

A TEI Project

Interview of Selma Rubin

Contents

1. Transcript
 - 1.1. Session 1 (April 21, 2009)
 - 1.2. Session 2 (May 5, 2009)
 - 1.3. Session 3 (June 4, 2009)

1. Transcript

1.1. Session 1 (April 21, 2009)

Collings

Okay. Jane Collings interviewing Selma Rubin, April 21, 2009. Good morning, Selma.

Rubin

Good morning to you.

Collings

Let's start out with where and when you were born.

Rubin

I was born in Toledo, Ohio--

Collings

Oh, Toledo, Ohio.

Rubin

--the glass center of the world, on March 28, 1915.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Rubin

So a few weeks ago I had my ninety-fourth birthday.

Collings

Congratulations.

Rubin

Thank you.

Collings

Yes, Toledo was the glass-making capital.

Rubin

I think it still is.

Collings

It could very well be.

Rubin

Because Edmund Drummond Libbey, who discovered the windshield, he was the one that invented the windshield in, I don't know, in 1910 maybe or earlier, and he was a collector of particularly glass and china and beautiful things. And he and his wife did not have any children, and they became very, very, very wealthy, and they donated a huge amount of land for a museum in Toledo.

Collings

Right, the Toledo Glass Museum. I've been there.

Rubin

Right. The collection is outstanding, because they traveled all over the world and collected, so they had very beautiful things. They were cultural people, and they were very interested in education. We had a wonderful asset. The university used their departments of decoration and art. We had classes there. I was a daughter and I had two brothers. My father was actually trained to be a social worker, so he was that in the Jewish Community Center for a number of years, and then he went into the music business. He had a store, and eventually he went into business with his brothers and sisters into a five-and-ten-cent chain, and that's where we kind of ended up. in 1941.

Rubin

I lived through the depression of the thirties. It was a very, very terrible experience.

Collings

And just remind me again how old you would have been at the start of the depression?

Rubin

Well, I started college, graduated college in '33 and started college in '33, so we were into it a couple of years by then, but it became more intense and became worse as time went on.

Collings

What do you remember about that?

Rubin

I remember despair. I remember the sadness in people's faces, particularly of the men. That was still a day when man was supreme and man was expected to support his family. It wasn't as much the wife. They didn't have the two family workers at that time, so the dependence for food and shelter was on the man, who lost his job. There was nothing for him to do. He couldn't face his family. It was really so sad. And they walked around with their coat collars up and their hats down, and eventually they were able to buy apples and sell them on the street for five cents, great big red apples. But the saddest thing was to walk

down the street where some family had been evicted, but all their belongings were out there on the street, and there was nothing they could do, because the sheriff was up there, the house was padlocked. They were just out.

Rubin

So we knew homelessness. I experienced, not personally, because we were able to eke out a living. We didn't have a lot. I went to school, and I worked at the same time. My father had the store. I was there half time with him. The latter part of the thirties I went to work for a department store for thirty-seven-and-a-half cents an hour. What took us out of the depression was World War II. We moved to Detroit in about 1940, because my aunt had a larger business, and she wanted my father to sell his business in Toledo and come and take care of hers, which is what he did. I was preparing myself to work in the factory, but I don't have any skills except college and bookkeeping. I took care of the books, and we went to New York and we'd order, but I really didn't have a manual kind of skill. So I went to learn how to operate a milling machine, and I went to school between midnight and four o'clock in the morning.

Collings

Gosh.

Rubin

There were high schools, but they were being utilized for twenty-four hours a day. And I did learn, and I got on the list, but I never got called. I had a boyfriend who was in the Navy, and eventually I joined the Navy as soon as it was open, which was in '43, about the middle of '43.

Collings

Open to women?

Rubin

To women. The purpose of the WAV group, the purpose of having them at all was to allow the men to go out on board ship and not have the women. Mr. Roosevelt did not allow that. During that whole period, women, unless they were nurses--

Collings

Women could not be on board ship.

Rubin

No. But they were used to relieve the men of their desk jobs or any other job. So when I got into the Navy, they always ask you what you want to do, and, of course, they never send you there. But I told them I wanted to stay within what they called storekeeper, which was office work. But they had a need for aviation machinists, and so they sent me to school in Norman, Oklahoma--

Collings

Oh, Norman, Oklahoma.

Rubin

--and it wasn't good for me, and I got sick. They didn't know what was the matter with me. I had something called cat fever. Eventually I ended up in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, at an office job. My two brothers were also in service, and when everybody came back from the service we all moved to California. My father's sister had a factory that made spaghetti and noodles and pastas, and she was anxious for him to come and join the business with her, so we moved here in '45, and I had bookkeeping jobs wherever I went. I was the paymaster at the Hotel Alexandrian and various things. Then I went to work for Rexall Drug, and I was there for five years. So it was a good job, but my purpose in staying there was to try to organize the office workers into the union--

Collings

I see.

Rubin

--which I spent five years and I never accomplished that. So then it was really, really time to move on. But the rest of my periods of time, I've always worked in CPA offices. I got married in 1947. It was a very good and a very happy marriage. Unfortunately, he had a heart condition. He had it when I married him, I knew that, and he lived to be--we lived together almost ten years and then he died of a streptococcus infection on the heart valves, which was a shame, because he was a really wonderful man. I loved him dearly and we had a good life together, and then I was a widow for five years after that.

Rubin

In 1961 I took six months off and went down to live in Mexico, decided I wanted to learn the language and have a very different change of venue, and it was wonderful. Another friend of mine lived down there, and we were going to school every day and learning Spanish and meeting people, and I had acquired a boyfriend along the way, and it was just very good for me. It cost me \$1500. I had my car down there. Then I came back at the end of 180 days, which is your max to stay there, and after I came home a friend called and she asked me if I remembered Bill Rubin, and she told me that he was looking for me because he'd lost his wife the year before. I didn't know that at the time, because I'd been away. Anyway, he called me and invited me to come to his house for a brunch with a bunch of political people who were really part of the movements in the committee, a lot of them around the Democratic clubs, but some of them what they called mass orgs, different kinds of unions and different kinds of whatever they were for, immigration or whatever the need was. So anyway, we had a date. We finally did have a date and seven weeks later we were married.

Collings

Seven weeks!

Rubin

And it was absolutely the same night we met we could have gotten married, because everything was right. And he had come to his friends after being invited out with a lot of different women, and he came to them and he said, "You know, I've finally decided that the woman I want to marry, I want to find and want to marry, has got to be somewhere around my age with my political views, and someone's who's had a happy marriage, which has to mean she's a widow." And then somebody said this, and anyway, the long and the short was we lived together, we got married in '61, and we lived there until '63. Bill was working--he's a plumbing engineer. He was a plumbing engineer, and he worked for the City of Los Angeles in the department that builds schools and rehabs them. There were 129 people in the department, and a bond measure failed, so he lost his job along with all the other ones.

Rubin

Then he was very unhappy. The smog was very bad at that time, and the traffic is so bad, and we just--it wasn't a happy place to live. So we had some friends up here and we came up and we looked a few times and finally said, "Let's try to move up there. Let's find--." He needed to find a job first, because it's a very rare job. It's a profession--you have to find it. And fortunately, there was one available, and fortunately we found it, so we came here and we bought the house around the corner for \$20,450, and, of course, I'm still living in it. Altogether we had twenty-six years together, but the last ten he had Alzheimer's, so he made it through. It wasn't really bad, but almost ten years of that, almost ten he was living at home, and I had somebody come in in the morning and help him with the dressing, and then at the end of the day--there's a facility here for Alzheimer people, and he spent the days there. So that left me free to continue my life as it had, and my young man that helped, if I had an evening meeting he would stay and fix dinner. Life was better for me in that sense, but he died. He had some kind of a chronic chest thing, infection, and the doctor called me and he said--.

Rubin

So I had been--well, between the two of us, when we first came here we had an incident. He had some black friends, a guy that he worked with in Los Angeles, and we had been here like two months and the guy calls up. He and his wife were on a vacation. They got stuck in Santa Maria and they needed to get their car, which was a Volkswagen, they needed to get it fixed and it had to be in Santa Barbara. So when he called he said, "Can we stay with you for a few nights?" And we said, "Sure." They came, we came down and we met them and we brought them back to the house. They were with us a few days and then they left. And while they were there, a little truck pulled by, kind of strange little truck. Anyway, they left on Friday, and Saturday morning we went out to get in the car and go down to L.A. and we had eight slashed tires.

Collings

Oh, my goodness.

Rubin

And I had said to Bill, "You know what? Let's take some time. Let's learn this town. Let's meet some people. Let's see everything and not get involved so quickly," you know?

Collings

Right, right, right.

Rubin

I said, "Vacation's over, so get to work." While he was here though, he got into the ACLU, and so he had some place and started to meet people. And the life just began to grow here. We went from one type of thing to another type of thing. We were good workers. I at age fifteen decided I did not want to be a mother, and he was not anxious, and we were both around forty at that point, so we got a lot of time that we didn't have to--

Collings

Yes. And how did you prevent becoming a mother, if you didn't want to be?

Rubin

Whatever they called that thing--pessary?

Collings

Oh, pessary.

Rubin

A little cone that you put on.

Collings

You had a pretty good run with it, it sounds like.

Rubin

Yes, I did. As soon as I got married, before I got married I went to the doctor and that's what he fitted me with, and I was okay. But everybody said, "My god, how can you do so much? How can you be in so many things?" And I would say, "You know what? I don't have any babies to take care of." Sometimes I wasn't even able to come home to fix dinner, and I'd apologize and my husband would say, "You know what? I didn't marry a cook." Or we'd eat out, or we'd get some little something. And I have had a phenomenal life in Santa Barbara, really. If I had predicted everything in my youth I couldn't have done better than I have done here. I think partially it's the community, because of the size, because you can leave your house at six o'clock for a meeting, and you're there at ten after or quarter after. You don't have to spend your life on the freeway going to things.

Rubin

See, both of us got active in the Sierra Club, and we went kind of up the chairs. We were on all different kinds of committees. He was a delegate to--there are

two areas, north and south, for conservation. He was a delegate to the south. We met just so many wonderful people. They were of the character that gives before it gets. I don't know anybody that doesn't sacrifice something to do the work that they're doing. So we moved here in March. He was here in January and I was here in March of '64, and mainly it was the Sierra Club, but it was some others that were attached to them. And then, of course, January the twenty-eighth of '69 we had the oil spill.

Collings

Right, right. Let's backtrack a little bit before we get to that, because that's so important.

Rubin

Sure. Okay.

Collings

Let's go way, way back.

Rubin

My parents?

Collings

Yes. Were they born in the United States?

Rubin

Both parents were born in Russia. My father was born in 1885, my mother in 1890. My father was sixteen when he came here. My mother was five. They came from different parts. They didn't know each other. I don't know if you know this about the early settlements. People would come, they'd land at Ellis Island, and there was a tremendous danger about so many people living, living, living, so a lot of organizations got to meet these immigrants and moved them into other parts of the country. So it depended. If you came from a wheat-bearing area, that's where they wanted to send you, or whatever your skill was or your interest.

Rubin

Well, my father's father had been a manufacturer of hats and caps for the army, the Russian army, so he came here and he got his job, and then there's a group called the Hebrew Free Loan Association, and that group loans you the money, no interest, and they move you and then they settle you, and then you pay back, and there's no interest if you pay it back. They've got about 99 percent perfection in their group. They're still operating, and that's what they did with my grandfather. They said, "Oh, we found this manufacturing place, Toledo Hat and Cap. It's up for sale. We'll help you if you'd like to move there."

Collings

Oh, so they actually bought the factory? I see.

Rubin

They bought the factory, yes. That's where my father worked when he first started. But he also went to school, and he was like a sponge. He ended up going to Cooper Union while they lived in New York. He went to City College. He went through high school in one year when he first came. Altogether, he knew seven languages.

Collings

My goodness.

Rubin

And he had a lot of skill. Well, Europe was like that. There are so many smaller communities nearby that it's easier for them. My mother came with her father, who had been a wheat farmer, and he knew no English at all, so they got him a pushcart and he started going around the streets, and he didn't like that. So when she was thirteen he said, "Let's go back again." They went back and conditions were even worse. They just turned around and came back. She went through high school, and she worked on a sewing machine, blouses, I guess, shirtwaists they called them in those days. That's where she went.

Rubin

She developed a tremendous love for classical music. She bought herself a piano and she went to everything. In those days, when girls worked they gave their paycheck to the family, you know, like you have to work. But she was able to keep out a little bit of money, so she went to standing room only in Cleveland. Every artist that ever came to Cleveland, she was there. She loved them, she just loved them, all those names I've heard all my life, all those wonderful names.

Rubin

My father was a very loving person. I would never think of walking out the door without kissing him goodbye. My mother seemed to have the dark clouds of Russia over her all the time.

Collings

The dark clouds of Russia?

Rubin

Yes. When I went there, years later I went there, and I was riding around with the tour, and I looked at some of the forests and I said, "I can understand my mother now." Because there's such a darkness about--that was still when they were before the break, when they were still under communism or socialism or whatever. I had tremendous love and respect for my father. I thought he was the most fabulous man that ever was born. I was thirty-two years old before I found the first person that was anywhere near like him. And I was agreeable to get married. I just never found, until I found Alex--

Collings

What kinds of things did your father hope for your future?

Rubin

Oh, he was a modern guy. "Whatever you want, you'll do whatever you want." He went to my first--when I enrolled in summer school, he went to class with me, and he had a professor that became my professor in English literature. Very understanding, very encouraging, did a lot of reading. I didn't do any exercise. I wasn't outside with the tennis balls and all the rest. I was at the library, come home with stacks of books, and I sat and read. My brothers, fortunately, they were in a little better condition, but I was a little fat as a result of that.

Collings

What kinds of things did your brothers go on to do?

Rubin

Both brothers were very vocal, clear of voice, interested--older brother was in Shakespeare in the plays at school, and the younger one did, too. He was into more of the social things. Now, my older brother graduated, and he had a degree in philosophy, and then he went on to law school at Ohio State [University]. Unfortunately, it was 1940, and he got a high number, so he enlisted. But before he enlisted, the year before he got married, and he enlisted from her home town, which was Fall River, Massachusetts, so he was able to come home weekends. By the time he was shipped out there was one baby already there and a second one on the way.

Rubin

The younger brother was enrolled here at UC City College at Los Angeles, and he wanted to do radio and speech. That was his thing. Now, he got injured in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium, and a piece of shrapnel went into his face like this, down, fractured his jaws and he couldn't eat for a year. Just he sucked in the liquid in between his teeth. And the older brother--they both came home. I mean, all three of us came--my mother used to have a flag in the window with the three stars on it. He came home. When he came back to L.A., he wanted to go back to law school, but his wife said, "I've been without you for five years. That's it. You've got to be home now." That was a bad mistake on their part, because he was never fulfilled. That's really what he wanted to do, but he ended up in the retail hardware business. Then they moved up to Modesto and within a few years both of them died in the same year.

Collings

Really.

Rubin

Yes. It was terrible, in their mid-sixties.

Collings

Who could predict that?

Rubin

Well, I'm the only one that's left, and it's amazing that I'm here at this age. I can't believe it. But my matriarchal grandmother lived to be 102.

Collings

Oh, well, there you go. Now, when you were growing up, was religion important in your family?

Rubin

It was. It was, only we observed the holidays. My father was the most religious. They did go to service, and I had a confirmation. The boys were bar mitzvah'd. I had confirmation and then I went to the high school, graduated from the high school. I was going to attend college classes, and when I was about twenty I went to service and something happened to my head at that service. I came home, I sat down on the chair, and I said, "There is no God, because a God could not allow these terrible things to happen to people."

Collings

Now, which terrible things were you thinking of?

Rubin

Well, it was the depression. It was a very, very heavy depression. My father had this business and he sold on credit, and then they never paid. But it was despair. It was sadness. It was just to have a positive attitude about anything was kind of marvelous at that time. And that was my decision. Nothing has changed my mind since then, nothing.

