used the ultimate British common-law protection of coram nobis, a writ of error, to overturn my conviction of 1961 on the basis that the government withheld exculpatory information. We should have won. But what happens? We get into a federal district court which is contaminated by the Reagan-Nixon Cold War mentality, lack of respect for our Bill of Rights, and we lose through just pure incompetence; just a judge that didn't know what he was doing, obviously. We get to a court of appeals where we have the same system, where our judicial system is simply so permeated with the people that Nixon, Reagan, and Bush have put on there, to say nothing of the fact that Democrats--in their own effort to appease the right wing and through the Cold War atmosphere--have named their own negatives to the court. You get down there and say to the judge, "Here we've got evidence that the person against me was emotionally unstable. We're not asking now for a settlement; we ask for discovery. We'd like to know more about Anita Bell Schneider. What did the government have? Did the FBI have that document that day in the federal district court in the old Fifth Circuit? What do they mean by 'emotionally unstable?' Do they have some material we don't want?

We ask you, judge, that." And the lead judge, in an angry tone, sitting up there on the bench with this brilliant, competent representation that NCARL and I have had from the ACLU, and Loeb and Loeb--Paul [L.] Hoffman, Doug [Douglas E.] Mirell, others, the ACLU of Georgia--turns to them and says, "I don't know whether--" (In effect, I'm paraphrasing.) "I don't care whether she's emotionally unstable or not. What I want to know, is he a communist? Was he a communist?" Doug Mirrel correctly tries to address that judge: "Your honor, that is irrelevant to this case. Mr. Wilkinson has never answered that question. That was the reason he went to jail in the first place. What we're asking for is discovery, whether or not Mr. Wilkinson's First Amendment rights were violated." And the judge comes back, "Is he or is he not a communist?" Doug tried his best to make the argument. The judge just bangs his gavel and says, "Aw, come on now!"

So we now end up a twelve-year lawsuit with a classical example of the Cold War going in full circle. It began with me in '42 and it goes through 1992, fifty years. We get to the end, we've won all the battles; I have the file. The FBI can't do it to me anymore, they can't do it to NCARL anymore. We have the record. We're moving politically, but when you get down to the

basic sixty-four-dollar question, "Are you or are you not a communist?"--whether it's Joseph [R.] McCarthy or the HUAC of 1930 under Hamilton Fish--it's the same thing. There's no change. Sixty-two years have gone by and the question still is, "Are you or are you not a communist?" So the continuing Cold War has stopped the NCARL lawsuit short of victory.

If we had won in the court, Don Edwards was prepared to go to Congress on a special bill to have the record set clear, you win in the court on a coram nobis. There could have even been damages obtained from the federal government for having illegally imprisoned me, and that money would have been very helpful to carry on our political campaigns and get younger people into leadership on our work. But we lost, so the Cold War is with us and is there. But I think I've said all I need to say about the Cold War. Let me just think for a minute.

TRELEVEN: Okay, let me--

WILKINSON: You've got a question that relates maybe?

TRELEVEN: Yeah, to the judge's question. Clearly, you could have been materially more comfortable. One might argue that you might have far better family stability had you never joined the Party. Do you have regrets that you did join the Party, as you look back?

WILKINSON: Absolutely none. I joined the Communist Party for the right reasons. I never gave up. At the time I joined, when there were those who were urging me to join, I had this feeling that I wanted to be an individual. I didn't want someone else dictating anything to my mind. I wanted to build a better world as an individual, and I found that the Communist Party as it was in 1942 represented so many of the things that I believed in, and was doing them, and doing them correctly. The Communist Party was an organization then of 100,000 members. There were very few parts of the structure of Los Angeles that were not directly, positively influenced by the Communist Party when I joined it. I'm glad I joined the Communist Party. It was correct I joined the Communist Party. What I think I'm saying when I'm asked what would have happened to me if there had not been a Cold War--

TRELEVEN: No, I understand what you said, and I'm not trying to link the two. What I wanted to follow up that question with--

WILKINSON: All right. Well, anyway, when I left the Party, I had no regrets of leaving the Party. See, at no time did I ever do anything for the Communist Party--

TRELEVEN: Right, which you--

WILKINSON: --that was contrary to my beliefs. I never

followed an order. I never took a direction. I never did those things, and I was in the Party from '42 to '72, maybe '75, I don't know, '73, '74, whenever it was I got out, thirty years. You know, I remember fighting the Party on issues when they wanted to integrate housing at the expense of black people having the greater problem in the slums. I fought them. I fought Bill [William] Taylor on the thing. When they wanted to outlaw the Nazi Party, I fought them on that thing. You can't do those things from the First Amendment. You've got to have this free marketplace of ideas. The only way you can build a better world is the free marketplace of ideas. They couldn't do it in Russia because they were an impoverished country coming out of feudalism. On top of that, they were really threatened every day of their lives by the West coming in to destroy, subterfuge, back up, misinformation, anything to weaken that country over there. But in this country it's different. We have democracy; we have the Bill of Rights; we have a tradition--and you could build. I never once allowed the Communist Party to influence me on that.

I know one time when I was still in the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles] and the Cold War pressures were so intense on us all, and I was working

with Ed [Edward] Lybeck, who was campaign manager for Helen Gahagan Douglas, and I was walking up Hill Street--or Spring Street--with Ed with a woman who I knew to be a communist. Ed did not know. Ed was violently anti-communist, as was Aubrey [W.] Williams, for that matter--the founder of our committee--and I made some remark that clearly was of an anti-communist nature. I mean, I red-baited, subtly. I don't know what the issue was. I probably said something that could be construed as separating me from communism or saying something negative about it. And I resigned from the Party for a week's time--this would be in 1951, '52--I resigned from the Party because I had red-baited in a private conversation with a guy I worked with. It's like I might be dealing with you yourself and you knew nothing about my politics. I sort of misled him briefly by my own red-baiting. It was a protective mechanism because the fears were so great.

Look what happened a month later when I refused to answer and the whole world falls in on me. At that time, I'm working with the Catholic church; I'm taking the cardinal on tours of the slums; I'm liaison to the Republican party, the city council, the mayor. If anyone had any idea that I was a communist at that time, I would have been ended as I was in August of

'52. So those pressures around caused me to say something. I wish I could remember what it was, but it was something that caused me to appear to be not a communist. Not an anti-communist thing, but it made me not a communist. So the guilt over that, this guilt which comes out of the Methodist tradition, I think, the religious thing. I was wrong and I resigned. A special meeting was held by some of the leaders in the Communist Party in the areas of social service that I was involved in, in which they said I was wrong, but I shouldn't leave the Communist Party. I should stay in there and not do it again. And I broke down and I cried because I had been anti-communist for a moment on Spring Street with Ed Lybeck. I did rejoin, but there was a week there when I was out.