Collings

Did you ever go to the movies in the thirties that were supposed to cheer everybody up and so forth?

Rubin

They were so outlandishly not life. A man and woman couldn't be getting into the bed unless one foot was on the floor.

Collings

Right, the [Production] Code.

Rubin

The code. The musics were nice, and we did go, because it was about five cents. But I was not a very good student, and I think I had a lot of anger in me, I think, at that time, and I don't even know--I am about fifteen units away from a degree. I never got it. I was just eighteen or so I think at that time. So I got through about 1938 and I said, "I don't need it." I look at my life and I say, what would you have done differently if you had gotten a degree? Because a degree at that time was--there was a degree called Bachelor of Arts, and you could do anything with that. So what was I going to do? I took some business courses, so I learned how to operate the adding machines and the comptometers and all that, and I earned my living in that.

Rubin

I think it was good, because it wasn't too demanding of me, so I had the time and the energy to give to the things that really came to matter in my life, and that was the social events of the day, how to work against poverty, how to work with poor people, how to recognize things, how to become active in an organization, how to take on leadership roles. I have been in over forty-two nonprofits in Santa Barbara. Okay, so I got the education in high school and college. That's the end. I've taken classes in different things since then, but adult-education things that interested me. But my real interest has been in the life, the living. I love people. I love talking to people. I love listening to what's going on in their minds, and as I get older I'm in a position of mentoring. People will come to me and say, "You know, I have this problem. How can I help it? What can I do?" And then we would go over, "Well, what caused it? Where do you want to go? What results do you want? How can you handle yourself? How can you handle the issue with the other person? How can you take leadership?" And people like me. They're fun. They like me.

Rubin

I have been very honored for leadership, for recognizing a need and doing something about it. And I'm not bragging with you now--

Collings

No, no, of course not.

Rubin

I just--if you talk to my friends, they will tell you it's pretty much the same. I have to say that my movement toward nonprofit came from my father, because he was very social.

Collings

Yes, I was just going to ask you where do you think this came from?

Rubin

I think that comes from him, because in his community center they had all kinds of groups that were trying to stop--

Collings

What kind of community center was this?

Rubin

It was Jewish.

Collings

Okay, it was a Jewish Community Center?

Rubin

Yes, but none of these things are ever for religion only.

Collings

Not religious, yes.

Rubin

Yes. So you'd bring in other people. We're always trying to do that. And his attitude toward the black community was very good. Now, I have a special love. When I was a freshman I took a class in race relations from a black woman from Wellesley. First of all, she was absolutely gorgeous, and she always wore a hat, and she dressed like she just came out, like they called it--

Collings

The fashion magazine.

Rubin

--the nines, dressed to the nines. And her husband was a lawyer, the only black lawyer in Toledo. And then she would tell a story about inviting people to her home for dinners and stuff, and if they wanted to go to the theater they had to sit way up in the balcony in the movie house. And somehow that just got into my bloodstream, and I have been very conscious of that ever since. I was active during the sixties, during the civil rights period. I was active with the farm workers during that period. We had a group called Friends of the Farmworkers. We'd collect money, food, clothes, and like every two months or so we would have a caravan. We'd go up to Delano, we'd meet with Cesar Chavez. We'd have dinner or lunch or whatever, and sometimes we would stay over, because Bill knew everything there was to know about the plumbing, and they had a need. When Cesar organized the farmworkers, there were farmworkers there, but they were Filipinos, and those people were never, ever, ever allowed to marry or to bring a wife or bring anybody in from, what's the country? Filipino Land.

Collings

Oh, the Philippines.

Rubin

The Philippines. So Cesar said, "If you will guarantee that you will build a retirement home for my workers when they get older and can't work anymore, I will bring them into the fold." So we did that. There was a plan made. There was a man brought in, a friend of Bill's brought in to run the whole thing, and people from all over the country, college kids came. They earned five dollars a week and their room and board, and seventeen-year-olds were doing plumbing. They were taught how you fix--these little girls, these cute little girls in those overalls, plumbers' overalls with the tools. So Bill would come and he would take somebody to teach them how to go to Bakersfield and how to fill out the forms and what you had to do, so that was a very meaningful period, that part of it.

Rubin

And I was in the SNCC movement.

Collings

Was that when you were still living in Toledo?

Rubin

No. When I got out of the service in '45, and then we moved here in '61, so that's where most--

Collings

Most of it came from out of your location here.

Rubin

Right, the sixties. Because I was active in Los Angeles with the black movement, too. Well, not the Black Panthers, not that group, but people that were really doing things and doing things legislatively. It was on a different level. But I was on picket lines. I would go out and be a movement person. I could stand. And then, see, in the sixties, let's see, and then, of course, the healthy part, when we got the legislation in the sixties. Okay. Then '69 we had the oil spill here, and January twenty-eighth of 1970 we got thirty-six organizations together to celebrate, to remember. We took over the City College and we had leadership from all over. We invited everybody and his brother and sister that had a name, and we had 1100 people come to a one-day session here.

Collings

My gosh.

Rubin

With Barry Commoner, oh, my god. I mean, the kickoff was Paul Erlich and his wife were here, and we had a banquet at night, and we had people going away just glowing and excited and filling out forms and taking literature, and everything just moved from here. We had a lot. We took--it was like a satellite thing. We just took from it and a lot of things, a lot of things over California and other places, but primarily around here. And right after it was over, a group of us got together and said, "You know, we have so much energy and so much going on, we can't let it die. Let's do something." And another two men and I formed an organization we called the Community Environmental Council [CEC], and in January it will celebrate its fortieth birthday, one of the few that lasted and accomplished, and very early--

Collings

Right, right, because most of those groups no longer exist.

Rubin

Early we had a piece of land, where we did organic gardening, and it was just fabulous. We had a compost pile and a methane digester and rabbits and all kinds of rope and stuff that you'd put the things up like that. This part needed the sun, and this part underneath--it's called bioengineering, I think, because underneath you could plant a potato, for example. We had that land and we were doing well. We hired a horticulturalist and we had a little garden first, and then we had a bigger garden, and then when we had the bigger garden it was on

rental property, so we said, no, we have to find our own. But what had happened is that in about the middle of the seventies we had a man with a lot of vision, and he came to us and he said, "There's the beginning of a recycling movement going on, and I think that the City of Santa Barbara and your organization should get together, and what we can do is we can collect newspapers and then take them down, they'd biodegrade them and they'd use them for a lot of stuff."

Rubin

So our contract was for thirty-eight-and-a-half dollars a ton. This is what we got, and we would pay the people that brought the paper. Over 200 organizations kept bringing paper in that we could subsequently send out, and the first year we gave back to this community \$125,000.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Rubin

Just these little groups of people that would--there was an outlet. There was a need for it. And then eventually it had the cans, the aluminum cans, cardboard, ledger paper, all kinds of things, and it grew and really developed and we were just part of the advance of all the little movements. Right now they're very heavily into energy. In fact, they told me that they expect to get the money from Washington. They think they're on the list of people that are doing very important--we just got a wind farm going here. We're part of that, too. And I was on that board for thirty-six years.

Rubin

In about 1977 we had an environmental person come to us and say, "Santa Barbara needs an Environmental Defense Center." Anyway, I got involved with that. I helped them get that one started, with a couple of other people, and today, what happens here if there's an issue and people don't know where to go? So they come to us first, and then we've got people that will sit down with them and explain what their rights are, what they can do. If it goes to litigation, then the people get together and they raise a little money, and we keep this group going. So it started in '77, and in 1982 a friend was selling his property downtown, which had been, let's see, the Legal Aid Foundation. Then there are all kinds of different things, like--[huge noise begins in background].

[Interruption]

Collings

Okay.

Rubin

So Kathryn Peak and I bought that building, bought that corner, and were very fortunate because there was an adobe wall. That corner, nothing can ever be done to it. If you paint it, you have to paint it the same color. You can't move

anything. You can't ever tear it down. You can't ever build it up. It's there into perpetuity. So we bought it in '82 with the purpose of being able to sell it to whatever nonprofit group could raise the money and wanted to do it, and that's just what we did. We sold it to them in 1985. They didn't have enough money, and they went to the bank and then she and I gave them second and third notes. They paid it off, everything was fine. They've done a lot of nice things. But they started out with one lawyer and one staff person, and I think there are about five or six lawyers now and an executive director and staff, and they've taken the front, which is a yard, and they've made such a beautiful garden cart. It has a well in it and starting in May they had TGIFs starting in May, the first Friday, from May until October. But people get together and we have hors d'oeuvres and a couple of drinks, and different groups kind of support it. And they have a raffle, and it's just a meeting place for so many different people. Everything kind of grows from that.

Rubin

I'm so happy when I go there. I look around, and when I come, because of the walking problem, I call them up and I say, "I'm going to come tonight," and they take--there's one long bench, and they have a little thing that says "Reserved for Selma Rubin." So I come, I sit here, I put my walker here and my friends come and they sit down and have a conversation.

Collings

It sounds lovely.

Rubin

I can't describe how happy I am in the community, and then I get a lot of phone calls. I'm on e-mail. I'm not very good, but I make myself, and I read a lot of stuff.

Collings

Yes. Now, did you have that kind of environment when you were growing up, all of this involvement in causes? You said that your father was involved in the community center. Is that sort of where it started?

Rubin

Yes, it was, because he was a joiner, too. He belonged to a lot of different organizations, and he loved to play cards. Our family would get together, my cousins and aunts and uncles, and we would get together on Sunday, and sometimes the kids would just go to the movies or we'd go out and play on the baseball grounds. My brothers were active, too, but in the things that they were kind of interested in sports. And my mother actually belonged to a couple of organizations, too, so my whole life has been around that.

Collings

And your dad owned the factory. Where does the labor organizing piece come in?

Rubin

My father, when they bought it. Let's see, that would have been in 1901 or maybe '03. What can I tell you about the labor part of it? I know my father worked there and his brothers. I know that they did.

Collings

Oh, your grandfather bought the factory. I see.

Rubin

My grandfather bought it, yes. It wasn't my father, it was my grandfather who bought it. My family has always been pro-labor, but I don't really know enough, I can't remember enough about what happened. But I know that my father was a very great humanitarian. I think he would do everything he can to help people, and I would estimate that if there was an organization, a labor organization, I think that they would probably have had that, because he held great respect for work, for labor. And, of course, as my grandfather was involved in manufacturing there, he had to have workers that were involved with him, too. But there's a pro-labor factor in my family, and I've always--I've never walked a picket line. I've helped people understand what that is, too. I have a little girl who was seven years old, and her mother was having surgery, and I took her out on a Saturday. I told her, "We're going to go out and have some ice cream, and then we're going to go to a movie." And she picked out the one she wanted and we went, and it was on Hollywood Boulevard. And when we got there, I parked the car and then we got there, I saw the picket line, I said, "Julie, I'm very sorry, but there's a picket line here, so let's go find out what it's about." We talked to some people and they made such an impression on seven-year-old Julie, she has never crossed a picket line in her life. She wouldn't even do that.

Rubin

And Bill was financially in pretty good condition, because his parents had some buildings and rental stuff in New York, and while we worked we had some supplementary, so we did investments, and at one time we were worth about two million dollars, but we have given away, we have given away. I sent three minority girls to college, two of them have their master's I have to say.

Collings

Oh, my goodness.

Rubin

See, that's what I do instead of children. I don't know, I've always been conscious of minorities. I think I come from that atmosphere.

Collings

Well, I was going to ask you. I mean, did you ever feel like you were not part of the mainstream growing up in Toledo?

Rubin

No, no. I never felt discriminated against. And I have a habit, I was told this when I was even an eight-, nine-year-old kid, I was told by my uncles and aunts that I had a way of surrounding myself with people who were good for me, that I never could have been part of a gang, I never could have been talked into anything that was bad. If there was something that was going on that was not in my welfare, I never fought with them, but I just eliminated. I went away. And I think I do that today. Instead of having really big fights with people I say, "You and I, we differ, that's all. We have a difference of opinion."

Collings

What were your friends in high school like? Were they interested in social causes as well?

Rubin

Well, my history of school is very interesting, because every year from my kindergarten to high school I was in a different school. Now, part of the time we lived in Cleveland, because there was a short period--let's see. I started school in Cleveland in 1920, and we lived there for six years, and during that time my father worked with development people on low-cost housing. He would build up some houses and we would move in. My mother would sell them and then there'd be another group in another part of town, and we went like that. So we moved back in '26, and in '27 I was in one school, I graduated. I graduated from Scott [High School], which was the school that I lived in Toledo most of my life. And I thought it was wonderful, because every year I had new friends and then some from the old group, I learned late in life that my brothers were very unhappy about that, but I just thought it was wonderful to make all the friends. I'm an outgoing, warm-type person anyway, so everything went well for me, and I have happy memories of my childhood.

Rubin

I only remember one time that my father spanked me, because I stole a dollar out of my mother's purse, and I didn't acknowledge. He knew it, she knew it, everybody else knew it, but I wouldn't acknowledge it. [Interruption]

Collings

Okay, go ahead. You had been talking a little bit about going to school and switching around to all of the--

Rubin

And going to different schools every year, and I was really happy doing that. I guess I didn't even talk to my brothers. I didn't even know that about them, because it was just great for me.

Collings

But this might have given you--being new in all of these situations, it might have given you a chance to evaluate what was going on around you and not just take everything for granted.

Rubin

It's very meaningful, yes, yes. And you learn a lot. You learn about all kinds of people from all kinds of countries, because we'd lived in poorer neighborhoods where there was a lot of immigration, lots of sad stories of Italians and everybody, everybody. I always had what I needed. I never had a lot of clothes and a lot of things, never had a bicycle, but I didn't want one.

Collings

Now, did any other members of your family have any kind of like social involvement or human rights issues? I mean, you said that your brother was interested in being a lawyer, but I don't know if that's the same thing.

Rubin

Yes, yes. My father pretty much set the tone, though. [Interruption]

Collings

Okay, go ahead.

Rubin

We're still better off than we would be in my house, because I don't think you would get a good--

Collings

Okay, go ahead.

Rubin

My father was a member of the B'nai B'rith, which is a social--that portion is very social. They do many, many, many things. They certainly did them when he was there and in those years, because, of course, you have to adapt to the times, too. When there's poverty, you've got to look at that. You've got to try to do that. When there's other kinds of social issues, personal kinds of things when people are losing their homes, all kinds of human problems that you just have to work with and try to solve, and that was pretty much his thing in life, and he would talk about those things with us, so we grew up knowing that we really had a social responsibility.

Collings

You felt that you had a social responsibility.

Rubin

My father would be very proud of me now, actually, because of the work that I've been able to do in these last years in Santa Barbara, which I will go into more detail, but I was accused of a felony and I had a trial, and I would have gone to jail for twenty-eight years. I would have gone to prison for twenty-eight years, which ends up now, having saved the Gaviota coast, that issue that I was working on which is called the El Capitan, and right now at El Capitan there's a trail named after me, there's a bench named after me. There's just lots of wonderful things. I have a lot of awards. I'm being honored about the middle of May by the Legal Aid Foundation that's been in business for fifty years. I

helped to get their quarters they live in right now, and there are about ten people in Santa Barbara, there are three women, and I'm one of them that's being honored. I don't know, I just stay happy. I just go out to lunch. People call me. [End of interview]

1.2. Session 2 (May 5, 2009)

Collings

All right, Jane Collings, May 5, 2009, interviewing Selma Rubin at Santa Barbara at the site of the Environmental Defense Center. I just wanted to follow up a little bit from our last interview, just take a few minutes on that. I was struck by the fact that you said that when you were fifteen you decided definitely that you would not have any children. That seemed like a strong decision for a fifteen-year-old to make, so what led to that?