TRELEVEN: This record that we've made over the last, I suppose, eight years--counting the pause because of FBI intrusion and other things--will not be available until five years after your death, and that record will reveal that you were a member of the Party. Why do you consider it important to keep it private until then?

WILKINSON: I think when I wrote this contract with you [legal agreement with UCLA], I'm thinking of other people. I have mentioned other people who are communists, I'm sure, many times in this record who the

public doesn't know are communists, and I was thinking that way. Five years will hardly protect enough, so that isn't quite enough of an answer to you.

TRELEVEN: No, it isn't, and this is something I think your wife, Donna, has asked you a few times.

WILKINSON: Yeah, she wants the record-- You know, Donna, speaking for herself, you know, feels that everybody who was a communist should come out and say they were a communist. They should all become Dorothy [Ray] Healeys, or something of that kind. I know today if the people of Arkansas-- If the president of the bar association of the state of Nebraska, where I'll be speaking this month, for one moment knew this record, I would not be there. When I'll be there, I'll be there to talk about the dangers of the FBI violating the First Amendment. I'll be saying the very things that the bar association needs to hear. Somehow or other, as times have changed, I'm no longer a pariah; I'm a guy who was unfairly attacked by the FBI. I can use that to educate them that the Reagan and Bush FBI are now after you, members of the bar association of Nebraska.

So Donna is totally unreal. Donna would not like me to speak to a lot of these service clubs and groups. I'm thrilled at the fact that Emory University is

bringing a theological group in with a bar group to speak, because I can work there. I'm speaking in Nebraska to three different service clubs. I wrote yesterday trying to get myself into a major Methodist group in Des Moines when I'm there this month. (Yes, October.) What do you say when you've got privileged [information]? (It's a word when you're publishing a book.) You say it's embargoed until such and such a date if you're doing a-- The embargo I placed on my story, I have nothing about me until I'm dead. I mean, I will no longer lose a speaking date in Nebraska where I think I can do good.

I know damn well that the Cold War is so well with us now that if I can continue, if we can keep NCARL strong enough to build it, we would never be able to get a law through Congress at this stage of the Cold War, if people that I'm working with knew I had been such a devout communist and still refuse to deny that I was wrong. I mean, I don't come out of the Party saying, "It was a mistake. I was a fool. I was young. I was wrong." I'm proud of the fact that I joined the Party when I joined. It was the right thing to do. It was the courageous thing to do. It was a logical step toward building democratic socialism in America. I got out at the right time. The moment that they tried to

interfere with my free thinking on the First Amendment, I left them, and I left them regretfully because I think they were wrong. The reason that the Party is dead today is because they've never seen that in America you can only build socialism with a democratic base. They've never learned that. They act as though they're in the Soviet Union with the guns of Hitler and the United States pointed at them, and therefore they have to silence freedoms. They act the same way in the United States as if they're afraid that we have no such attack. We're a free people and we should go into the marketplace and argue our case out.

At some point I want to say something here about what would have happened to me without the Cold War.

TRELEVEN: That's right. I had gone off in a little different direction, so let's say--

WILKINSON: Let's wind up the Cold War thing, then I have one thing I want to say about my family, and then I've got it [all] said.

TRELEVEN: I have a little trouble connecting here. Okay, does what you're going to say relate to you having joined the Party in '42 had been no Cold War to begin with?

WILKINSON: Yeah, I guess so. I wasn't thinking of it that way. The point is that when-- I really think the

Cold War goes back to 1917. That's where I begin.

TRELEVEN: Yes, okay.

WILKINSON: So I'm born into it. Let's forget the fact that-- We can't forget anything. I just think that if the Cold War had not existed in our country, I would have become, logically, the director of the Housing Authority of the City of L.A. [Howard L.] Holtzendorff has been dead for a number of years, the man that I would have had to replace. I could have fought for that and would have worked for it. Chávez Ravine would not be a ballpark but a housing project. Watts would not be a ghetto. We would have gone far in eliminating all slums in L.A. and achieved integration, prevented the ghettos that we now have, and all that.

And, politically, already as early as '48, Stanley Mosk on the Supreme Court of California--[and other] still-leading Democrats in the [Democratic] party--were asking me to work politically for them in ways that very easily I could have run for Congress, and I could have been elected to Congress. My popularity was such, if there had not been this Cold War atmosphere--I'm not talking about on me, but the general atmosphere--I could have been elected to Congress. I think if I could have, I would have been perfectly willing to stay on in housing to fight to keep it what it was intended

to be, to be sure that it wasn't just housing, but it was a place--a base--where people who had not had economic opportunities could grow and develop. We would have changed public housing to something which would allow private ownership of the housing. I think that would be a direction I would have gone in because I think private ownership of one's house is essential, is a positive thing.

TRELEVEN: I heard Jack [F.] Kemp say that at the Republican [National] Convention.

WILKINSON: Well, I have to know more about what he means by it than what I mean by it. I think that if we had built good housing-- The Cold War contributed to the fact that under [Robert A.] Taft we built inferior housing for poor people, and the moment you got a buck over a dollar figure, you give in to private enterprise instead of building good housing for poor people and then saying, "Now, we're going to subsidize you as long as you need it, but the moment you can afford to pay for this good house we've given you, then you're going to get to stay here. We want you to stay here. We want you to be a community leader, but you'll have to pay the economic rent. The taxpayers won't subsidize you." That's what I mean, because you can't try to get Kemp to say take over the ownership of Imperial Gardens

or Jordan Downs--as Kemp is talking about now. Those things were legislatively mandated to be slums from the very beginning, to say nothing of the selection of the sites after the Chávez Ravine failure. They were bound to become ghettos and it can never, never, never work.

I have something I want to--

TRELEVEN: Were you going to go on with the Cold War, or is that about it?

WILKINSON: Let me just see if I can't, in a paragraph, say what I want to say. The Cold War was something that did as much damage to America as it did to the communists in the Soviet Union. It was destructive in every aspect in terms of progress. The waste of money militarily, intellectually, every way, it was a negative. It's been very bad for our country, as we talk about now when to win an election Bush has to go down and sell 150 more planes to Taiwan to save some congressional district in Texas. That's all part of where it all came from. So any thought, any language, that talks about the Cold War as, "We've won the Cold War," in a proud way is totally false and has to be recognized as that. It's like calling the uprising here in Los Angeles in May a "riot." You know, it's not the right way. It was an uprising on the part of people who were really, really suffering and crying out

for something better. So I just see the Cold War as bad for everybody, and we should in no way be proud of it. We should consider it a bad thing to begin with and a thing that has held back social progress throughout my lifetime. Certainly, my god, it's the seventy-fifth year, for me, since I think the Cold War started, and it's still with us.

Now the only thing, if there's any more tape left, I want to just say one thing about family. Is there any tape left or not?