Rubin

I think that I was really not baby-oriented. I was not a sitter for small children. I didn't play with dolls very much, they didn't interest me very much, and I was living in kind of a turbulence then. I was born in 1915, and this was just kind of at the time of the crash [Great Depression], and there were lots of events happening, lots of people jumping out of windows, and there was a general fear, and I just thought this was not--of course it was not a healthy atmosphere, but it was nothing--I've never been pushed to have that motherly issue with me that in my later life I've learned that most women are ready to do anything, and time has proven that with their fertilization programs and all that they do today to have babies. It just didn't push me, it didn't drive me. And I'm glad of that, because all of my life I didn't use children as an issue, in my political life, in my environmental life, and lots of women always comment to me about how many boards I'm on and how many things I'm doing. Then I point out to them that what they are doing is the same, but they're doing it with their family, because they can't get away at six o'clock to do things that I can do, because they've got children, they've got a husband, they've got a life or they've got other responsibilities, but they're based around children, which my life has never been, either with my first husband or with my second husband. Both men were also not of the baby persuasion.

Collings

[laughs] Well, it's interesting, because a great deal of environmental activism is oriented around mothers becoming active because they're concerned about their children's health, that that's not your motivation, obviously.

Rubin

In the overall it is. I want this a healthy world. I want this a healthy world, and I talk to young people. "This is your world. This is what you have to do," and I talk to them in terms of their own children, too.

Collings

Yes. But you specifically decided not to, so that even goes farther than just saying, I wasn't interested.

Rubin

No. And I wish that more women in this world were able to do that. I'm hoping that that will be part of present and future, that they can really have choices. I mean, a choice is a very important thing to a woman.

Collings

Yes, absolutely.

Rubin

Not a choice of an abortion, but the choice if they really want children or don't.

Collings

To really consider that.

Rubin

To really consider what their lives are going to be like. Today when you have a baby, you have to recognize that when that child goes to college it's going to be in the 300,000 or more brackets that you have, and you have to be prepared. You have to save that. You have to look at that child. This is your responsibility. That child didn't ask to be brought here, but you brought him and it's your responsibility to give it the best life that you can, in making the child self-sufficient as you do that.

Collings

Yes. You were greatly affected by the Great Depression. In your household and in your view, what caused the depression? What was to blame for the depression? How did your family frame those events?

Collings

In the economic area. There was a question of war first, and then both World War--at the time, of course, it was just World War I, and I had an uncle that was in the service. I think my family was basically very much of a pacifist. Peace was a very important part of our lives.

Collings

So they saw the Great Depression as being linked to the waging of World War I?

Rubin

Right, right.

Collings

I see.

Rubin

My father was not in service. Oh, they were married in 1912 and it started in 1914. My mother gave birth to a dead baby in 1914. She was just devastated, and her father said, "Go home and get pregnant." So she went home and one year later I was born. The economics of the time were so devastating and so sad to live with, because of the fact that people had all of these problems and weren't working and had the psychological problems, especially the men.

Collings

This really affected you.

Rubin

Oh, very much, to today. And I'm very worried right now, because I don't like the way some of the things are going, and I'm remembering the men being out of work. They didn't have the workers' comp or the unemployment benefits at that time in the thirties. That came at the end of the thirties with Roosevelt, but it taught us a lot of lessons, of course.

Collings

And then with regard to the war effort to World War II, your family was pacifist in nature, I mean, but then here are the three of you, you and your two brothers were all enlisted.

Rubin

Yes.

Collings

So how did the family feel about the war effort?

Rubin

Everybody did everything they could do. My father was in business at that time, and he would be very, very troubled and very upset if anybody came to him and tried to sell him black-market products. We were on gasoline rationing, and he was so cautious and so careful, maybe not take that block or not do this. He taught me to drive going back and forth to work. That was before I went in the service in 1940. I think I got my first license in 1941. But we were saving--my mother--I still have that little habit--she used to take the string and save it and make balls of string. For more than two years I had one pair of nylon hose that would get a run and then I'd have it fixed. You could do that at that time. For a couple of pennies they would fix that, and that was it. Those were the ones. That was the pair that I wore. I wore cotton hose during that period, too. We did.

Collings

Did you ever paint a line up the back of your leg the way they did to sort of make it look like you were wearing hose?

Rubin

No, no, no. I was not very fashionable. [laughs] We saved. We were careful with everything. There was no choice as far as going into service at that time,

although I don't know, maybe if I were to do it again I would suggest conscientious objector, but the older of my two brothers, who's younger than me, had a draft number that was very early, and he would have been called in. They got married before the war, just before the war in early '40, and then he enlisted. He was in law school when it happened, in '40, '41, and he had enlisted in Massachusetts where his wife lived. He'd gone to OCS [Officer Candidate School] and was just waiting. In October he was waiting to be discharged, and he would have been because she was pregnant. He would have been in the sense that that was the procedure. And, of course, he was in. He was in for four years, and he was in the Normandy Invasion and D-Day.

Rubin

My younger brother of the two was in the Battle of the Bulge. He had a piece of shrapnel go into his face, go down, fractured his jaws. He was in a hospital for a year. He could only eat by sucking in the liquids in between his teeth. Came out, he couldn't use a toothbrush. And I enlisted as soon as President Roosevelt announced the WAVES, because there were women groups for all of the service, the WAC, the Marines. When you enlist, they say, "What do you want to do?" and then you tell them what you want to do, and then they say, "Well, let's take this test." And then you take the test, and however you come out and whatever their need is is where you go. So first I went to boot camp in Iowa. Then I was sent to Norman, Oklahoma, to Aviation Machinist Mate's School. I came out very high on the mechanical. On the mechanical I didn't know one from the other, but I just would kind of guess. But it didn't matter, because they always sent you where you needed to go.

Rubin

I was in training there. There were 300 women and 20,000 men within the environs of Oklahoma City, where everybody did their liberty. It had curfew from two to five; you couldn't be on the streets. Lord knows where those people were. I remember one night we had seventeen service people in our room, just to get through those few hours.

Collings

Yes, sounds like a crowd.

Rubin

I did have a blast, actually.

Collings

Really?

Rubin

I really--I met a lot of people. I was not the most beautiful one on the base, but I had from fourteen to sixteen dates over a weekend.

Collings

Wow.

Rubin

That was Friday night through Sunday night. A date was like you'd have a Coke with somebody from three to four and then go to the museum from five to six, that kind of a date, and once in a while a movie. What was interesting is it was a plum for a man to have a date, even for an hour over the weekend. So when we'd get in the bus to go back to the base, the guys would come around with a lipstick and they would ask us if we would please put the lipstick on and give them a kiss, just anyplace on their face so they could go walk back into their barrack and say, "Well, see what I got this weekend?"

Collings

Oh, my gosh, that's so funny. Would everybody just do it as a matter of course?

Rubin

Yes, just kind of a thing. It was a thing. Being Jewish meant that you could get out on Friday night in addition. For instance, if you didn't have a weekend, you could still go on Friday, because you could get out like at dinnertime, and then you were supposed to go to a service, and then somebody there was supposed to sign your chit, and then, of course, you had to be back, I don't know, eleven or something. So we used to do that. We would go to the temple and there was a black janitor and he was very nice. He signed everything and we went off. We played the game.

Rubin

But I got sick. I got something which to this day I don't know. They called it "cat fever." I just ran a high fever. They couldn't find anything, put me in the hospital for a week. The fever went down, they treated that okay, and I came out and I lost out with my class of women. So then I was with the men, and they were not--to start with, I was afraid of that job. Like, "Oh, my god, I get up there and I'm going to screw something and the screw's going to come out and somebody is going to die." It was not a happy--because I wanted to be in the storekeepers. So I did that maybe for about another month, and then I came and I asked them if they would transfer me off this job, because I was very unhappy with it and could I go and do something more productive. And they put me in an office job.

Rubin

Now, the reason for the WAVES was they did not allow men onboard ship (sic), and so whenever we got the job we were releasing a male. Anything we could do as women we could do. The Rosie the Riveter was part of that, too. And the men were released, the men were able to go onboard ship and do their jobs. I was very patriotic. I heard a lot of things. One of the things that my father showed me a picture one day in the newspaper of the town that he was born in, and the Nazis were there. I didn't tell you this?

Collings

No.

Rubin

The Nazis came, and he said, "This is the bridge where I used to--the river under that bridge is where I used to swim as a child." And, of course, they were just doing really terrible things. They were drowning cemeteries. I was close to it, I read a lot, I listened a lot. I was very moved and very patriotic and very caring about what was happening. I was very conscious of that.

Collings

Yes. So you felt that you had a special stake in what was going on for that reason?

Rubin

I did, I did. And my mother bought a flag. She had the flag in her window with three stars on it. I believe they were blue, dark blue, because when they were gold it was a death. But she had this blue thing. She's very proud of that. I have lots of friends I used to--before the war I had a lot of friends that were in service, and I used to send them candy. We had a thing like See's candy or Fanny Farmer's, and they made some kind of a special chocolate that could go from Alaska, very, very, very cold to very, very hot climate. The men just loved this stuff, and I used to do that very regularly, my two brothers and my relatives. I had cousins, and then I picked up a lot of friends along the way. I used to just go and--I think it was like fifty cents a pound including the postage, so--

Collings

You'd send them chocolates.

Rubin

Yes, I sent them chocolates.

Collings

Oh, that's lovely.

Rubin

It was the See's chocolate.

Collings

Well, why don't we pick up, sort of get back into our chronology and pick up on the date of January twenty-eighth, 1969?

Rubin

A day that shall remain in--

Collings

Live in infamy, right.

Rubin

Oh, my god.

Collings

Oh, actually speaking of that, I'm sorry, I did want to ask you another World War II-related question. I'm sorry I skipped over it. Where were you when you heard about the dropping of the atomic bombs, and what was your reaction?

Rubin

I think I was still in Michigan. I was devastated. From that moment on, I've never forgotten that. I've never forgotten through--because of my work even now with Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, I've never forgotten that we're the only country in the world that has ever used those bombs on people. I have visited Hiroshima.

Collings

Oh, have you.

Rubin

Everybody should do that once in their life. You'll never want to think positively about nuclear again. I was almost embarrassed about it. I remember when I visited in Mexico, one of the things that people used to say to me, "How did you feel about the United States when they dropped the bomb?" It was terrible. I never forgave Truman. Anything he did before or after that was nothing compared to what he allowed. You know, understanding the history, and I've read--in the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation is Frank Kelly, who was his speechwriter, Truman's speechwriter and has written a number of books, and Frank and I just go at it whenever we--because he's very supportive, because he said, "Well, there were so many things that happened at that time." But not for me, not for me. It's an unforgivable, unforgivable sin.

Collings

Did people talk about it a lot?

Rubin

Yes. At the time they did. But people at the time were fed the fact that, "Well, we shortened the war by that." And the history of that period in the white papers have proven since that they were absolutely ready, and the talks had already started in Washington for them to abandon, end the war, the Japanese to end the war. But we wanted to show whatever we needed to show at the time, we're number one.

Collings

Did a lot of people in Mexico ask you about that?

Rubin

Yes, yes, yes.

Collings

Was that sort of the question you just got all the time?

Rubin

I'd get it wherever I went. I lived in Mexico for six months, because I was trying to study the language, and I belonged to, what do you call it, a circolo.

We met at somebody's house that's a guest house, and people would come from all over the world, and we'd have a lecture in one language or another, and then we'd sit at a table of four people and we'd converse. Wherever, even outside people, but particularly the Mexican people were very keen on that--how did I feel? How did we feel? We've had a blight on us, in my opinion. And yet I think you'll find a lot of people that will still say--maybe some of the service people that were there. They were fed the fact that it was ending, so it saved them. It got them home faster. But not so, I don't think so.

Collings

So how did you get the news that this had happened?

Rubin

Radio. Radio was the big thing then. Of course, we didn't have what we've got now at CNN.

Collings

Right. So it was just part of a regular news broadcast, or breaking news or something?

Rubin

Extra, extra special, that's all. How many people were killed at the time. And they did Hiroshima. Hiroshima was a flat area, and then to make sure they did Nagasaki, because that was hilly, mountainous and hilly, so they wanted to have in their scientific reports how the bomb worked when it fell on level and on--

Collings

Yes, pretty unspeakable.

Rubin

We have a program on August the fifth in Santa Barbara, the Nuclear Peace Foundation always has an afternoon, and we talk about it. And we generally have a Japanese person, sometimes somebody visiting or a local person who has lived through it. We commemorate that, and we do the origami, the cranes. The little girl that I don't remember her name, but she was the one that was going to make a hundred of those before she died, the cranes, paper cranes. So at least we try through out Nuclear Age Peace Foundation to not let people forget about it and forget that we were the ones, and we can't. It's the basis of our work is to educate people and make people remember that we were the ones, and it can't ever happen again. And you know how much more refined it is than what it was in 1945, the nuclear missiles, and we're very happy to hear our news president tell us that he's very much opposed to nuclear missiles. We're very happy about that. We've written to him. We've written some books and had some people in Washington kind of getting a little closer.

Rubin

We have an advantage, because our Congresswoman Lois Katz has--first of all, she's a good peacenik, and she has relations with the people that are close that had worked on the campaign. Her daughter is in Washington, so we feel a little closer, and when we want an appointment we get it a little earlier with her. She's a good spokesperson for us.

Collings

Yes. Okay. Well, let's jump forward and Summerland, January twenty-eighth, 1969, the Union Oil Company spill occurs. So what happened?

Rubin

What happened was that the Union Oil Company was trying to save a little money, and they put in this platform with the very big pumps, and all of those pump part of it was to be wrapped in protective covering so that this could not happen. But they wanted to save, so they didn't do it.

Collings

They didn't do the wrapping enough?

Rubin

They didn't do the wrapping enough, and that's where when the spill happened, it happened from that spot. It erupted. We had a newspaper then called the Santa Barbara News Press. We still have the paper, but it's not what it was. It had an environmental reporter whose name was Robert Solen, and the paper told Robert that sometime there was going to be a spill and to educate himself. So when the spill happened they gave Robert a call, and he jumped in a plane, and he was going over and over and over the spill.

Collings

Here's a picture of the spill, yes, aerial picture.

Rubin

And he was able to bring the news, heavy news out right away. Papers were full. I think the taller building here had like five stories, and two men were working for G.E. Temple. Their names were Marvin Stewart and Bud Bottoms. And the two of them looked out their window and they couldn't believe what they saw, and one said to the other one, "Look at that oil." And the other one says, "We've got to get that out of here," and was born an organization called Get Oil Out [GOO], and within a few days we had a lot of signatures. Within a couple of weeks, because I worked on that day and night, within maybe a couple of weeks we had 200,000 signatures.

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Rubin

It was like 80,000 people in this community. Of course, the state--Santa Barbara County is a lot bigger. How to say, the devastation that took place, the saddest part of all of it was the birds, the birds, and the birds got oil-covered.

They set up cleaning stations, but what happened is the bird has a natural coating of oil as its natural covering, and then on top of the natural one they got this--

Collings

Gunk.

Rubin

--Union oil. And so people would take them to the cleaning stations and clean them and put them back, but not their natural-- And they didn't live. They couldn't live. So it was kind of--

Collings

So did they not understand enough about the natural oil at that time?

Rubin

I guess at that particular time they didn't, so a lot of them were lost. Anybody that tried to get back on the water, they didn't live. The town was totally devastated. People were just overcome with emotion. Of course, the beach--and it was spewing out. It was such a terrible sight, just, ooh, big gushes, gushes, gushes.

Collings

Right. Sort of it was boiling. It was sort of boiling and gushing as I understand.

Rubin

Yes, you can really kind of see that from there.

Collings

Yes, you can.

Rubin

Everybody turned out. We organized and organized and reorganized, and we just had everybody doing something, calling the Congress, calling the President, calling the Secretary of the Interior. They all came out, flew out, took a look, flew back. Nothing much happened. With the signatures we had a very devoted woman by the name of Lois Seidenberg, who was quite well to do, and she hired a plane and she took boxes of the signatures and she flew them into Washington and presented them to Congress, and as far as we know they were put in a desk and they're probably there someplace.

Collings

And these were signatures to stop the drilling?