TRELEVEN: I think what we're going to do is to take a break and I'm going to have to put a new tape on because I don't want to rush the family part, and I think we should take as much time as we need.

WILKINSON: All right.

TAPE NUMBER: L, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 5, 1992

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're on to our third tape and we did not want to wind up this interview, Frank, without getting what I'd call an update about your family. I know that you wanted to talk about this. Shall we start with Jo [Hildegarde Wilkinson Nachowitz], Jeff [Jeffry], and Tony [Anthony] or how would you like to go at this.

WILKINSON: Well, let me give you a feeling that I have at the end of this tape. I have tried recently to remember to what extent I've talked about Jo, Jeff, or Tony, or Bobby [Robert], John, and Billy [William Childers] for that matter.

TRELEVEN: Yes, right. We have interspersed Jo, Jeff, and Tony in various contexts, and I think the thing that remains unanswered right now is: Where are they? What are they doing?

WILKINSON: What about Bobby, and John, and Billy? They've been with me now twenty-some years.

TRELEVEN: We haven't talked about the Childers much at all. But why don't we start with your children, maybe take you way back to Ohio and talk a little about Donna, and then what happens after that.

WILKINSON: I'm not just sure why the reference to the family is made here at the end because without the family support that I've had throughout this time, I could not probably have done the things that I wanted to do, that seemed right to my conscience to do, on the First Amendment.

TRELEVEN: It's because we saved the most important thing till last.

WILKINSON: I like to think of that.

TRELEVEN: Okay.

WILKINSON: So for the record, let it be this way: I married Jean Benson in 1939 and we had three children, beginning with Jeff in 1942, Tony 1944, and Jo in 1946. We were married for twenty-seven years. We divorced in '65 at the time when my children were--whatever is the year figure there--probably seventeen, nineteen, twenty-one, something of that kind. Jo was still living at home. Tony was just beginning to leave home to study up in San Francisco [State University].

TRELEVEN: Yeah, twenty-three, twenty-one, and nineteen, right about there.

WILKINSON: Something like that.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: Then the following year, in 1966, I married Donna Childers, who had three children in Ohio, John

the oldest, Billy the middle, and Bobby the youngest. I think their ages-- It was something like eight, ten and twelve, maybe nine, eleven, and thirteen. I don't know, but very, very young. We have now been married for twenty-six years, going on twenty-seven. Two marriages, fifty-four years.

Maybe it's a weakness in my own character, the way I have not brought any of these people into the picture more than I have, and that's my question.

TRELEVEN: Well, I think they have been interwoven as we've discussed various topics, far more than I think you remember.

WILKINSON: I regret that I haven't brought them in more because their general support, both wives and children, have made the difference in terms of my own ability to do what I wanted to do, and I have done what I've wanted to do throughout my life, pretty much. I think we've described that here. The impact upon the wives: On Jean it was probably less of an impact on her because I did not join the [Communist] Party until Jean was ready to join the Party. It wasn't something I was doing on my own. We began having our children the same year we joined the Party. So we decided to have children even though we were becoming members of the Communist Party. My going to jail was a unilateral

decision. My decision of '52 to stand up to the eminent domain thing was my own decision and I brought on the pressures from the community that made it unbelievably hard.

The one light story I remember about that time is when we were living in the Los Feliz area on Rodney Drive, and Tony comes home on his tricycle down Rodney Drive and he's crying. Some kids had been bothering him. "What's the matter, Tony?"

"Daddy, I'm the only one in our block who believes in public housing." Sort of a plaintive cry of a child in 1952 when he would have been fourteen, I guess. If he's born in '44, he'd be eight years old. Yeah, eight years old, sure. So those kinds of things.

Then the decision to make the First Amendment challenge: I sought Jean's support, but I would have done it if Jean had opposed me. It was that important to me.

TRELEVEN: You would have?

WILKINSON: I would have. If Jean had said no, I still would have. But Jean did support me and without her support the whole thing would have been different. If we'd had a divorce at the very time I'm going to jail, the whole nature of the public support might have been altered somehow. But Jean stood with me, and look what

happened to her. She lost her job in '52 at the same time I did, on guilt by association with me. Maybe the Board of Education would have had a HUAC [House Committee on UnAmerican Activities] hearing sooner or later to pick Jean and the other teachers out that they singled out. Maybe it would have happened a year or two later. It could have happened to me a year earlier than it did to me, accidentally by circumstances, mainly the real estate lobby's desire to kill the housing program and Chief [William H.] Parker's desire to kill it. But Jean lost her job. I think if [there is] anything at all that Jean would have to complain about, it is that within a month after I am fired, she is fired on guilt by association with me. I think Jean had every reason personally to resent that implication that her problems related to the fact that she was influenced by me. Then when we did divorce in 1965, the fact that the Board of Education hired her again sort of compounds that: "As long as you're with Frank we don't want you." Jean had her own record of political life, activities, and ideas. She probably agreed with some of the things I've said here; probably there are things that she would not agree with. That's her record to tell. But that was something.

Then my going to jail was a great hardship on the

family. By that time, I'm traveling about a third of the time, then I go to jail for nine months, and then Jean goes on the road to defend me. With Anne Braden, they speak at public meetings in New York and elsewhere on a petition drive. That's all part of that story. Economically, the impact was enormous. We did not have the money. Jean was earning her living at five dollars an hour tutoring more affluent kids after school hours, and I was earning between fifty and seventy-five to ninety dollars a week on my civil liberties work.

So here the kids are growing up ready for college. Tony got into San Francisco State, whatever the fee was at that point--much, much less than it is now--and he stayed with Sarah Crome, a family friend of Jean's and mine in San Francisco. So it was almost nothing. Jeffry did not go on to college. I think he started out at [University of California] Berkeley and dropped out about the same time that Tony did, but we were not giving him any real support, financially. At one time, Tony planned on being a medical doctor. Another time Jeffry planned on being a lawyer. Jeffry's best friend is a lawyer. In our family medicine is a very honorable tradition.

Jo is the only one that got any breaks out of the thing. As soon as I get out of prison, this prep

school, Windsor Mountain in the Berkshires, the headmaster calls me up--I'd never heard of the guy before--"I'm Heinz Bonde, the headmaster of Windsor Mountain School in the Berkshires. Do you have children?"

"Yes, what is this about?"

"If you have children, I would be happy to give them a free high-school education here at this prep school." Jeff and Tony were already nearly out of high school. Jo was beginning, so she went back to the Berkshires and went to a prep school at Windsor Mountain. So she got something good out of it, and then somehow managed to live with Jean or live with us while she went through and got her A.B. at [California State University] Northridge. You know, that worked out that way.