Rubin

Stop the drilling, yes, yes, close it down and stop it. There were Senate hearings about it. Robert Solen took--he was a good photographer, too--he took many, many, many pictures, and he went to Washington with that, and he was interviewed with the Senate committee. Everything was affected by it, the stores, the people. People would come down and look and cry, and everybody was doing something. Really, the town participated. We bought tiny little

bottles, maybe it would hold an ounce, and we filled all of those bottles, 450 bottles with oil, and closed them, tagged them, put a tag on, and every Congressperson and every Senator got a bottle of oil from us.

Collings

That was a good idea.

Rubin

Letters, phone calls, telegrams. Communication was--

Collings

This sounds like it was quite an organizational--

Rubin

Oh, it was, it was, it was.

Collings

How was it possible to organize all of these groups of people and people from many different political spectrums?

Rubin

Right, and that was the issue, the oil was the issue. Everything else went by the boards at that time. The city councils and the board of supervisors, we were wrapped up in it and just watching that stuff, watching it day after day after day. I don't really remember how many days it spewed oil, but--

Collings

What were the efforts made by the Union Oil Company to--

Rubin

Excuse themselves?

Collings

--in terms of the cleanup, and to excuse themselves, yes?

Rubin

The cleanup is straw. They brought straw in bales and bales, and they took it out and just spread it, and it got absorbed and brought back into the moving truck and taken to the county fill in Ventura. They filled it; up here there was no room. That, to my understanding, is still what they do for an oil spill. They claim that there's a lot of companies like Clean Seas and all this stuff, but to my understanding--there might be, because I'm not down to the minute today. But that's the way they cleaned it up. That took forever. And even today when you walk on the beach you'll get oil on your shoe, and, of course, they're calling this natural seepage, that kind of oil.

Collings

And now there's another group that wants more drilling to prevent the natural seepage, correct? SOS, Stop Oil Seepage?

Rubin

Stop Oil Seepage. I'm not really too familiar with them now.

Collings

Oh, okay, all right. Well, we'll stick with the oil spill of 1969.

Rubin

What happened as a result of that spill is in 1969 about July we all got together and we said, "We need a commemoration of the oil spill, and still keep it alive and still stop it in the channel." And so we got together with about thirty-six different organizations. We promoted--

Collings

Now, when you say we, would that have been the group--

Rubin

Oh, Sierra Club, GOO, all these--you know, six or seven people would get together and they would have a name and there would be a something, and everybody--we're working toward the same end, but people have different ways of working. Some people like to be on the phone. Some people only like to write. Whatever they liked to do, we wanted. We took from everybody everything they wanted to give us. So we get this group organized in order to have a commemorative day on January twenty-eighth of 1970. And we brought in--we invited people from all over the country to come and be part of that. It was a total one-day session, and we took over the city--I think they were on the break period then, and we took over their cafeteria. They didn't really have a theater kind of thing, but it was in that one building. We took over and there were workshops in different rooms. We got 1100 people to a one-day meeting on this subject. The big meeting took place in a great, big room, and you were looking out at the most beautiful ocean, ocean, ocean, with the oil platforms out there.

Rubin

It was the most meaningful thing. People--we had the whole day. Then we had workshops on different ways, different ideas that people had of what they wanted to do, and in the evening we had a banquet with speakers and music. And the place only held like 400 people, so a lot people overflowed. We also had a potluck thing on the beach that same night. And then we took down, hundreds, thousands, 1100 names that we had. We had Barry Commoner here and we had Dennis Hayes and all the big-name people. Paul Erlich, actually was on. And a couple of weeks later the organizers kind of got together and we said, "We can't believe how much energy there is in this community on environmental issues. Let's do something. Let's form something." So from that was born the Community Environmental Council, which was kind of enveloping.

Rubin

We raised a few bucks. We incorporated. I was one of the three incorporators. We rented a storefront. We kicked off by selling magazines and newspapers, and we rented out little space for other organizations that a lot of them didn't

have a place, so they would rent a table in the room, and a lot of other groups kind of sprung from that. But that was kind of the nucleus. That's why we were just calling it the council. And that took off like unbelievable. 1970 was the Earth Day that was organized, the first Earth Day. What's his name, Gaylord? Nelson Gaylord I think his name was. He was the one that laid claim to having thought it up, but it actually was born here.

Collings

The senator?

Rubin

Right, Gaylord Nelson. I think that was his name. The city closed off a whole city block. We had all kinds of booths, and everybody that was interested in any environmental issue brought a table, and we had a kickoff. To this day we're still doing that. We had one, was it a couple of Sundays ago? We took over this whole park. There were, how many now, about 120 booths, and everybody, everybody that had anything remotely environmental--somebody brought me a little battery fan and all kinds of things, and, of course, things have progressed. We had cars there, and it's been a nucleus, the CEC.

Rubin

Now, the CEC has done some phenomenal things.

Collings

The Community Environmental Council.

Rubin

Right.

Collings

You were the co-founder of that, correct?

Rubin

Right.

Collings

With Marie McGinnis?

Rubin

Mark McGinnis.

Collings

Excuse me, Mark, can't read my own handwriting. Mark McGinnis.

Rubin

Mark McGinnis and John Meengs, M-e-e-n-g-s. We started that. And Mark and I have gone on to do that for a few other things, too. Well, Paul Rhodes became our first executive director, and he was with us for twenty-one years, until the governor, Governor [Pete] Wilson wanted him in Sacramento, and eventually he ended up as the head of the Integrated Waste Management. That's where he stayed. He's writing books and he's in business. We've had a few other people since then. But everything was cooking, everything was building and growing

and erupting. It was just an exciting time here, particularly in Santa Barbara. But it gave birth to it in a lot of other places. We gave birth to the recycling here. 1976, a man came into town that retired out of New York, thought he was going to play tennis the rest of his life, couldn't stand it, decided he was going to help out. Where could he help out? So he came around to us and, "What do you need? What can we do?" Well, let's examine what has to be done here. I'm not repeating myself, am I?

Collings

No, no, not at all.

Rubin

Okay. "What has to be done," he said, this wonderful Robert Clauson said, "is all of these little organizations need a way of raising money besides bake sales and rummage sales, so what can we do?" He goes down and he processes and he researches, and he comes back and he goes to the City of Santa Barbara, and he said, "You need to go into partnership with CEC, and you need to do recycling of newspapers." And this is what--we got the newspapers. He made these arrangements, once a week all these papers--the city gave us a place, a building, and people would bring the newspapers, and then they we'd have their name and we'd weigh them and give them so much credit, because he made this contract for \$48.50 a ton for five years. Didn't matter what happened to the market, it went up, went down. We got the 48.50. In the first year that we were in business, we gave back to these communities--there were like 200 or so--we gave back \$125,000. The school kids would collect up papers and turn up.

Collings

That began in 1976?

Rubin

About 1976.

Collings

Yes, and continues until the present?

Rubin

There are two companies. [Interruption]

Collings

We were talking about the recycling that you were using to fund the environmental organizing.

Rubin

The idea was wonderful, because we kept that until just a few years ago. We sold that to two disposal--there are two disposal companies here, and we sold it to one, because they've been doing tremendous research and doing some really, really good work, and it was time to let go and we sold it, and we have profit from that. And all these years we have worked with buying and selling, and it was great because there was enough profit so that our organization could share

in that profit. It didn't have to go to the public that much, didn't have to go for grant making, because we were able to earn our own. They call it the C-4. We were innovative, we were very creative.

Rubin

A couple of blocks from where we opened our office there was a piece of ground that was going to be made into a parking lot, and we went to the city and we said--we had a woman on our board who was a rancher, and she said, "There's no sense in that piece of ground just sitting there. Let's go to the city and ask them if we can't plant a garden there," and that's what we did. And in the next block from there was a hotel that had seniors in it, because these people would sell their homes and then they'd move into this hotel for their comfort, and they always took their garden tools with them. So we would go over there and we'd say, "Do you want to come and help us with the garden? Whatever we produce, you can have." And that went on until another piece of land, a great big city block that they'd been trying to put high-rises on and they were not successful, and so the museum was contracting to take that on. They were going to build a new museum.

Rubin

So they came to us and they said, "You know, it's going to be a while. Why don't you take a quarter of this and build a really big garden?" So we got into the bio-intensive French method of gardening, like this, and then the place that didn't need as much sun, like down here potatoes, for example, we could plant potatoes, but here we needed tomatoes and green beans, whatever. We had a methane digester. We had rabbits or chickens or stuff, and it was very experimental. We hired a horticulturist from the university, and we brought children in to teach them about composting and to teach them how to grow this. You know, children don't always know that the milk doesn't come from the shelf, right?

Collings

Right, exactly.

Rubin

So it became a teaching area, and everything that was innovative in that period--well, we're now forty years old. In April we'll be forty years old.

Collings

The Community Environmental Council?

Rubin

Yes. And included in that--well, no, I'll get to EDC [Environmental Defense Center] as a separate thing.

Collings

To EDC, the Environmental Defense Center, where we are. Yes.

Rubin

This one, right. But we did that one in 1977. But there were a lot of offshoots of CEC. Okay, we built a watershed resource center at the beach to do water, to do creeks, to teach people to keep the ocean clean, all kinds of growing solutions. It's been like the head and like the base. People kept coming to--we don't do very much political work with the CEC, because we're nearly not allowed to, but there's a certain percentage, every 501 (c)(3) is allowed a certain percentage of lobbying. But they always did a minimum of that. They were more interested in--we had a Clyvus Multum Toilet.

Rubin

Well, one of the other things we built--from the El Mirasol, some of the board people felt, well, it's time. We have to have our own place now. So we had one well-to-do and very smart man. He got his real estate person to just kind of keep their eye on finding something, and we bought a piece of property which was kind of--it's up the hill, and it was a dairy farm, had a couple of small buildings for the dairies up there, and for five and a half acres they charged us \$36,000, and we raised the funds and we moved up there. And we had our own garden up there. We had a man. And all of this stuff that we do, it isn't just flowers for flowers, but all right, we're going to experiment with tomatoes, we're going to do this with that. Always organic, that was the whole key to that movement was to make it organic and figure out how we get rid of snails, you paint marigolds, and all that. And pamphlets and books. We'd have meetings of the community. We'd have speakers. We had videos.

Collings

Now, during that period a lot of that organic farming and environmental stuff went along with cultural issues, perhaps people living in communal-living situations or holding political views that were out of the mainstream, perhaps early Women's Movement stuff. Was that ever a part of this?

Rubin

Oh, yes, oh, yes. Women Strike for Peace was very early here in Santa Barbara, and we had people in both. I was always in both kinds. I was in the civil liberties group, ACLU, in this, and people, you know, when you get into a group and you show some talent, some interest, some way of working, and then they say, "Oh, I've got another job for you." Like right now I'm on eight boards. Okay, I'm unusual. I don't know if people do that much. But it's very interconnected, and almost all the groups in this period had some kind of an environmental angle to them, whatever they're doing, whether they have to save, whether they have to watch their energy consumption, whether they're doing bicycles, encouraging bicycles instead of cars, or cars for less. Whatever they're doing, somehow today the teachings, I think, everything is just interwoven since that period of time.

Collings

But at the time of the oil spill the entire community, no matter what the political viewpoint, came out. But over the next year or so, did divisions appear along political lines?

Rubin

No. No. We had a woman who--we were looking for somebody to run for Congress, and we were in a group and this woman stands up and she says, "Well, I have a candidate. My husband, Gary Hart." Now, this is not the one who couldn't keep his zipper buttoned up, but a wonderful, wonderful young man. He had a master's and he was a teacher, and he ran for Congress and he didn't win. He ran for the Assembly, the first time he didn't win. He ran for the Assembly the second time, and he won, and he got all the way up to the top. He was termed out by the Senate, and made such a tremendous contribution in all of this time. People just loved him. People voted for him twenty years later, because he came to their door twenty years ago. And he made a wonderful contribution. The last thing he did was to be the education director for Gray Davis, and Gray was terrible, he was terrible. Gary only lasted about a year with him. He said they just couldn't work together.

Rubin

But it did bring in a lot of people. It did bring in people that were caring. All these years we've had good people, until right now we've got a bad senator here, [Senator] Strickland. We've had women. We've had one very good organization called the Women's Political Committee. When did we start that one? Our congresswoman came out of that one. We do educating. We try to get women on committees and on boards and get them politically involved. We've got lots of white papers on all kinds of subjects. We've got women professors in the group. They do evaluations and support. Every year they go over everything. We've had three supervisors that have belonged to the organization. They've been mentored by the ones that are in. It's a very good organization, it's very healthy. We try to be nonpartisan, but it's very difficult. The Republican women don't seem to want to associate with us too much.

Collings

Yes, that's what I was sort of wondering, because I understood that in the very beginning that kind of thing wasn't the case.

Rubin

It was open.

Collings

But now it is.

Rubin

Now it is. I don't know if you're a Republican you're just, oh, you're not very good. People are embarrassed. I was in an organization with a woman. I saw her on Sunday and I said, "How are you making out in your group?" She's

really a liberal woman, and she is devastated. She said, "It's just terrible what's going on." She says, "We just have to overcome this. We've got to correct ourselves." She says, "I'm part of the Republican women. We're trying, really trying to make a change." She said, "But we're getting a lot of opposition. The men are not cooperative with us." So really, they have their own struggles now. But we've been really fortunate that we've picked on some very good people. In the main we have a good majority on the board of supervisors. Let's see. We've got the mayor and six council people, five of them you'll find here at our thing, and the mayor. They'll all be here on the Friday night things supporting here.

Collings

Let me pause for a moment. [Interruption]

Collings

Okay, we're back on again after a break, and yes, we're still talking about the Community Environmental Council, which was formed after the oil spill. One thing I wanted to ask you was if there hadn't been the oil spill, would you have catapulted so wholeheartedly into environmental causes in particular, or perhaps have been more continuing on with civil liberties types of issues and social justice types of issues? Because the reporting about the oil spill often sort of says, "Oh, well, people say this was the beginning of the environmental movement in America."

Rubin

I had joined the Sierra Club in 1967 when we moved here. In living in Los Angeles, and I had come to Santa Barbara from Los Angeles, but in Los Angeles the Sierra Club wasn't regarded the same way.

Collings

More of a conservation movement.

Rubin

There wasn't the outdoor aspect to it. I wasn't as aware of Sierra Club, living in Los Angeles. When I came here, that was almost the first--well, when we moved in '64 we joined in '64--

Collings

You and your husband?

Rubin

My husband and I. I'm not much of a walker and I'm not much of an outdoors person, but what I was observing in this community, which I fell in love with and I'm still very, very much in love with, and I want to preserve it, I want to save it, I want its ambiance, I want its beauty, I don't want it overcrowded, I don't want a million houses, I don't want the traffic as bad, and almost immediately when I got into the group I was aware, and I made friends quickly, early. One of the early things we were trying to do was to save the Channel Islands, because that was going to be sold off, and we were trying to protect

and save that. So I got involved with those people, and I got into membership. I did my skill, my skill was bookkeeping, and I was working, of course, and this was my part-time stuff.

Rubin

But the oil spill for me was a significant turning point. But what happened to me was, a man came into Santa Barbara by the name of Jules Berman, in January I believe, or earlier in 1970, and he asked for a variance on a piece of property called the El Capitan Canyon area, which had been zoned for one house in twenty acres, residential and horse farm up there. He asked for a variance to put in 1,535 houses, and I was part of a group at that time--there were a number of Sierra Club people, but it also attracted a lot more people into it, and it offended us, and we needed to stop it. So I took a leave from my job. I staffed an office, because when the allowance was given to him, we immediately went into high gear and did a referendum. Now, a referendum is different than a petition drive in that petition drive, you have 180 days to get your signatures, and in a referendum we had only thirty days.