On the negative side, the kids had the trauma of not knowing at all that Jean and I had any differences in terms of marital differences. It was a very horrible thing, I'm sure, for them at that age. What was the guess you had on the ages?

TRELEVEN: Well, by '65--

WILKINSON: In '66 Jeff would have been twenty-four.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, twenty-four, twenty-two, and--

WILKINSON: Twenty. That's pretty old. Probably the

age is part of the fact of why it happened then because it wasn't something sudden in terms of the marriage, but I could not see breaking up the marriage--and I was the one that took the initiative of breaking up the marriage--while the kids were still little. I mean, the problems were there from early on, and we stayed with it. But I think for the kids to have their parents separate--and there was initial bitterness from Jean--I think that was a very great trauma for them. Whatever happened, Jeffry did not write to me or visit me while I was in prison. There was a period of time when he was quite alienated from me. He was working in New York at the National Guardian, I think, but he would not write, or anything else. I had an open letter for him to write to me during the nine months in prison. He never wrote. Jo and Tony wrote constantly and came to visit me once.

On the positive side, these children lived in a very exciting environment. They really saw the [Joseph R.] McCarthy era in the worst of it and the best of it. Their lives were not endangered, except Jo's when a bomb was placed against our front door when we lived on Crescent Heights [Boulevard], just before I was entering prison. She could have picked that up and could have killed herself. But they didn't know their

lives were threatened, I don't think. Maybe they have memories now of things we've forgotten about. There were certainly many phone calls that threatened us. When I'm on television and things like that where they had to have security set up for me--

But they met very interesting people. They came to know Alger Hiss personally. When Jeff wouldn't speak to me, he moved in and stayed with Alger and Isabel in New York. When Alger came out here he stayed with us, and they had that experience. Corliss Lamont at our house, we got to know him. I remember him coming to our house and the kids putting up big signs, "Welcome Dangerous Corliss Lamont," something like that, in front of our house when we lived up in the Los Feliz area. They met Willard [E.] Uphaus, and they met Junius Scales. They knew all the Communist Party leadership personally. They went to the [First] Unitarian Church and had that experience. They knew Steve [Stephen H.] Fritchman intimately. They knew Linus Pauling. Linus and Ava Helen had our family over for a last supper; the whole family over there for supper just before I went to prison. So they had an opportunity to meet an awful lot of interesting, wonderful people.

TRELEVEN: Frank, did they, because of their Unitarian

associations in terms of their contemporaries--in other words children who were roughly the same age--did they develop lasting friendships with other so-called "red-diaper babies?"

WILKINSON: Yes, definitely. They certainly did. I just thought of another one. They heard Paul Robeson constantly. They got to know Pete Seeger. Pete Seeger had Jo and Tony come up to Beacon to stay with him when I first went to prison, and to give them a nice weekend up there, as Jo says, "He tried to teach me banjo." When I got out of prison, Joan Baez had us up to her place at Carmel for a night and a day, and Jo's singing relates very much to that kind of a background. So these were all people they knew.

I'm just accidentally throwing in the names, like Harvey O'Connor and Jessie O'Connor. Our kids went back to stay at the O'Connors'. When I got out of prison we went and had a wonderful family cottage there, staying in Little Compton, Rhode Island. They had the experience of moving into New York. They lived at Corliss Lamont's mansion for three months at Ossining while I was starting my work in New York. They lived in New York, went to school in New York, for a year. All these things. They met Aubrey [W.] Williams, they knew [Alexander] Meiklejohn. Meiklejohn

was somebody in our house or we visited them at their house--Alex and Helen. I'm just beginning to scratch the surface here, but that's the positive side.

Where my kids stand now, I don't know, and I'd be the last one to try to answer by hindsight. Today, a wonderful relationship exists between all three of my kids, and with me, and with Donna, which I'll come to. A very wonderful relationship. It's a good one; it's a healthy one. They've produced nine grandchildren and that's a very wonderful thing. Whatever damage was done to them from this experience, by hindsight, is different. Jeff and Tony dropped out of college probably not so much from me--maybe it was partly economic, I don't know; I think they were in college when they dropped out--but it was during the Vietnam War, part of the rebellion against academic--

TRELEVEN: Authority.

WILKINSON: --authority. They both decided they wanted to be trade unionists, which clearly comes out of our background, because they knew all kinds of trade unionists.

TRELEVEN: Sure.

WILKINSON: Trade union was a good word in our house and they knew them: they knew Harry Bridges; they knew Russ Nixon; they knew all kinds of trade unionists, all

kinds. Union meetings were something they went to. They marched in labor parades. But they wanted to. Jeff actually went to work in a molders plant in Oakland, became a molder and became shop steward for the molders union and became a board member of the Alameda County Central Labor Council, and argued on the floor for American labor support for the unions being repressed under [Augusto] Pinochet [Ugarte] in Chile. Tony went into the warehousemens local union. He still today is a warehouseman and was on the general board of the ILWU, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union. Very good trade unionists. Ideal from my standpoint of ideas. My kids have all turned out better than I because they are good trade unionists from practical experience, not some theoretical thing that I approached it from.

They're as free of racism as any people that I know that are Anglo, WASP [white Anglo-Saxon Protestant] kids. They're free of sexism, very much so. They all have turned out better.

Jo tried teaching, gave it up because of the conditions of our schools where she went in and got her first job in a ghetto school, broke her ankle trying to break up a fight between sixth graders, and decided they weren't teaching, they were just baby-sitting. It

was a horrible experience for her. So she went to work for ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] as a legal secretary and became very proficient. She now is working in a private law practice as a \$42,000-a-year legal secretary, doing very well as a single parent. Her marriage is gone and she's a single parent, and makes more money than I ever made.

Tony and Jeff married wives who were trade unionists. When Jeff broke his back in the molders union, he got a job at the University of California [Berkeley] working in part the College of Engineering, where he handles the filing of documents and the processing of documents, the reproduction of documents. I just visited his office at Berkeley last week for the first time. Margaret, Tony's wife, works at Berkeley as secretary of the Berkeley band. Jeff's wife works in Berkeley. They all three are working for the University of California. They all have got long tenure and have got good job protection. They're also very active leaders in the union fighting for union rights of the non-academic employees, the non-academic--

TRELEVEN: Staff.

WILKINSON: Staff.

TRELEVEN: They're called staff now.

WILKINSON: From janitors and laborers to secretaries.

I just read their union bulletins up there. They're remarkably wonderful, good things, and they've all been active in union work. What they really think about their lives I've asked, and I don't know. I just think they've turned out wonderfully well. They've produced wonderful grandchildren, and that's that.

Jean was badly hurt by the divorce. I think she knew it was coming, but it was still hard when it came, very, very hard on her.

TRELEVEN: Did she know you were in love with someone else?

WILKINSON: Yes, I was in love with someone else.

TRELEVEN: No, I know you were. Did she know that?

WILKINSON: She knew that. I told her that. That's when the divorce came; I told her about Donna.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: That was very, very hard on her because at that time she and I were just scrimping by. We owned a house simply because somebody pulled in and bought us a house when our place was bombed while I was in jail.

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I remember you telling that.

WILKINSON: But Jean was hurt by it. Our marriage was not an unpleasant thing. It wasn't fighting personalities, it was just incompatible from a standpoint of our love. It was more of a Platonic

relationship rather than a love affair. That grew out of the fact that Jean was the only one that accepted me when I came back from the Holy Land, all changed. She was the only one. People thanked her for marrying me. I proudly write on the marriage license, "manual laborer" and she writes down, "school teacher." But when the divorce came that was a really rough time for her. I did the best about it I could.

Bob [Robert J.] Schmorleitz, a Unitarian lawyer, president of the board of the Unitarian church, agreed to be the lawyer for both of us without charge, on the condition that it would not be a contested divorce. I told him, "Not only uncontested, but you ask Jean whatever she wants of any kind and give it to me and I'll sign it, then I'll read it. I don't want to read it. I want to do whatever it is." Well, Bob sort of laughed at that, went ahead, talked to Jean, and she took everything: the house, a car, all the furniture, everything except my clothing and books that were particularly mine. On top of that, I had to pay, I don't know-- I was earning ninety; I think I was giving fifty dollars of it for child support out of the ninety. Betty Rottger found homes for me to live in, first with Pauline Schindler, the wife of the architect, and the other with Helen Travis, the widow

of Bob Travis, who had led the sit-in in Flint, Michigan, for the autoworkers [United Automobile Workers Union, CIO]. I lived there free, lived on fifty dollars, and in a year's time saved up \$2,000 somehow, by living on nothing.

TRELEVEN: Wow.

WILKINSON: But that was very rare. Jean took the family and all and moved north. With the sale of the house she was-- She always wanted to live in Berkeley. She'd been born in Carmel. Her parents had been school teachers in Hayward and she also wanted to do that. She also wanted to be rid of L.A. and me, and everything of that kind, so she moved up there with the kids, had to give up a wonderful dog. That was a tragedy for the kids, the dog.

[tape recorder off]

TRELEVEN: Okay, we're back on.

WILKINSON: All right. So Jean was able to buy a house in the Berkeley hills. She's got a lovely house now where she always wanted to be. The Board of Education up there hired her, so she had from '65 to '75 to teach. She got some pension. Then after that [she] wrote books with other teachers on the rights of women, the history of girls in puberty, wonderful books and research that she's done.

I think most of our friends stayed with Jean, emotionally. Some stayed out of it, but most everybody thought that Jean was in the right on this thing and I was in the wrong on this divorce because I was the one that broke it up. So Jean ends up with a nice home, out of the blacklisting for a period of ten years, out of politics entirely, and through friends was able to do a lot of traveling. She's traveled a great deal around the world. She's near Tony and Jeffry and their seven kids in Berkeley. After about four or five years, Jean initiated connection between Donna and me, and we had a very good relationship from about 1975 to roughly 1989. Right now, our relationship is severed at her decision because Chauncey [A.] Alexander, in this tribute that was given to me on my seventy-fifth birthday, that dinner in Washington--

TRELEVEN: Yes, yes.

WILKINSON: --that [tribute] journal refers to my life and wound it up by saying, "At seventy-five, Frank and Donna live in Los Angeles with their children and grandchildren." No reference to Jean was in there. That was Chauncey's way of handling it. Chauncey happened to divorce. Chauncey and his wife and Jean and I married at the same time. It was [similar] all the way through: three children at the same time,

divorced at the same time, and a very bitter relationship with his former wife. He continued to be close to Jean, and that was just his way of writing it. Why couldn't he have said, "Frank was married to Jean," and so on?

TRELEVEN: Anyway, things cooled off.

WILKINSON: Cooled off. Right now, Jean has asked for no further communication with me. That's been very hard. That's been now nearly two years, three years, and I'm very sad about that. I think my kids accept it; they just don't talk about it. They see her independently. They're close to me and they're close to her but they accept her decision. She just felt that I had written her out of my life by that tribute [language] that Chauncey put into the journal. I'm willing to--and have thought constantly of--trying to restore communication with Jean again, because it's silly at seventy-eight to have a bitterness that grows out of a bad article.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: But I think that if she were here she would probably say, "Well, the article is just typical of Frank. I mean, it's always been Frank. Frank went to jail. Frank did this, Frank did that. I have not been in his life in any way all these years." It was a

bitterness that was just brought to a head because "Frank and Donna live with their children and grandchildren." It was bad.

Now let me deal with Donna and--

TRELEVEN: Well, let me lead with a question about Donna. You traveled extensively. You were traveling extensively. You met all kinds of nice, warm people of both sexes, and no doubt many women. But in that whole context, you met Donna and what? What struck you about Donna?

WILKINSON: It was in '62. It gets back to Jean again. I fell in love with Donna seven months after I was out of prison. So here's a person who stayed with me throughout twenty-seven years, including a year in prison, a single mother, three kids, and the worst of it. I get out of prison and seven months later fall in love with another person. She didn't know about that until three years later. So that's just another part of Jean's sad story.

I'd like to emphasize that Jean has so many friends and they do so much with her, it isn't like she is-- She's such an interesting, good person in everybody's mind that she is fully an equal intellectually--or better than I intellectually--and socially [has] more friends that I have, probably,

meaningful friends. So it's not only that the Board of Education was wrong to say that Frank was it. Jean always had totally independent, equal, strong ideas in life. She was not dependent upon me for anything, and certainly I didn't provide very much. She provided more money as a teacher than I probably brought. I guess in the Housing Authority [of the City of Los Angeles] days I was bringing in good money, but otherwise--

Now, what happened is, I get out of jail in '62--
TRELEVEN: Right.

WILKINSON: --and I'd been on the road traveling before I went to jail. Almost immediately I started these field trips; it just was logical. We had a campaign then in the third year to abolish HUAC. I'm out of jail. Thousands of people know that I've been in jail. There's editorials, columns, and newspaper stories about Carl [Braden] and me. We were known figures by that time, so we were invited to come and speak. I went right from Lewisburg Penitentiary to a concert-- Pete Seeger, Willard Uphaus--in New York, several thousand people, just as there'd been a concert of 5,000 with Pete Seeger on my way in [to jail]. From there I go directly to Chicago after visiting Aubrey [Williams]. Chicago, on a bitterly cold night, a large

auditorium--

TRELEVEN: Yeah, I remember you telling me.