Rubin

So in that period I was in charge of this office, and I was giving out petitions. They would come back at the end of the day, and at that time we had to put in a precinct number on the petition before we turned it in. They used to do it in the office, but then it became a heavy hardship for them, and they were having to pay for that, so they said, "No, you have to do that." So I was in charge of getting--we needed something like twelve or thirteen thousand signatures. My friends came and they'd stay in the office with me. They would work. They would go out on the streets. They'd get the signatures, and within that thirty-day period I think we got like between fourteen and fifteen thousand. We got a lot more than we needed. Everybody was against the idea, because what we weren't aware of at that time, because it wasn't the key thing that moved us, but what would have happened, it would have gone right up the coast, another house and another house and another school and another big box and Costcos all the way up. And we weren't quite as aware at that time as it became later. Today we look at it and we say, "El Capitan saved the Gaviota coast."

Collings

Right.

Rubin

So I got a lot of signatures. There were people at the university. We had over 450 people circulating. Okay, we got our signatures, we passed them in at the due date. The clerk said, "Okay, we've got enough signatures." And what the referendum asked for was, either the board of supervisors would rescind the vote that they had made, or put it on the ballot for the community to vote on. Well, they weren't going to rescind it. That's egg on their face. So it meant we

had to petition the community. And we started out, my husband--I was very tired by this time. Oh, we started out--okay, so they wouldn't rescind it, so they let us go.

Rubin

Then Mr. Berman comes. We had a trial, and he was accusing--here was his thing. 1970 was the year that the students were allowed to vote from their college instead of going back to their home or even absentee, whatever. So Mr. Berman and his lawyers decided that all these students out there had not abandoned their families and abandoned their previous, so that meant that they were going to vote here and also go home and vote. A lot of sense that made. So we had a trial in the month of August of 1970, the entire month. So what was happening was we were accused of making changes on the petition.

Rubin

So what happened, we'd go to court one day and then the lawyers would bring in this sheaf of papers, and they'd talk, and he'd say, "Okay, I'm going to invalidate that hundred." And then he'd come back the next day, he said, "No, no, I think I'll let that go through." But by the time we were through, we had an adequate number. And the trial had to end by August, because otherwise it wasn't going to get on the ballot. It had to be on the ballot for November, and they go to press, I think, the first of September. And I was really tired, because it was emotional and I was up all hours of the day and night and concerned and worried and talking and getting down early and getting home late and so on. I was very tired, so I asked my husband if we couldn't go have a vacation, and the place I love is New York. His family had some property in New York, and they were all gone by this time, but we used to go there periodically, and he would go investigate how things were going.

Rubin

So we went to New York, and we got to the museums and we go to plays and the things that you do in New York. And at one point I said, "Let's go up to this office." I think it was the Sierra Club. I can't remember to this day. But we went up to this office and I introduced myself. This woman said to me, "You're Selma Rubin?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Do you know that there's a warrant out for your arrest?" I said, "No, I didn't." So I called the lawyer and sure enough, one of the people that was helping with me, who was seventy-nine--

Collings

Was that Pearl--

Rubin

Anna Laura--

Collings

Oh, Anna Laura, okay, yes.

Rubin

Anna Laura Myers. Anna Laura was seventy-nine and I was fifty-five, and every day in the paper was this story, every night on the news was, "Selma Rubin, aged fifty-five, Anna Laura Myers, age seventy-nine." And Mr. Berman would get on and he would talk to the audience about this element--

Collings

"This element"--

Rubin

--bad, bad, bad people. God, he had such names for us.

Collings

So you and Anna Laura were accused of?

Rubin

Altering petitions. See, when you get them, as I said, you have to put in L-22-- You look it up in a book with the person's name and the address and so on, and then you write all that down. We were accused of making changes in the names, in the address. Where it said city we would do Santa instead of S.B. We were accused of all of this, which is a felony. You're not supposed to touch this to this. Actually, what we would do--when you write your name and your address, nobody can read it. Right?

Collings

Right.

Rubin

So we studied and we worked and we said, "Oh, it is 1478 Romero Street." So we'd write that in so that the person checking--

Collings

So it was clearer.

Rubin

--could see it. But we never ever touched anybody's name. I mean, what was the sense of that? You've got 3,000 more than you need. Well, we were in court, Anna Laura and I, fourteen times more. We did not have a trial with a jury. We had a wonderful lawyer, a really darling guy, Republican, didn't know the first thing about environment when we got him started, and, oh, during this time you can't believe all this stuff that happened. Gladwin Hill, who was the environmental editor of the New York Times, came out here and spent days interviewing us right here in this spot, taking pictures. L.A. Times was here almost every day, and our local paper. There was so much just going on and on and on. And we're going to court, and we're going back, and court and back, and she was a little nervous, I think. She was a little scared. She came from a very established family. Her husband--

Collings

Anna Laura?

Rubin

Anna Laura's husband had been on the bank board of California, and they owned property, they owned an avocado ranch down near L.A., one of those communities. She comes originally from Iowa with the cattle. She was a very, very well-to-do lady, and we both suffered a lot with that. We became very close. Any place we'd go we were like the twins. So what happens, before the trial was finished it went to the ballot, and, of course, they were taking out ads, they were doing all kinds of stuff. Well, we won almost two-to-one. The trial ends and we're innocent. You know, it was a crime, it was a criminal thing, so it involved the district attorney. And he gave this case to one of--there were two guys in the office that wanted to go forward with the trial, and about eight guys said, "Don't be stupid. Don't do this. You'll never get a conviction. They're two white, WASP, middle--don't do it." And these two guys insisted.

Rubin

And they gave it over to Steve Bailash, one of the attorneys. "Well, you have to do a good job." So he did the best job he could do. Oh, the word that they used to use for us was they were criminal, "The criminal element in this community," and my friends used to bring their children and the children would say, "We know Selma. She's not a criminal, is she?" Oh, I tell you, it was just a great, great period of awakening. They'd call on us to come out and speak at the university, and there was a book written called "Stop It." There were some more books that I guess were written about the whole petition process and so on. And included in our campaign group was Norman Sanders, who was a professor of geography in his sixth year and was due to get tenure, didn't get tenure because of that. I don't know who was in back of that, but he didn't get tenure and he had to leave town.

Rubin

Anyway, the judgment was we were innocent. Steve goes back to the office and they tell him he's got to take our case on appeal. What could he do? This is the boss. So he took it on appeal; it was turned down. And would you believe it went to the [California] State Supreme Court?

Collings

Where it was turned down.

Rubin

And April the first of '71 we get this postcard, "Petition denied." It's in the books. It's in the law books of California, our story, and we were heroines, I tell you. You could go anyplace and Selma and Anna Laura.

Collings

Did you ever feel that the case might go against you?

Rubin

Oh, you bet. Twenty-eight years in prison for me and twenty for her. Oh, yes.

Collings

You were afraid?

Rubin

Oh, I was afraid, I was afraid. I'd wake my husband up at night and I said, "Bill," I said, "if I have to go to prison, I'm not going to be able vote after that. I'll be a felon." That was the only thing that worried me was the voting. Oh, my god. It was a tumultuous period, but I gained a lot of strength. I gained my own strength. I gained strength from my husband, I gained strength from all these wonderful people around me congratulating me. "You're fighting our battle. You're fighting our battle." So what do we have today? Up at El Capitan we have--it was allowed to be used for camping, I think, even through that period. But actually, the place was up for sale, and eventually I think Texaco bought it, because they thought there was oil, and they have put roads in and went to experiment for oil in the oilfield, and there was no oil there, there's nothing there. It's so serene and it's so beautiful and the trees and the birds, and I'm telling you, when you go in, well, you don't drive there. You just kind of walk around and think you're just in a different world. It's so good for your soul.

Rubin

But the people that bought it, first of all, they donated a large piece to the county, and one of our other friends--it had the trail, the William Wallace trail, and they've been putting in--you can still go in with your tent, or you can go into, it's kind of a luxury little house. It has a double bed, a loft, and a bathroom. I guess it runs probably three or four hundred dollars a night, but there's lots of people that want that. You can only drive in, drop your stuff off, and then take your car back to the parking lot. There's no driving around there, only the service. And then they have a couple of very big yurts up there, so they do entertaining, they do retreats. People come in from all over the world, inventors, people that come just to have a week of retreat, and it's just such a peaceful, just wonderful, wonderful place.

Rubin

And the people that bought it are very devoted and very friendly and very kind, and the present owner, Roger Himovitz, talked to me, I don't know, about two years ago, and he said first of all they want to make a tape and they want to talk about exclusively that and take pictures, and they've done all that. And then he called me and he said, "You know what? We're going to do a trail in your name," so there's a Selma Rubin trail. They also have a lot of trees, and the trees fall, so they've got a workshop where they make benches and tables and whatever you can make out of wood. So they've made a bench for me and it has a plaque on it with "Selma Rubin and Friends." What did we do? You know, we saved this place for posterity, and it's going to be into perpetuity, because also that area with my trail has also been donated to the community. People come out there and they go hiking.

Rubin

And in the summertime they have concerts, because the people that come, as I said, they can come in a tent or they have canvas places, too, that are cheaper. They've got an RV place. I think he's finally told me last year that he's finally in the black, because they've done every environmental thing. They call on every specialist to come out and give them advice on everything, the solar stuff, with this stuff, the water, everything that they're building. They just hire in people, give them work, gave an artist a job to do like a postcard, and she did that and she caricatured kind of the area that could have been a housing thing and then against the wilderness. So sometimes we go on a Saturday night. They have concerts, and the people living there can come to it, the children. They've got a flat surface. The children dance. They've got a barbecue. You can have a chicken or meat barbecue thing. And they're a real asset to this community.

Rubin

Now, what would have happened is they would have 1,535 houses--you need schools--1,535 houses in that same, I don't know, couple of hundred acres. I don't keep that figure in my mind, which I should. So that would have just opened the door and all the way up through Santa Maria and to San Luis Obispo, just there's a lot of acreage. Every place that there's acreage, that would have been up for sale. We're in a problem now because these guys are still now coming, "My son wants a piece of the land. This one wants--got to sell." So everything is we're fighting, fighting, fighting to save what we've got here.

Collings

Well, I think that's the thing that's so remarkable, is people come to California and they see this lovely coastline and they say, "Oh, isn't that nice?" But every single inch of it is the result of work of people like you, people who have been involved in the California Coastal Commission and what have you, to protect the coastline. It didn't just happen by accident.

Rubin

Also in the year of 1970 was the petition for the Coastal Act, which I think that might have started earlier, but in 1972 it was on the ballot, and I was active with that, because that was another Sierra Club thing. So when it passed, when it passed and they set up six commissions, all coastal areas, we were the South Central Coast Watch. I got involved with that right away. Norm was still here at the time, so we used to meet at his house, and we were building an organization. The purpose of Coast Watch was to watch the Coastal Commissioners, okay. We had to go to their meetings, we had to see what they were doing, we had to protest if their votes were bad, and we were building this Coast Watch organization.

Rubin

And Norm as the professor had some friends, and one of them was Professor Arthur Schwartz. Arthur Schwartz had just come back from a sabbatical in Israel, and Norman said, "His wife is really a potential person for getting involved." He said, "I'm going to bring her to a meeting." She had been--let's see, her father and her brother and her sister-in-law are all lawyers, and she had been a teacher. She has four children. So she comes to this meeting and she listens to what's going on, and at the end I said, "Naomi, do you have an interest in kind of joining with us and helping to build this organization?" And she said, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "Well, the first thing we're going to do is we're going to kind of go up and down the coast and organize all these people within our bailiwick, and we'll get them alerted to what's going on in their own community, so when something happens we've got people to come to the meetings and to the planning commissions and to the city councils, and we've got our people--."

Collings

You're organized.

Rubin

--built-in people who will be watching to protect their area." So I said, "We'll go to the meeting and we'll do a newsletter, and we'll sit at the meetings, and if we find things that we disagree with, we will just get up and protest at the meeting. You can stand up and make your statement." She said, "Selma, if I ever had to get up before a group like that, my legs would turn to water." So I said, "Well, we'll work on that. We'll see." This woman, if you can imagine a human sponge, that was Naomi Schwartz. First of all, she went to law school here. She became Gary Hart's administrative person. She read and she read and she went to meetings. You know where she went? She went--she was the state chairperson for the Coastal Commission. There were six commissions plus the state commission. That's where--she couldn't go any higher. [Interruption]

Collings

Okay, go ahead.

Rubin

Naomi Schwartz could not have gone any higher in the Coastal Commission. She was replaced by [George] Deukmejian when he came in, and then she came back to Santa Barbara. She was elected three times as the supervisor of the First District, in which she lived. Beautiful woman. There's no environmental issue that she can't speak about, that she doesn't know about, that she won't help you with, to this day. She's retired now. She thought she'd do some consulting work, but she didn't really want it to take--to do other things. She wants to write. We're very good friends and she always says that I mentored her, I brought her into the movement, which I really did, and I've done that with other people. So many people come over to me and, "Selma, you

won't remember me, but--." A young man comes over to me at the table one Friday night and he stands and he looks at me and looks at me and he said, "I guess you don't remember me, do you?" And I said, "Truly I don't." He said, "I lived with you for two months while I was an intern in EDC."

Collings

In EDC, the Environmental Defense Center.

Rubin

Right here at EDC. I have these people coming and staying with me. I've got somebody coming in about the middle of June. I have a bedroom. It's a small room, but they don't need very much, and they come here and they work as interns, and they love this place, they just love it. They can't wait to get up in the morning and come to work here, and I make it very happy for them. I give them a bedroom. I said, "I don't touch this room. You take care of it. Whatever you want, you want to make the bed, you don't want to make it, it's your business. This is your bathroom. My cleaning lady cleans the bathroom once a week. Here is the kitchen. I don't cook except to cottage cheese once in a while, but here is the kitchen. Here's this, here's that. Here's a shelf in the refrigerator. There's a shelf to keep your stuff on. You're welcome to use anything you find. You cannot wash my dishes, and I won't wash your dishes. And my only rule is if you are not going to stay at home a night, please let me know, and I will do the same for you. It's only courtesy. It's not because I'm checking or anything." But I wake up during the night. I always look out the window, and if their truck or whatever isn't there, I worry. It's just natural. So that's my arrangements with them, and they observe that.

Rubin

If something happens like suddenly on a Friday afternoon somebody says, "Well, let's go down to L.A.," they'll call and say, "I won't be there tonight." And if I go away it's the same way. And I have very great--I said, "You can do anything in your house that you could do at home. You have a girlfriend, you want to bring her here, that's fine with me. Your brother, whatever you want. This is your home for this summer." So they like me very much, and I get good reviews, so I get more. Now, the only thing is that my house is truly a mess, because I never--it's clean, but I can't throw anything away. I've really got to get myself ready and move, but I've got all this paper, all this stuff to throw away, and a couple of young guys said to me, "We'll come over to your house. We'll do anything you want done. Anything you need, and packed and thrown out or whatever you need." And I have given to them like personally, but I've given to the community in which they exist, in which they are happy, so I get my joys and raptures by that.

Rubin

I miss my husband very much. He was a very wonderful person. We had a great life together, were married for twenty-six years, but only like the last six of his when he had Alzheimer's it was a very sad time in my life and his life. But I can't--life is for the living. I've just got to go on. I've got to be who I am, and I've got to try--I've tried on a number of occasions to build something that wasn't there, from a need. For example, one of the last things I did was called Pueblo, and Pueblo's purpose in organizing--it was called A Coalition for a Living Wage to start with, and that was because the city council had not given raises to their staff. Some of their staff were on minimum wage for a long, long time. We got together and we got an organization going, and we rewrote the ordinance--

Collings

What year was this?

Rubin

2000. We rewrote the ordinance, and we kept going before the city council. We said, "We want you to accept this and go over it. Let's work together. Let's try to get these people wage increases." So it would go from the minimum to an amount, either twelve or fourteen dollars, depending on whether they got health care. I mean, god, it's time already. And it took five years before we could get the four votes. Three of them were fine all the time. The mayor was wonderful. And the minute we got the fourth person, whom we worked for, we worked for this guy and we got a commitment out of him that we were going to get this vote, and within a couple of months we were accepted and the people are now earning from their twelve to fourteen dollars.

Rubin

It's kind of the poverty area. We've done some other good things, because you can't take a group of people together and keep them for five years and not have a success. So you turn your energies and you say, "Okay, what else is missing from your--?" So this group wants to close down the nursery school for the Chicano women, where they bring their children to leave at childcare. They want to close that down. Well, we stopped that. The MTD is going to raise their rates from like seventy-five to a dollar and a half or something; we got in there. We made some changes there. And I'm part of every--it's not just the environment, and it's just not ACLU. I'm in an ACLU chapter for, well, since I've been here, but I've been on the board for a long time, I've been the treasurer a long time.

Collings

Well, it sounds like your activism is organically connected to the needs of the community.

Rubin

And my home. I want a beautiful place to live, so I'm going to work hard to keep this. I've lived in the same house--we moved there in '64 and I'm still in that house. I'm right ready to move now. I want to give up the house and I want to move into a retirement home where the teachers do live, and that's going to be my forte, because it's an intellectual atmosphere. It's really very, very nice, and I'm happy there. I take my exercise class there three times a week. What have I missed?

Collings

Well, I just wanted to sort of go back a minute. You said that many people had said to you, "You brought me into the movement," and I presume you're referring to the Environmental Movement.

Rubin

That's my big movement.

Collings

Yes. So when you were sort of being vilified during your criminal trial, and there was all of this discussion of that element, was there a sense at that time that Santa Barbara was home to these movement activists?

Rubin

Santa Barbara was home to the John Birch Society in '62, and the newspaper got a Pulitzer Prize on the writings at that time, so there's always been--

Collings

A very polarized community, yes.

Rubin

Because the wealthy, very, very, very wealthy people--the movie stars buy houses for fifty million. A lot of them live there. But it's nice for them, because nobody pays attention, so there's Brad Pitt and there's this one, there's that one. And the community itself has given out--the whole Bottoms family, Tim and his brothers were all movie stars. So they walk through, "Hi, Selma." "Hi, Tim." And they don't get bothered. They can go into a restaurant, nobody rushes up to them with a, "Sign this," kind of thing. So this Hope Ranch, which is also a community that when it was built, the Jews and the blacks and the Hispanics, nobody could live up there. It had whatever they call those restrictions.

Collings

Covenants.

Rubin

Covenants, yes, yes. Of course, it's no longer true. We infiltrated everything. But I came here and I saw a need. What was the need? First, one of the early things we got into was helping the farmworkers. The woman who was my partner in this building was very close to Cesar [Chavez].

Collings

Cesar Chavez.

Rubin

Chavez. And she had a ranch, and when he'd need R&R she'd bring him here. He'd stay up there. And she would dress herself as a carrot picker and go out in the fields to find out what was happening with Social Security, with workers' compensation, all of these things. In a speck she was a spy, but for the good. I have to say, these are the kind of people that I've been attracted to, that I've been associated with. It's not money. It's not money, but it's the people that want to do things, want to keep this going, want to prevent pesticides that people are using on the fields. We've got a wonderful guy that spent a huge amount of time and built up Pesticide Watch here. He's just been taken over by the Orfalea [Fund] group. I don't know if you're familiar with that, the Kinko? [Paul Orfalea] Well, he's got a big--he started here and he has a big foundation, and he's interested in organic food. And, of course, all this comes into it.

Rubin

You pick up your paper at night, unfortunately. Craig McCaw, who I think he practically invented the phone, sold his invention to AT&T for nine billion dollars. And I don't know if they were in a divorce before or after, but she [Wendy Petrak] got three out of that, and she bought the newspaper, and she's a libertarian, and she has just run that paper to the ground, fired all the people that were--she's been fighting the union, and we just have no local paper. The paper is going downhill so fast. She's got an idiot for an editorial person, and he takes on--he doesn't like you, God forbid, because you'll be in the paper every day with everything you ever did and manufactured a few things more, and a point of view. He is just--I don't know what we're going to do. We have a couple of alternative papers, but they're not--

Collings

The Santa Barbara Independent would be an alternative paper, then?

Rubin

Oh, that's the alternative paper.

Collings

Because there's this lovely article on you, what we just talked about with the Gaviota coastline.

Rubin

Naomi took that article from the Independent, and she sent it to Pat Morrison. I think she had some kind of a relationship with Pat Morrison, and I think the story is "The Gaviota Coast Thirty-Seven Years Ago," or something like that, and she wanted her to interview me. And Pat sent back saying, "It's not quite the appropriate time." She's going to file it. She said if she has that need that she would do that. Pat and I wear hats.

Collings

Yes, right.

Rubin

And she's been here. She's been here as a speaker and we've compared hats.

Collings

Well, maybe on an Earth Day anniversary, and she could pair it with the founding of GOO or something.

Rubin

I never worry too much about that.

Collings

Now, did you meet Cesar Chavez?

Rubin

I did, I did, because that was one of the early things. We did two early things. One is we got into what was the equivalent--it wasn't the NAACP, it wasn't that group. I don't remember if it was SNCC. It was one of the groups, and they couldn't find rentals here, and there was discrimination, rampant discrimination. So we formed this group, and a couple--my husband and I would go and we'd answer an ad. We were looking at that apartment over there. It was empty. We looked at it, we liked it. "Okay, should we take it?" "Well, now, there are a couple more in the paper." We'd leave. Then we'd send a black couple in. "Oh, no, it's not for rent." That's one of the things we tried, and we did, we broke that down.

Rubin

Also, there were no ethnic faces in any bank or any store, the bigger stores. Anything that met the public head on, there was nobody here, and this is where we got in on the bottom floor of doing that.

Collings

So how did you go about that?

Rubin

We went around and talked to people. We threatened. "I'm going to take my account out of this bank if I can't see a manager." I mean, there are plenty of educated people. Let's start with the manager. Let's just do this. And now--

Collings

So would you do this as part of a group?

Rubin

Yes, as part of whatever the issue was. In this case, as I say I can't remember, it was SNCC. Then the next big one at the same time was the farmworkers. Let's see, what was the name of that organization? Friends of the Farmworkers. Okay, what we would do is we'd have a food drive, we'd have a clothing drive, we'd have a money drive. And I think we started--it was either the grape or the lettuce, I'm not sure. But we organized for a couple of months at a time. We'd get all this stuff, get all ready. We'd pack it up in vans and we'd have a caravan

to Delano, where Cesar met us and we would have lunch together and we would talk and what was going on. And my husband was a plumbing engineer, and what happened, when Cesar went to Delano to organize, he went to the ones who were there working, and that was the Filipino farmworkers. So he talked to them and he said, "We want to bring you into our union." And they said, "We will consider it, providing you will build a retirement home for our retired workers when the time comes for them."

Rubin

These men were never allowed to bring women or to get married in California. So my husband would go down, he would work with them. He would take them to Bakersfield. He would show them how to get permits. He would help them plan the sewer system, and a man from Santa Barbara named George Salinas took a year off and went up there and managed. Seventeen-year-old girls would come. They were plumbers, he's teaching them to be plumbers. [laughs] You know, when I think about my life and think of some of the interesting, some of the funny things, it's what gives me the sustenance, it gives me the health. I'd look at these young girls and, oh, god, plumbers.

Rubin

Anyway, we would stay overnight sometimes. We'd spend a day or two. He'd have to do more than that for them. And he would meet, which is a wonderful thing--he met with the people that were going to be living there. "And what is it that you want in your house?" And this guy says, "I am a photographer and I'd like to have a darkroom. Can you fix--?" "Yes, we're going to have a darkroom." Whatever was asked, it was incorporated into that living residential place for them at Delano. It went on a long time. I still get--we all get just all kinds of mail. I'm still supporting them. I don't know--they're still in the same situation with the pesticides, with all of the work that they have to do, and it's the pobrecitos, the people that get the most exploited.

Collings

Yes. But what were your particular memories of Cesar Chavez? I mean, how did he seem to you as a person?

Rubin

Oh, dynamic, humble, a very humble man, very grateful, very thankful. He was so very appreciative of what we were doing, and he was so appreciative when he'd come here and Katie would make a fuss over him and treat him and, "Come on, Cesar. You've really got to rest. You've got to let go. You've got to do some reading." And then Dolores Huerta was very much involved. She's still very much involved with her foundation and she's still training people. We've got the Pueblo--it was the Coalition Against Gun Violence--no, no. It was the Coalition for a Living Wage, and then as I told you, we didn't achieve our goal, so the people, you know, you have to keep them together with something

besides disappointment. So then when we changed the name, we changed it to Pueblo, which is People United for Economic and Social Justice, something like that, I can't think of all the words to it. And we now have an executive director who was trained at the farmworkers. She was an organizer, a farmworkers' organizer.

Rubin

And Dolores Huerta has another--her right hand is Cruz Philips, and she lives up here. Her husband works for the SEIU. Belen, she's just full of excitement. She's so smart and such a mover and shaker. She's going to be leaving, I don't know how soon. She's going to be leaving to go back to New York to get her Ph.D. in this kind of work. She's such a delightful person.

Collings

Now, did you ever meet a local activist named Pearl Chase? She was older than you, right?

Rubin

Oh, my god, Pearl Chase. To emulate her--if they want to pay me a compliment today, today, "You are Pearl Chase of this area, Selma, you are Pearl Chase."

Collings

And who was Pearl Chase? She's quite a bit older than you, wasn't she?

Rubin

Yes, yes. Pearl Chase was an activist before activism. She another one that introduced--she had a group of women that were called Pearlies' girls. These women were active in the drive, the El Capitan drive. Mr. Berman hired people to come and find out where Pearlies' Girls lived, and they'd come in and find them, and they'd go around to the back doors at eleven o'clock at night and start knocking on the doors and trying to serve papers on these people, and scaring--

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Rubin

It was terrible, it was really terrible. She was kind of the generation before me. El Marisol was a big square block on which lived Christian Herter's estate. Then when he closed it off and sold it off, twenty-seven developers bought it with the intention of putting nine-story high-rises on it. Well, not with a Pearlie in this world. Pearlie started everything. She had a group called Plans and Planting. Pearlie Chase's brother was Harold [Chase]. Harold bought Montecito. That was all his. They had no children, he had no children. She was never married, a very stately woman with beautiful white hair, very aristocratic-looking, but reached in. She reached--

Collings

Where did their family money come from?

Rubin

I don't really know, but it's got to be oil or gas or lumber or something. Got to be oil. Oil is the big thing. Well, he bought all of that, he bought all of that land, and she never lived there. She never lived on any of the property. I think she had a house in the city here, an easy person but very strong, very firm and very strong, and when she went before the city council, they shook. She was the grand dame of this area. She had to be part of everything. She was, again, a single woman who didn't have other things like children in her life. She was able to devote--there are books about her.

Collings

Now, how did you meet her?

Rubin

Probably went to a meeting. I don't know. You get to know people, and I was in--where did I meet her?

Collings

Was she a mentor for you?

Rubin

The work that she did, but it was not a personal thing. It wasn't like my relationship with Naomi, where I brought books for her and I took her to things and I called up, "There's a lecture tonight on so-and-so. I think we both should go to that." I didn't have that relationship as a mentor, because almost from the first I came here with some skills. I learned a lot, I really learned a lot, and people around me really did a lot of teaching. I subscribed to everything. I can't keep up with my reading today, especially--of course, we didn't have the computer. We didn't have a computer. I get fifty, sixty e-mails a day. I have to respond to each one of those. They're doing something for horses, they're doing something to the wild boars, they're doing something to the three-legged frog, they're doing something over here. There's a meltdown and so on. And I have to respond. "What am I going to do?" "Write to your congressman, write to your senators, call them, tell them how to vote on this issue, that issue." I'm just busy. I can sit there for three or four hours, just answering my e-mails. I sit a lot and I go to a lot of meetings.

Rubin

Besides the social-justice, which is all the things that ACLU does, and I belong to a group called the Santa Barbara County Action Network, and we're on top of everything. Whatever comes along we vote on, we make a decision on. I don't do as much public speaking on the issues, unless somebody says, "Oh, Selma, could you do this or could you read this?" And I'm available. I don't have time to research things. If they tell me, "Well, such-and-such is happening, and they're going to be building so-and-so, and so many stories," but I don't have time to really get into it in any depth, so I'm peripheral on a lot

of things. And sometimes it only means they want you to come and be part of the audience, the city or the county or the planning commission, so what--

Collings

I would think your name would carry some weight at this point.

Rubin

They know. When I come to a meeting, everybody up there sits there. They know. They wave to me. They know what I'm there for, and I usually have a button or a statement. I represent kind of a healthy, progressive element of Santa Barbara, and I fight for my position. I don't just take it because it says. I take it because I try hard to read. If it's an issue like the ballot measures, I try to have a reason that I'm going to vote no or vote yes for it, because I find a lot of people asking. My friend Rohalio, who's lived here for years and years and years, went back to his hometown in Zacatecas, and he e-mails me. He said, "I just got my ballot. How should I --?" because he's still an American citizen. "How should I vote on this?" Then his daughter calls me up. "Well, I'm thinking about this. What do you think about that, Selma, and why?"

Rubin

I had a lot of money at one time. When my husband and I did our trust and our wills, we had about two million dollars in money and stock and a house and some property. I've given all that away. I have only my house now and a few savings accounts, and actually in order to move into this residence I will have to sell my house, which is okay with me. But I look at what did I do with my money, and I've got three young women who have got their master's, who would never have gone to college without me. One of them was living here. Her mother walked out on five children. The youngest was three, and her father said, "Okay, now, you have to do this and this, and you have to go to school." She was wonderful in high school, and then she starts in City College and she hasn't got time. And I watched her until the second year, and then I said, "Arquel, you've got to get out of town. You've got to go away to college." "I don't have any money." I said, "Yes, you do." And I talked to her father, I said, "I don't care what you do. She is not your wife. She is not the mother of these children. She has to get an education."

Rubin

We sent her to--first she wasn't accepted, because her grades were so poor, and the first semester that she was away, she got on the dean's list. I couldn't be happier. She has a master's now, and she's the head of a department for the City of Los Angeles, which deals psychologically with parents, with children.

Collings

Like a mental-health services or children's services?

Rubin

The children's services. And then she's got a sister who has become a lawyer. She hasn't been able to pass the bar yet, but we're working on that. And then I have another one that I really adore. I met her when she was practically born, and she was just loafing around. She wasn't doing anything with her life, and I said, "Julie, I don't like what you're doing. You go to college." "I can't. I have no money." I said, "You're going to college." She got not only her master's, she got about five or six different, I don't know what they are, certificates or something. She teaches autistic children.

Collings

That's wonderful.

Rubin

I mean, that's my happiness, that's my joy. I just love those young women, and I go and I see them. I see them, I talk to them, and they confide in me and I confide in them, and they're my pathway to the youth. They're the girl pathways, and the boys, most of them are right here. Except for the seven-year-old, he's so cute. We went to see a play called "Footloose." Do you know that play?

Collings

Yes.

Rubin

The children's play? I went to see that. This guy who was just here, his son was the lead.

Collings

Oh, how nice.

Rubin

It was a very joyous thing. It was high school kids from freshman to senior, and they called me up, this one guy who used to be the gardener. Now he has something called healing solutions or healing gardens or something, and he sells organic healing plants to the nurseries, and he's into that one. And his wife, who has her master's, is working for art from scrap, and they go around to the schools. They're building gardens for the schools, and then all the scrap stuff that comes into Santa Barbara, it goes to their store, and children come and they buy all this stuff and they make things. They make all kinds of stuff, paper stuff, plastic, whatever. So I'm on that advisory board. I'm on eight boards, two campaign and two--I'm on the advisory board here, and art, and I think three altogether. They call me to come for a meeting once every year, so it's not a burden. But I'm out a lot, I'm out a lot, and I want to be out a lot.