WILKINSON: --filled at the University of Chicago, and then come home, and it's on, and on, and on. Shortly after that, I'm invited to take a field trip. I went up and down the Atlantic Coast again. I had a field trip to Chicago. Dick [Richard] Criley's nephew, John Williams, had become the head of the Midwest Student Committee to Abolish HUAC out of the University of Chicago. He had a German car.

TRELEVEN: Mercedes?

WILKINSON: No, no. A cheap one.

TRELEVEN: Oh, a cheap one.

WILKINSON: The people's car.

TRELEVEN: Oh, Volkswagen.

WILKINSON: Volkswagen. So Dick lined up a schedule. Everybody wanted me to speak, and John Williams agreed he would drive me. So we went to every little town you ever heard of in Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. We were covering the ground heavily. Big, big, big meetings in Madison; some fair-sized meetings at Marquette [University] and Milwaukee. We're riding along, town after town after town, like Cleveland, Toledo, Oberlin, Columbus, Cincinnati, Antioch [College], fourteen or fifteen days.

I come into Columbus and I've been invited there to speak. There's still, by the way, the FBI's [Federal Bureau of Investigation] role in trying to disrupt these things, [which] was very noticeable, very noticeable. At every one of those places I mentioned, the FBI was there to try to break up those meetings. They thought they had killed Carl and me off. Instead of that, we were drawing larger crowds than ever and using it effectively to abolish HUAC.

We come into Columbus. All I knew was that there would be a reception at the home of the ACLU president in Columbus, Ohio. His name was John Childers. His wife's name was Donna Childers. They wanted to have a dinner beforehand at their house, and then there'd be the meeting at the church. The minister of this Unitarian church there had started a forum. They had Frank Donner come and speak, they had me come and speak, and Donna had been on the forum committee. Donna was a housewife with three small kids in this lovely house by the river, a typical split-level, two-car (a station wagon and another car) family, probably three acres of beautiful trees right down to the edge of the river. That's where they lived. We'd be there for dinner, then a meeting, and then back to their house for a reception afterwards from the people who

sponsored it. So I just arrived there, I met Donna as I walked into that house that night, and it was just love at first sight. It was the most wonderful thing in the world. The feelings that I had never had emotionally with Jean I just had with Donna.

Apparently, Donna by this time had been going through her own development. She was questioning what is her life. She had been a graduate of Ohio State [University] and she'd done social work, but she was now a wife with three children and her husband is a successful lawyer. And she was beginning to question those things, and she was beginning to open up her mind politically. The Unitarian minister--long before I arrived on the scene, I did not politicize Donna at all--began saying, "Well, you ought to do some more reading," and he gave her Barrows Dunham's philosophy book, Giant in Chains, and others. She came back saying, "He's wonderful, wonderful. You got any more?" He gave her C. Wright Mills's critique of capitalism, and she came back and said, "Hey, that's great. I agree with everything he said." (These are Donna's references.) Then he said, "Well, let me give you a critique of C. Wright Mills, so he gave her Herbert Aptheker's book critiquing and she came back and said, "Well, I agree with Aptheker. Mills is wrong;

Aptheker's right." The minister at this time is beginning to get a little alarmed by the way this woman grows with reading. He says, "Well, you'd better be careful, he's a communist." Donna said, "Oh, I think I'm a communist. I agree with Aptheker," and Donna then was as open now as she is now, right out in the open.

So when they invite me there, it looks to her as though she's going to meet the first live communist. I've been in prison. I was in prison because I wouldn't answer questions, so I must be a communist. So they open up their house, have this big dinner party--thirty people for dinner beforehand--and Donna greets me very warm and exciting, assuming I'm a communist. We go to the church and there are many, many people heckling at the church. I got through the talk all right. I'm getting a little used to heckling by that time; not well, but a little bit used [to it]. I'm not nearly as well developed by that time as I was a year later. I know when I went to Drake University to speak in Iowa, I just about broke down. I couldn't face the heckling that I was getting from the right wing and the Birchers [John Birch Society] there in Des Moines.

TRELEVEN: We're going to have to pause.

TAPE NUMBER: L, SIDE TWO

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TRELEVEN: Okay, back on.

WILKINSON: So I can tell you that walking in their house and seeing her, instantly I just was in love with Donna. She gradually had become less satisfied with her life. She was married to a wonderful guy, John Childers, who continues to be a very close friend of ours. But right there and then, that night and the next day, we fell in love. She fell in love with me likewise. I had to come back there a couple times. Didn't have to, but I had to--

TRELEVEN: Managed to?

WILKINSON: Well, no. I was invited to and it was very logical. We were forming committees of 100 to abolish HUAC in Milwaukee and other places, and I asked Donna if she would form a Committee of 500 in Columbus. So Donna took on the leadership of the Committee to Abolish HUAC in Columbus, and got 500 prominent people to join a committee to abolish HUAC, much more conservative territory than Milwaukee ever was.

Then I came back and she drove me down to Cincinnati where I debated Fulton Lewis [Jr.], she drove me up to Ohio Wesleyan [University], where I

spoke, and she drove me [other] places. I stayed at their house and then I would go on; I had other speaking dates.

But all this related to our growing love. I think if I remember [correctly], the second trip we were driving down to Cincinnati, or somewhere, and Donna just out of the blue, sitting beside me--I'm driving--said, "I want to know one thing. Are you a communist?" I had never answered that question since 1952 to any non-communist, just never had. It was like you get it at these meetings but with Donna it was a matter of, "Are you a communist?"--hopefully. "You are, aren't you? I want to meet one. I want to know one. I want to fall in love with one." I answered her question. I said, "Yes, I am," and she was absolutely thrilled that I was a communist and that deepened her relationship with me.

Anyway, as it grew, I think I would have-- I was not at all prepared to break up my marriage. I had found love that I had always wanted and needed, but I still had a wonderful home with Jean and our kids.

TRELEVEN: So you're--

WILKINSON: I think I would have been willing to have a wonderful affair with Donna. I was not in any way prepared to break up a marriage.

TRELEVEN: Yeah. But you found your loyalties becoming divided, right?

WILKINSON: They became divided, and Donna pressured. I would never have divorced Jean, I don't think, if Donna hadn't insisted. She was reaching the point where she was saying, "You've got to be honest."

(Donna's always one to argue honesty.) "Don't be two-faced. You don't really love Jean; tell her so. I don't really love Jack; I must tell him so. We've got to be clear about this. Let's be straightforward." That was Donna's attitude. I would postpone, and postpone, and postpone until one time on the telephone she called me. She said, "Guess what? I told Jack that I'm in love with you." I said, "Oh, my god." You know, that was forcing the issue. She says, "Now you've got to tell Jean." That was pretty much the way it went.

I came back there and Jack actually-- When I'd come, he'd move out. He took a room downtown so I could stay there. I met with Jack and we talked. I tried at one point to tell Donna that I just couldn't do this to Jack and her kids. I sat with Jack and told him, "I'm really in love with Donna, but I don't like what I'm doing to your family." Jack was saying, "Well, it's unfortunate. I'm hurt too, but she loves

you so what can we do about it?" Donna's the one who's in effect saying to both Jack and me, "Look, this is what I'm going to do." It wasn't a matter that Donna would stay on with Jack. She was of a mind to grow and flower, and she'd found what she thought she wanted in me.

Then I did tell Jean about it, and that was very, very hard, and Jean moved to Berkeley. Let me tell you, Bob Schmorleitz gave me the six- or eight-page statement of divorce settlement and asked me to read it. I said, "No, I'll sign it first and read it later. I don't want to bargain with Jean." So I signed it and then took it home. After I left his office, I read it and found out I had absolutely nothing. I had no bitterness toward Jean at all in that. I felt grateful that I could give her money for a house, and a little money to help support Jo and Tony, and that's the least I could do. I had broken up a marriage and I felt very unhappy about that. I was in love with Donna, but I was unhappy to hurt Jean, and I felt the least I could do was to give her everything, economically, I possibly could, and fortunately she took everything. Everything.

Now we come to the question of Donna's children. They saw me as a person that came to stay at their

house. The three kids had a bedroom together. They put an extra cot in there for me, so I stayed with their kids. They were eight, ten, and twelve when we married. We didn't get married till '66, so that's four years earlier they were four, six and eight, and here's this man who comes to stay at their house and it's all very fine and good. Then comes this divorce and the traumatic impact that had upon those children, [which] I don't think I have any idea about to this day. I know it was very, very hard on them because of the move to California, and Jack remaining in Ohio, so they went back and forth a great deal to Ohio to see Jack. Yet their relationship with me was never angry, never mean. They were gradually very loving, but they at least were temporarily separated from their dad. Fortunately, Jack got remarried and moved to California.

TRELEVEN: How soon was that?

WILKINSON: A couple years.

TRELEVEN: A couple years later.

WILKINSON: That helped a lot because then he lived in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

TRELEVEN: Pretty close.

WILKINSON: Yeah, close by, and so they were seeing their father lots more and they loved their father.

It's a very wonderful relationship, and that helped. But you've got to realize that this thing came about from '62 to '65. I didn't even learn about my FBI papers till '75. From the time we got married in '66 until '75, I was traveling between 100 and 125 days a year all over the country, organizing. The kids were home with Donna alone in a brand new state, Jack coming out later on.

TRELEVEN: Did Donna understand that that's the way it was going to be?

WILKINSON: No.

TRELEVEN: She didn't--

WILKINSON: She didn't.

TRELEVEN: --before she married you?

WILKINSON: She tried to insist that I not travel as much and I fudged every way I could to rationalize it. Now Donna accepts it. The last ten years she's accepted it quite completely. She'll say, "Where are you going in October?" It isn't like, "Are you going to be gone again in October?" I just bring her home my calendar. She wants to know when I'm here, when I'm not here. Donna has built her own life, fortunately, here in L.A. with the library [Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research] and DSA [Democratic Socialists of America]. She has an

enormous circle of friends already out here, and I think she'd like me to not travel as much for my own health as well as wanting me around more. But I married, have these young kids, I'm gone 100 days a year, and they are then eight, ten, and twelve in a totally new territory. What it did to them, I can't imagine. All I know is that I have not become their father, that's for sure. You don't even use step-father. They're not encouraged to call me dad or anything like that, father. I've always been Frank with some diminutives that we've thrown in to try to explain who I was. Children talk.

You look at her kids, the way they've turned out. I mean, John, coming out of Ohio goes to high school in L.A., in his junior year of high school leaves to go on a Venceremos Brigade to Cuba, gets all of his teachers to certify that he was present when he wasn't present--except the gym teacher--and he goes off for thirty days to Cuba. He reads all about [Euigencio] Batista [y Zaldivar]. He becomes somewhat of a Marxist, all Donna's influence. He comes back from there and then he--I'm not just sure when--he goes to Cal [University of California, Berkeley] and he's going into Latin American studies. He puts in his last year at Cal at the University of Mexico in the Mexican government

school--not an American version--so he's speaking Spanish all the time. He becomes quite bilingual and does very well. He gets out; he's not sure what he wants to do yet. He then tries everything under the sun from acting, dancing, singing, waiting, wine-testing, teaching, Buddhism, yoga. You name it; he's tried them all. That undoubtedly relates something to the change in his life at a critical time. Now he's married to Laura, and has a wonderful child, Cody. But, economically, totally unreal, totally unreal, and I don't know where it'll go, but John is-- You know, all three kids are very close to me. Billy--

Oh, and another thing: they moved out of a segregated, all-white neighborhood in Columbus and Donna and I pick a house on Heatherdale [Drive] at the time when the Crenshaw shopping center had a committee trying to find people who would move into blocks that were being blockbusted to stop "white flight," and they gave us addresses to go rent. We travelled all over the city looking, and we moved into Heatherdale because that block was 75 percent black, and it would be all black within another three weeks if some white family didn't move in. So we move in with three tow-headed white kids, and I think definitely it helped to stop any further "white flight." It's an obviously good

place to live and people stayed on. But that meant that these kids move in, and there are no white kids left in the neighborhood. All the families with children had moved. The whites that were there were without children.

Then the integration of schools comes, so our kids are bussed way away from there to get to an area where they can be in an integrated school. They're bussed to Westchester, bussed to Hamilton [High School]. Up at the Windsor school--two of them went to school up there--they were the only white kids, I think, in the entire school. All those things. Out of that thing--I mean, there were some bad things, like John was beaten up once coming home from school by some black kids. He was scared and he was chased by some kids at Hamilton High once. He was scared. I don't know how much trauma was done there, but by hindsight his first real love affair was with a black woman dancer. John's best friend is an architect. His father has this architectural firm [Ed Barker & Associates]. Billy, who becomes an architect, knows this family through John, and they hired Billy as the token white architect in a black firm.

So Billy today is a successful architect in a black firm. When Christmas holidays come around, who

comes to see us? There's a black cop from San Jose who comes home. There's a black singer down the street who comes to our house. They have legitimate black friendships. Like you and I remember a boy friend from our neighborhood, they remember boy friends, but they're black. So Billy is fortunate, I think. I mean, architects are going broke in this depression, but this firm, through affirmative action, gets a part of the [Los Angeles] Convention Center, a part of the metro [rail] system. So Billy is having a wonderful chance at designing great buildings, and great systems, and he's very creative in his work.