Rubin

As I get older, my capacity for eating goes down. I can just about eat a small bowl of soup and half a sandwich, and then I'm really full, and a cup of coffee and I'm really full. And generally when I go, if I order a sandwich I have half

there and half I take home for the next meal, for breakfast or whatever. Anyway, you probably won't find too many happy women at age ninety-four. They've all got something. I fell down January the second, 1997, because I was going to visit my friend who had come out of the hospital and was living at her daughter's, and nobody was paying any attention to her, and she called me up and she said, "Am I a pariah?" And I said, "What do you need?" She said, "I want a visit." So I said, "Okay, I'll come over." Then I called my other friend, who actually lived in her apartment, and I said, "Tim, Sarah's complaining that we're not visiting her enough." He said, "I was planning to go over tonight." And I said, "What time are you going to go?" And he said, "Around seven." "Around seven?" And I said, "You know what? I'll go at two, and then I'll leave probably like 4:30 or something like that, and then give her a little time and then you come and visit."

Rubin

So I visit with her from 2:30 to 5:30, and it's a very dark, rainy day, and my car is parked in the driveway at Hope Ranch, big three-car garage, and there's a stone driveway. I say goodbye to her and I walk down the steps, and there are five steps there, and they're wide and there are big flowerpots, so I can't hold onto anything. I walk down three and then I fall. And it's raining, and I have had pneumonia. Doctor said, "Don't be cold, don't be wet." And I think, okay, this is my end. I'm going to be laying here. I cannot move. I couldn't get to my car to get my phone, to get my cell phone, which was sitting in the car with my raincoat, and I'm just resigned to my death. And somebody someplace was watching out for me, because I look over there and suddenly there are lights and a car. Her daughter was not expected home until eleven o'clock, and up comes this man, my friend, I befriended him. He jumps out of the car and he stoops down and he said, "How are you and what's happening?", gets me in conversation to see if I was okay. And then he said, "If you can move, I will take you in my car to the emergency." And so I'm working around, but I can't do it. I mean, I knew something was bad.

Rubin

So he runs up to the house and he gets the address, because we didn't know the address, and he calls emergency, what do they call the truck?

Collings

Ambulance.

Rubin

Ambulance, calls the ambulance. They take me to the hospital and I'm laying in there and they do what they have to do. They took my clothes and so on. And while I'm laying there, the nurse comes over and she said, "Mrs. Rubin, there's a young man out in the waiting room, and he's not a relative of yours, but he wants to know how you are. May we tell him?" I said, "My god, without him I

would have been dead." I really knew I would have been. I couldn't have laid there for two hours in the rain and survived. So I said, "He saved my life. Sure, tell him." And then they did something and they medicated me and they put me in a bedroom, and I woke up in that room at eleven o'clock, and there's Tim sitting in the chair waiting till I wake up so he can find out how I am. Then he took my keys and he went and got somebody and they moved my car and he put my car in the garage, and for the next weeks he was available. He came and he saw me, and I was two weeks in the hospital. And then my other friends wouldn't let me go home, because there's nobody at home. So they took me to their house, and we rented one of those beds, and I was in their house for six weeks more. And everybody that came, the therapist got me up walking, but I had other people come and take care of me and the food and all the rest of it. They just wouldn't let me go home until I was able.

Rubin

And Tim would come, put me in the wheelchair, take me out to the university. We'd always get two seats, and one of them had to be on the aisle, and then he'd sit like this and put his hand over my knee so if somebody wanted to--"You can't get--you have to be very careful, because she's got a broken leg, so just be careful how you come in here." And I have a triple fracture in that leg, and that's why I have this.

Collings

The walker.

Rubin

Because I'm not stable when I walk. I just kind of waddle. First I had a cane, and that's really no good, no good. Then I talked to my doctor and he said--but this one, if I could find the person that invented this, I'd hug and kiss him. It saves my life. It only weighs thirteen pounds. I put it in the car, take it out, back and forth.

Collings

And off you go.

Rubin

And off I go. [End of interview]

1.3. Session 3 (June 4, 2009)

Collings

Okay, Jane Collings interviewing Selma Rubin at the Environmental Defense Center, June 4, 2009. I thought we could just pick up a little bit, kind of go back to some of the earlier stuff that we talked about. We had talked last time about your signature-gathering activities and your struggles with Berman, and one of the things that he had said quite publicly on TV was, "The sooner this

group is gotten rid of and this county is cleaned up of people like this, it'll be a better county." This was referring to all of the people involved in the signature gathering. But it seems to me like he was sort of playing off of the climate that existed in Santa Barbara that went beyond your group, and I'm sort of thinking of the Isla Vista community perhaps. Did the people that you were working with, and did you and your husband share that sense of imminent social revolution that seemed to be what was going on with the Isla Vista scene?

Rubin

I would have to say that the oil spill made an awareness in this community that is lasting even to this day, even though today there are some little differences.

Collings

That's interesting.

Rubin

But it alerted, it involved--I don't think there was a person in this whole community that didn't feel the effects of the oil spill in one way or another, either getting telegrams and letters and e-mails and so on from all over the rest of the world, because that was the sound that broke the barrier. Santa Barbara and environs will never be the same. There's always a special environmental atmosphere here. There's always been that. There has been that since the oil spill. There was a feeling of tremendous difference in people. No doorbell that you ever rang that a person running for office wasn't able to use that as part of their campaign, and people just did things. A majority of people were involved. The minimum would be to sign a petition, and the maximum would be to start a new organization, and there were many of them that sprung up. The first one was the Get Oil Out [GOO], which is still in existence and still working hard and still has a board, raises money and still is where it was thirty-eight years ago, thirty-nine years ago.

Rubin

One of the things that really the community that got involved was the students from all over. We had West Mount, we had City College, and we had the University of California at Santa Barbara [UCSB] and its bedroom community next to it. I don't know, it's like a square mile, and I don't know how many thousands of people live there. It's close-knit and it has its own culture, its own interests, its own disciplines that grew out of that period, including what now is the Environmental Studies Department. It's in the [Donald] Brenn School [of Environmental Science]. It's probably at this time known around the world. We have some very famous people we have attracted. There are like six Nobel Prize-winning professors at UCSB. They grow, they grow, they grow.

Rubin

There was kind of a fight-back feeling in that period of the 1970s, and I think the issue of Mr. Berman coming in at that point and getting a special allowance

on this zoning issue and carrying that to the Planning Department and then the Planning Commission and then the Board of Supervisors, and then that group of people going along with, "Yes, yes, yes. We need this housing up there. We need something there." And the rest of us, who were fighting back at this issue, we didn't want 1,535 houses on this area which has been zoned for one house, twenty acres, and recreation. It was a very hard-won fight, because we had the opposition that had a lot of money.

Rubin

The group that was most active, a group called the Citizens' Planning Association and the Citizens' Planning Foundation--

Collings

Right. Now, what's the relationship between that and the Citizens' Committee for the General Plan?

Rubin

Well, that came out of it. That built out of that organization, and that particular committee was more specific. We raised funds to be fighting that one through the general plan. Now, CPA gave us an office. They had an extra office there, and they gave us an office, and the referendum took place within the forty-day--when there's a petition drive, you have 180 days to get your signatures. And in a referendum, which is to negate something that's been voted, you only have thirty days. Well, of course, when that vote came through from the Board of Supervisors, we were ready for that. We just went to the printers and had the petitions signed, and we were on the street within a couple of days. There were over 450 people from the university area that really worked on the petitions, that just combed everything. They were out on the street. They were just busy, busy, busy, and this came right before the finals and before graduation and everything coming together.

Rubin

When we had the first trial, the civil trial, and we won the trial, although it was a hard-won fight, because organizations and people were accused of making errors on the drive, on the petitions--

Collings

Now, you're referring to the trial where you--

Rubin

No. There were two trials. There was a civil trial and a criminal trial. So we start with the civil one, because when we got all the signatures, and the Elections Department verified that we had enough and we could go forward and we were planning to do that, then there was a Writ of Mandamus, which stopped everything, and then we went to trial. For the month of August of 1970 we were in court all that time.

Collings

Yes. And the judge was looking at all the signatures.

Rubin

He was looking at them, and he would throw out a few and then the next morning he would put them back in. He took everything very seriously and very much under advisement. When it ended and we had won, and in the interim we had our professor of geography, Norman [K.] Sanders, who wrote the book about the case, but the technical part of it, the obtaining of signatures and all the reasons that went up to do that--unfortunately for Norm, he was in his sixth year, which is the year that tenure is given, and they did not give him tenure because of his role with our community, you know, knowing that at the very top we've got a lot of people with a lot of money and influence. So Norm was gone. We won that part.

Rubin

We were going to be on the ballot, and I had worked very hard on that campaign, because I staffed the office, and I was there all day. Petitions would be brought in, filled petitions. I'd give them other ones. They'd go out on the street. They'd come back, and at that time we had to put in the precinct. On the petition itself we had to put in the precinct. Normally, the Elections Department--well, this is a cost saver and so on. That was the issue that I got. The second trial happened because I was then accused of while these petitions were in my possession that I made changes to them, which is a federal offense. This is a felony. You can't do it. Now, what we actually were doing--when you sign something, you yourself know your signature, but for other people to read the signature it's sometimes very difficult. And as we go over them and we're looking for the precinct, we can see that maybe that one figure wasn't clear enough. We might have written above it, like "1782" or whatever to just clarify that. There was no adjustment, there were no changes made to that. We never put anybody's name in that wasn't registered, and these are all the things that we were accused of doing, which I was particularly accused.

Rubin

Now, my soul mate, Anna Laura, who was then seventy-nine and I was fifty-five, she came in every single day. She was there before the door opened. She'd bring in her signatures and she'd go out on the street and she'd come back at the end of the day and then sit with me and help me do this, and it was a very invigorating time. The door would open, and I never knew who was going to walk through the door and say, "I'm Mary Jones. I want to help with the petition." You'd sit them down or you'd give them one to go out, and it's such a community thing you never even thought, so who's going to come in and who's not going to come in? Included one that came in was a police agent.

Collings

That's what I wanted to ask you about. Sanders talks about that in the book [Stop It!: A Guide to Defense of the Environment].

Rubin

All right, okay. I would like to work on the precincting, but I have difficulty working in a room with other people. Do you have another place I could work?" And I said, "Sure," and I handed her the petitions and she went into the other room. And she came back a number of times, and she was helping, helping, until she got on the witness stand, and then we're thinking, what is it she did when she was all alone in that room?

Collings

Oh, my gosh.

Rubin

We don't know that. I do know she was getting a hundred dollars a day for that, because that's what she said on the witness stand. But we trusted everybody. We had to trust everybody. This was a community thing. I'm not going to do an FBI check on everybody that wants to put their pen to paper. And 99.99 percent of the people who came in are still interested. A lot of those people--

Collings

So when Berman says, "Nine felony counts were filed against the two women, based on information planted in the citizens' organization--"

Rubin

In the office.

Collings

Yes, and so this is the woman, this was the spy that he talks about.

Rubin

Right. But we did end up with civil trial, and it was like two or three days before you had to tell the printer that it was going to be on the ballot. And my husband and I went off on a vacation to New York, which I was very much in need of by that time, because I was very emotionally exhausted and very tired and very worried, worried, worried about it. We took a vacation. My husband's family had some property in New York, so we used to go and visit, and so part of the vacation was to go to the theater and so on. But I wanted to see where some of the environmental groups, what they were doing, too, and I went to an office which today I think I remember as being the Sierra Club office. I'm not really sure, but I think that's where it was. And when I came in, I started to talk to some of the people, and this woman said to me, "Are you Selma Rubin?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "Do you know that there's a warrant out for your arrest?" And I said, "No, I didn't know that."

Rubin

So I immediately called my lawyer, and he said that he was--I'm not sure what the technical word for it, but he was responsible for it, and he knew that we were in New York and that we were--

Collings

The lawyer was--

Rubin

Frank Sargus. And periodically somebody would say, "I saw Selma on the street." And he said, "No, I talked to her. She's in New York City today." Anyway, when I came home, wonderful Frank Sargus said, "Well, we're going to have a criminal trial now." We were in court fourteen times. Frank was a little worried about having a jury trial with Anna Laura, because at seventy-nine it's a little hard to sit in the witness box and not be nervous. The woman was nervous. I mean, I was, too.

Collings

Was she really upset?

Rubin

Well, but she's an environmental person from way back, and she's been involved in the mental health of California. She'd been on the board. Her husband had been on the banking board in California. She was a woman of substance. They had a ranch in Covina, and she had a very lovely house here in Hope Ranch. And we got into the second trial, which was the criminal trial. Our friends would come into the hearings, and Mr. Berman and his cohorts would call us the criminal element in Santa Barbara, and my friend's little eight and ten-year-old kids, who knew me, said, "Mama, Selma's not a criminal, is she? We know her. She comes to the house." And I got sustenance, I got strength. Everything was strong for me, because I had all of this wonderful surrounding, including my husband, who couldn't have been better. He was just absolutely there all the time. That is true unto this day. This is how I feel in this community. I have a million friends. I enjoy this community. I enjoy the people. I love coming to this site, and this site was started in 1977.

Collings

This site being the Environmental Defense Center, where we are now.

Rubin

Well, we started with another office in 1977, because the people who had been involved from the very beginning, from Get Oil Out and the CEC and all of these, these people were still a part and knew that this community really needed an Environmental Defense Center. There were so many things happening that it was needed. We needed to have an office, we needed to have the place. Our objective was to help and to educate, because litigation was the end of the rope. But if somebody had a community issue on, what, housing, on the street lamps, whatever the issue was, and they needed help but there was very little money,

and this was our idea. We had a nonprofit Environmental Defense Center. One of our lawyers came to us and said, "We would like to start something. I will be happy to give up my office and start and become the executive director." That was Mark McGinnis.

Rubin

We started with them, and we had an office person help and volunteers. There was a group that I was part of that was able to transition--it's called Santa Barbara Citizens for Environmental Defense, and we were able to transition into setting up the Environmental Defense Center. There were three people on that board. There was Robert Easton, who was a really big spokesman, spokesperson for the oil, and then Ken Miller, who was also a writer, and these two men corroborated only in the sense that they read each other's papers. They really had no time, and I was working at the time. I was working through this whole thing. I took some time off to do that. But I told Mark I was very convinced of the need for this, and I told Mark that I would do whatever I could, so I kind of became the treasurer and the bookkeeper, and I was part of knowing everything that was going on. But we did have a staff person there, too.

Rubin

We stayed in the office there until Kay Peak and I bought the property at Garden [Street] and it was our intention at that time to buy it and to sell to any nonprofit that felt that they could raise the money and handle it and that they wanted a permanent home, because the site has an adobe wall on it and it never can be torn down or built up. It would make the most fabulous condo conversion. It'll never happen, because that's what's here. And at the corner there was the different building, which became the Legal Aid Foundation, and that is called a structure of merit. It has kind of a roof thing. Now, that one can be moved and its structure can be moved, that part of it. You can notice it maybe when you go out. See, it's right at the corner there.

Collings

This one right here?

Rubin

The little gray building. That has a history of its own here. This property was actually the home of one of the early legal people in Santa Barbara.

Collings

Oh, really. Who was that?

Rubin

His name was Dodson, Dodson. He was a judge. But he used to live in these quarters until they were able to make like a little office space. And the owner of this building, the man we purchased from, had several people in that office, including Frank Sargus. That was his office earlier, too, so there was a whole

love affair that went on in this area. Now, in 1970 we had something that blew up on the campus, which then became the bank burning. At that time in, I think it was like June or so, I was at a conference on population and growth in Chicago, and my husband was home, and whatever happened out in Isla Vista and the university, which became a pretty dreadful thing, and we lost one person who was killed, and people in Isla Vista were totally on the street. They were frightened to death, because we had a sheriff there who was a little not totally with it. He went around with guns, and it was very frightening.

Rubin

I called my husband when I heard about it, and I said, "What's happening?" He said, "There are seventeen people living in our house," our little 1400-square-foot house.

Collings

What were they doing there?

Rubin

Scared. They were very frightened. They didn't want to go to class. They just wanted to hang out away from Isla Vista and the campus, and it was a very troubled period for us. But it, too, it had its up. They actually did burn the Bank of America on the campus, which has been since rebuilt. I don't think--it's not a bank anymore, but there was a whole--it's too crowded out there, I mean, four people in every apartment.