Bobby. I think Bobby is the closest to me. Billy and John, too, although I think they were hurt more by Jack [being absent] than Bobby was. Bobby has always been the closest to me. After all, I've lived with Bobby for twenty-two years; he lived with Jack for eight years. You know, that's the difference.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: He now has finally got his degree, his teaching credential at Cal State Northridge. He can teach there whenever he can get a job. Meanwhile, he's become a tennis pro and is now in charge of all the tennis courts at Cal State Northridge. He's got a good living as a staff person. He's on the payroll at Cal

State Northridge as the tennis something or other.

That means he gets all these perks that go with being employed, like medical [insurance] for one thing.

TRELEVEN: Yeah.

WILKINSON: We have birthdays [celebrations]. Like on my birthday, the kids all come back to pay attention to my birthday. They all give me gifts. They all give me Christmas gifts. But I'm not their father and I don't pretend to be. I love them, and I love their children, but they have a father. I'm not the father.

Donna has been the most amazing of all. In some ways, she is closer to all of my kids and grand kids than I am. She levels with them more; she's closer to their age. She just is with them. Where's Donna today? She's tired out; her father needs her and everything else here. Donna is down at Jo's new house where she's moved in, cleaning house and helping her hang pictures. That's the way Donna is. She's generous to a fault helping my sister [Hildegarde]. She sees my sister once a week to help her do this, help her do that. She was over there yesterday, all day long, shopping and helping her clean up her home there at this place in Pasadena. Then I came over there for dinner last night.

So Donna's very close to my sister. My brother's

wife never calls me, but talks to Donna back and forth, constantly. My sister, Betty [Clara Marie Evans] up north [in Berkeley], likes her. When we go up there, Margaret, Tony's wife, and Cathy, Jeff's wife, they have hours of conversation that I sit in and listen to, because Donna just talks about everything. I mean, she's out front; politics, party, the new Committees of Correspondence. (This is for them to say, what their political persuasions have become; that's for them to talk about, not for this record, I'm sure.) But they're interested in Donna's ideas and conversation a great deal. They are just urging Donna to get up there because they want her to see the improvement they're making on their house. I'd seen it. When is Donna going to get up there? They come down to stay with us. They're very close to Donna. Tony, the middle son, just adores Donna. When I first took them up there, I was naive enough to-- They were all up there at Berkeley, and I flew up with Donna to meet my kids. "They'll love you," you know, and I'll never forget that experience. Some restaurant, a place where we met to talk, and the kids were just sort of reading the newspaper, looking down, really unhappy with Donna, this strange woman who'd taken me away. (She will describe how totally unreal it was. "They'll love

you," I said. "My sister will love you," Donna will say, as we're coming into the airport.) I'm so proud, this is my new wife. My sister, Hildegarde, is formally warm to her, but her friend Peter [Margrethe Petersen] just was somewhat cool. Before she died she loved Donna. But there was real resistance that Donna had to live with my family. My brother [Allan Blodgett] and his first wife wouldn't speak to us when we got married. His first wife died before Donna ever got to know her. Now Donna's close to my brother's second wife, but there was that initial isolation.

So I'm saying--I may have said enough of this-- I'm just saying that all of my own children and Donna's children have turned out wonderfully well. From my standpoint, my own kids, I think, have turned out better people than I. Certainly, I can speak for myself in terms of ideas and commitment to social justice, all those things, racism, sexism. Very, very healthy people. They've turned out wonderful grandchildren. Donna's children are turning out wonderful too. They love me as Donna's husband, not as their father. Donna's father [Glenn Myers] and mother [Lillian] found it hard. I think Glenn still finds it a little hard, but Lillian accepted me very well. Glenn is waiting for me this afternoon to help him on

something he needs some help on, so we have a relationship. But it's beyond him to accept his daughter's divorce. Glenn is very anti-communist and he suspects that I'm a communist. Occasionally, when he's angry--he'll get a little high or something--he's suggested I'm a communist, once or twice. It makes me feel very uncomfortable, but I think that Glenn knows me as a good guy, in many ways.

But I think the thing to be said here is to what extent I've lived my life, doing what I wanted to do, how I wanted to meet the world, how I wanted to meet the change in religion, change in politics, everything, and I've gone ahead and done these things for what seemed right for me. What I've done in terms of my wives--Donna and Jean--or their children, our children, I think I've done a great deal of harm. I think we probably have come out of it with less trauma than most divorces I know of. I'm sure of that. I'm sure there's less trauma because otherwise there'd be ample hostility toward Donna, or toward me, from the children on either side. There isn't that, and that has a great deal to do with the fact of Donna's warmth, Donna's personality, and her communication ability, and her love of-- She really treats my grandchildren exactly as well as she treats her own grandchildren. I cannot

tell the difference. That's hard to do. I mean, way inside myself I have one feeling about-- I mean, I have a subtle sense--I'm conscious--that they're not really mine. With Donna you don't get that, even a subtlety. She's just accepting of the whole thing.

Donna just wishes that I were a stronger person. She wishes I were more radical. She's been disappointed that she thought she was marrying a "communist" and she hasn't found that in me. I think she's a bit disappointed, wishes I were stronger, less of what I am than I am: the Methodist hangover, I guess.

So we end up properly on what my life may or may not have done to my children. I think the fact that I bring this in so much here at the end of the story is part of the problem, that I lived so much of my own life that even when I start telling you about it, I bring in my wives, Donna and Jean, and the children almost as a final thought, although I hope we'll find it woven through the interview.

TRELEVEN: Well, we've been taping now over this long period, and you will find family matters interwoven in this interview far more than I think you remember.

WILKINSON: I hope so.

TRELEVEN: Yes.

WILKINSON: I hope that's true. I'm sure that's true about my own kids, but I hope it's beginning to be true regarding Donna's kids, though. I'm not sure. Do you think there was much about Donna's kids as I've just been talking?

TRELEVEN: No.

WILKINSON: Not as much or--

TRELEVEN: Donna, but not Donna's children.

WILKINSON: Right. I think that first of all, the traumatic and the political, prison, joining, out, in, out: you know, by '66 all those things were pretty well on a set course, and I just was trying to be a good father in an absence of the real father of Donna's kids.

Thank you.

TRELEVEN: Thank you. I think we're at a time when we need to pause. We've been taping damned near five-and-a-half hours at this point--

WILKINSON: Okay.

TRELEVEN: --so it's been a marathon.

WILKINSON: End of the story.

TRELEVEN: End of the story for now; we'll see where we are.

WILKINSON: I'm very grateful to you for your patience and your research, and your care of putting this thing

all together. It would not have been possible otherwise; I would have just taken the mike and run with it if you hadn't tried to give me some sense of direction from your own knowledge, and kept me from embroidering too much.

TRELEVEN: Well, I would say for me it's been a unique experience not only because of you, but because of the FBI. [laughter]

WILKINSON: Yeah, you've come to know them pretty well.

TRELEVEN: They probably know me better than I think they do. Anyway, thanks a lot.

WILKINSON: Enough!

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