Collings

Well, did the burning of the bank kind of provide an opening for Mr. Berman to talk about the criminal element and "these people"?

Rubin

No. No, it was only with us. It was only the ones that are trying to prevent him from--

Collings

Yes, I know. But was he able to sort of make people who were uninformed believe that this was all the same crowd?

Rubin

Right. He hired a big firm of P.R. people and, of course, he was going to utilize that. He was an extremely disappointed man, because the results of the second trial, the felony trial, ended up in the Supreme Court of California, and we won that one. And that came back April the first of 1971 was that last announcement to our lawyers, and he tried to sell this property after that. See, one of the things that was very important at that time, and we weren't as alerted to it at that time, but the saving of El Capitan saved the Gaviota coast, because if that had happened and he'd gotten his permit and he'd put in his houses, the entire coast from Santa Barbara all the way up was open to more--they couldn't stop the next group, its development. So we look back on that period as being a crucial,

really--it's more crucial today than it was at that time that we were actually living through it. But all of us look back at that and just--and that's one of the reasons that I'm honored so much, is because they say, "Oh, without Selma's work--."

Rubin

Now, when you say Selma you don't say Selma. That's like hundreds of people in back of me, right? But I'm surviving and I'm remembering, because I'm older and I'll remember the people who were involved in it, and so every now and then I get this special--two weeks ago the Legal Aid Foundation had a fiftieth anniversary, and they picked on ten people in Santa Barbara whom they felt were responsible for their fifty years of action, and one of them was me.

Collings

Wonderful.

Rubin

And my biggest contribution to them was to make the sale possible, for them to have a home, too. But I always gave some money, or I gave to the causes and stuff, but that was my big thing, and it was a very delightful evening, and I really had--the plaque is so heavy I can hardly lift it and take it into the house. And I'm so satisfied. It's so hard to look around and say, this is alive because of work that we did. But I was only like the carrier--how should I say? I mean, we made it possible for Santa Barbara to live, to be, to invest, to stay as much as we possibly can. We're fighting every day for some other issue here. But the main--like the Citizens' Planning [Council] responsibility is to investigate every new thing that comes before the city council or the planning commission. We go over all of their issues, and if there's not enough or there's too much or it's too high or it's too big or it's inappropriate, we rush off and fight these issues.

Rubin

But there's people from all over that are interested in that, that participate, and one of the things that they live with is to maintain this community as much as you possibly can. At the same time, it's home. People live here. You've got to have a place for people to live, and we don't. That's the biggest problem here. And I'm very worried that it's becoming a wealthy, wealthy, wealthy community, and where do people go who need--there are a lot of people just working in stores, domestic people, carpenters, bricklayers. With all of this construction stuff, they have to have a place to live, and they don't have it here. And everything has just been going up, up, up. And it's true of other communities, too, but the size of this community--there's the ocean and there's the mountains, and that's just so much space. You can't do anything more, unless you're going to cut the rest of the mountain or go live in the ocean. I don't know.

Collings

Right. And then at the same time, you're sort of maintaining a mandate of slow growth and non-development.

Rubin

Yes, yes. Right. At the same time we're saying, "Affordable housing." What does affordable housing mean? I mean, who can really afford to live here? And the saddest part is families whose children can't stay here, because there's no jobs, there's no work, and once they graduate--the lucky kids that somehow have made it to graduate and they love it here, they just love it here, and they just want to stay here. If their families are here, they just can't, and some cry about that, but what are they going to do? Their children have to go on. Now, some people have been fortunate. I have a friend right now who came here from Los Angeles. He went to UCSB when he graduated high school there, graduated college here, and then he went to the Santa Barbara College of Law, stayed in the community, worked in these various volunteer jobs, and today he has an office and he's been practicing law for the last twenty-five years. He's kind of a more unusual case, because most people aren't able to stay here and would love it. Look at this climate. We're the envy of the world.

Collings

It's lovely. Yes, like all of your hard work has made it this lovely place, but it has to stay sort of small and slow growth as a result of that.

Rubin

And unfortunately, stores are coming in and mom-and-dad stores are closing. We get some more Gaps and we get Old Navys and we get all of these. State Street, when Bill and I moved here--in 1963 we came here looking for a place, because of the smog and so on in L.A., and on Friday night like about nine o'clock you could start at the ocean and drive all the way out to the end of State Street, and maybe you'd pass three cars, right? Tonight on a Friday night now it's lively and fun, and everybody's walking up and down on both sides, and the college community has added to that. But all of these stores that were funky, right, they're no longer funky. There's a whole plan, and it keeps moving up and up and gets fancier and more expensive. Right now we're having a problem with a lot of stores closing. The economy--they can't keep going, which is really a shame. The cultural life has kept pace with that. We have theater, we have very good theater here. The City College as part of its program is theater, and they do like four or five plays during the season. They have the Ensemble Theater, who's been here for, god, twenty-five to thirty years. I was on that board for a period of time, and that's doing really great. They do like five plays a season.

Rubin

And then there's a lot of stuff at the--they built the Paseo downtown, and they have an auditorium up on the top for about 150 people, and all kinds of plays

come through there, maybe two or three times or so. So there's a lot to do, and the community has expanded a lot. There's a lot of music that goes on here, a lot of music of all different kinds. In addition, we're having the Musical Academy of the West, which we've had for a long time, with Marilyn Horne. It's a world attraction, and people go from there and become really famous in the world of music. So culturally it's--the only big problem right now is that we have a woman who owns the newspaper who is absolutely--nobody knows what she's doing, what her intention is. She has been fighting her staff. She's fired god knows how many people by now, and it's in the courts, and like it's over two years. And you know what? We've got a little paper here called the Daily Sun. Thursday we get The Independent. That's a weekly and everybody advertises in that. But The [Santa Barbara] News-Press is just like all the other ones but more so since people have canceled. So we don't have a paper here.

Rubin

Now, what we do, what I do is I take the L.A. Times. But when I get the Times in the morning, I take it apart. I take out a lot of it, because I'm not interested, and there's an awful lot of stuff that pertains to the L.A. area particularly, and that doesn't particularly interest me. I always read the letters to the editor, and I read the editorial page, but it's not my paper. It was when I lived in L.A. So we're suffering from a lack of kind of news, but I think it's something that's going on all over the world today is that.

Collings

Yes. Well, maybe that needs to be your next project. [laughs]

Rubin

A newspaper, huh? Well, she's turned down a lot of very good healthy, wealthy offers that she's just, I don't know what. I don't know if she's engaged to him, but it's her co-publisher [Arthur von Wiesenberger], and she picks him up and puts him down. If you turn that off for a second, I'll tell you. [Interruption]

Collings

Turned back on.

Rubin

So I hope you'll buy a newspaper, get a newspaper. We have the Miller-McKuen paper that comes out almost daily on our e-mails, and then there's a monthly magazine, too.

Collings

Well, this is such a small community. What about this woman who was a spy in the organization and who testified against you? I mean, is that somebody that you would see around?

Rubin

No. She's gone.

Collings

She didn't live here?

Rubin

I think she lived in Lompoc. That was where she was. But nobody's ever-- personally, nobody that I know of that knows of her. She probably is still working for the FBI or one of those spy agencies, but I don't know, because we're talking about 1970, so that was like almost forty years ago.

Collings

Right. I guess one of the things that it makes me think of is that, I mean, did she present herself as a member of a certain cultural group--

Rubin

No, she was just hired.

Collings

--or was that not necessary, because so many different types of people were involving themselves in this campaign?

Rubin

Right, right. She hid that until she was on the witness stand, and then, of course, when they questioned her, all of us--I was a little bit surprised.

Collings

But she didn't need to present herself as a hippie or a this or a that?

Rubin

No, no. She was a properly dressed--there were a lot of those.

Collings

And there were a lot of those.

Rubin

There were a lot of those in the community. I mean, not everybody was, because we had the older community coming in just as much as the younger one, going out on the street. Actually, he didn't do a good campaign. Had he done a good campaign, we might have had a much harder time. But we were the lead, because we were the people.

Collings

This is one of the posters, if you want to just refresh your memory. But I mean, one of the things that Sanders talks about is how he was so vicious in his attacks that he actually inspired people who weren't necessarily interested in the issue in the first place.

Rubin

Right. He'd approach them on the street, and he had his people just going up to them and really grabbing them and trying to impress them with what we were doing.

Collings

And according to the book, people would react to that by saying, "What is this petition? Let me have it. I want to sign it."

Rubin

Yes, yes, yes, yes. But we won on a good, healthy majority, though. I don't think it was two to one, but it was very heavy, because people are influenced. You can listen to somebody and then, "Okay, maybe that makes some sense," if it's in your line of thinking maybe. It depends on which political party is kind of pushing it at the time. So this is the Citizens' Committee, that's where we were. Oh, my god. I just had lunch with Mary Ann--

Collings

Well, go ahead and describe the poster for the tape, so we know what we're talking about here.

Rubin

Okay. At the top of this--what is this?

Collings

Flier, I guess. That's a bulldozer.

Rubin

At the top of the bulldozer sits the caricature of Jules Berman. He's running the bulldozer, and what comes out of the pipes are smoke with dollar signs on. And riding over is the chairman of the county supervisors, the Citizens' Planning Association of Santa Barbara, the League of Women Voters, the Sierra Club, the Goleta Valley General Plan, Save Our City, Scenic Shoreline Preservation, the County Planners, No on Proposition A, which is the Citizens for the General Plan, the Lawyers' Committee, the Carpintaria Valley Association, the Santa Maria Air [Pollution] Reduction Team, the Audubon Society. And the bulldozer's piece in the front that is capturing all of this is called El Capitan. And the quotation on October 23 of 1970 from Mr. Jules Berman was, "The sooner this group is gotten rid of and this county is cleaned up of people like this, it'll be a much better county." And the poster says, "Are you one of the people Mr. Berman wants to get rid of to make this a better county? Then let's meet to eat. Come to our big For a Better County Breakfast Monday morning at the El Paseo Restaurant. Make it the social event of the year. The time is eight a.m. on Monday, November the second, 1970. The place is El Paseo. The price is two dollars, and the purpose is to make this a better county." And the group invitation is, "You are automatically invited if you belong to one of these fine organizations supporting a No vote on Proposition A. If not, use an official invitation," and it lists the organizations against Proposition A are League of Women Voters, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Scenic Shoreline Preservation, Save Our City, Western Center for Environmental Defense, Santa Maria Air Pollution Reduction Team, the Lawyers' Committee, Lake Los Carneros Resident Group, and another group that has a collection of twenty educational, commercial, and homeowners association in the Goleta Valley, and Patricio

Perez, the Urban Affairs Department, the University of California Extension.
This is a newspaper and opposing Proposition A.

Collings

That's a very broad coalition, isn't it?

Rubin

It is indeed. It is indeed.

Collings

And who was Jules Berman speaking for when he said that the sooner this group is gotten rid of?

Rubin

He was speaking for developers and other people that are giving his support. People that had his proposition passed would have opened the coast, the Gaviota coast to all kinds of development from then on, and those were his cohorts. Those were his people that maybe gave him some money, but Jules Berman was a developer from down in the Los Angeles and south area, and he did not need their money. He had an option to buy when he came in with this, so the option was depending on his being able to get permission to build. So he never used his own money for that, and the cost to him at that time would have been 4 million dollars. When it was finally sold and now that it's become part of the community, they paid 10 million. And when they bought that, they gave a very large portion of that El Capitan area over to the county for recreation and for people to come and use, to go on hikes and be able to use that.

Rubin

At the same time, there's now outdoor recreation there. You can do everything from come in with your sleeping bag to very lovely little houses, little cherrywood houses that have a double bed, have a loft, have a bathroom. Those are for people that want to spend that kind of money, or they've got the yurt style or your tent. The thing is you can only come in, you can put your things down, and then you take your car out to a parking lot, so there's no driving within. You can get a lunch, you can get some pick-up food, or you can drive out. It's right across from a beach. There's also an RV parking on the grounds, so they've done what they could do to be able to make some money out of it, and my friend who owns it, he's given the amount of land, and there are two people that have trails. One of them is William Wallace, who was on the board at that time and very helpful, and the other one is Selma Rubin had a little trail up there.

Rubin

Also, a lot of trees fall down, and they've got a workshop, so they make the park benches and tables and things for use in there. They're just lovely. They made a bench and then it has a plaque on it honoring me, but all the community that--I should have brought it to show you. Shoot. Anyway, it goes into

perpetuity in that area there. Nothing can happen with it. It's got an easement on it, and it'll be there for people of various income levels, but there's Four Seasons all over the world. There's places for people with money. I don't begrudge them the opportunities to go there. And he donates a lot of things to a lot of auctions. You can bid on a weekend at one of their cabins.

Collings

He owns the Four Seasons? Is that what you're saying?

Rubin

No, no, no. But I mean there are people that want to stay at a Four Seasons, or they go out to the campsite, right? So they might be paying like \$300 a night for the campsite. They'd pay that at Four Seasons and maybe more than that. But there are people that have money and want to live that way, and I don't begrudge them. They're going out into the fresh air. They're going to be alerted. There's lot of literature teaching people how to live in that kind of community and the fact that you can't park your car at the motel door. You have to just, as I said, leave it and park your car someplace else. And I am very happy with that settlement and, of course, in the way it went and the fact that we're still fighting. We're still pushing to not open up the coast. We have many Gaviota coast events and fundraising going on all the time and articles and books, and the environmental community is still alive here.

Collings

Yes. Now, do you think that you would have had as much success as you did organizing this very broad coalition that represented really all spectrums of Santa Barbara society, without the background of the oil spill?

Rubin

It would have been a little harder, but it would have happened. I think it would have happened. The issue would have made it. The people that are environmentalists and interested were interested, yes, because of the oil, but they're interested in all the other--land use is a very big thing here. I think so. Everybody was just kind of ready. It might have been just at the cusp of the beginning of the Environmental Movement, because it was true, because I used to live in Los Angeles. I didn't belong to the Sierra Club in Los Angeles. It was a non-entity to me. But the minute we arrived here, that was one of the first things we did. We looked around here and we said, "Oh, how beautiful, how beautiful. Can we keep this the way it is?" And my husband and I joined. We moved here from L.A. having been members of the ACLU for many years, so we just switched. But when we started to look around--we've been very political, too, all of our lives. But we started to look around, and it's more than the politics and it's more than the civil liberties. It's this whole way of life.

Rubin

Housing has always kind of been an issue, but we were introduced to some people who made a recommendation for a real estate person, and my husband was probably eighty-two or so when we moved here. But his father, he lived with him with his first wife, and she died and then the father stayed with my husband. And then when they came up here, we had to look for a house where my father-in-law could have his own bedroom and his own bathroom, and she was looking for us. At one point she takes us over to this house. It's just below Hope Ranch. It's a tract. There were forty-nine houses in that lemon orchard that was torn down about 1958, and they put up these forty-nine houses. The houses are like 1500 square feet. They had like four small bedrooms, or you could have--in fact, one of my rooms is a laundry room, and one is my computer room now. And the house had been vacant for about four months. He wasn't able to sell it. And the agent said, "I think we can get this house for 22,000." She says, "I'm going to call him."

Rubin

So she calls him up and she said, "Dan, what's the lowest price you would take for your house?" He said, "I'm so disgusted. They're offering me like 19,000. I will not take--," and he gets very high. "I won't take one penny less than 20,450." She said, "Dan, you just sold your house." The neighbor next door--the houses are all the same. It depends on like where the garage is or how the inside is situated. Just before the tremendous drop, she sold her house. She advertised for \$899,000, and she got 916,000. I'm still there. I'm still there. And I do know. At ninety-four I'm beginning to think that I need more--I'm having more trouble reaching up in my cupboards. I'm thinking seriously about moving into a retirement home for teachers which is very famous.

Collings

That'll be very nice.

Rubin

Yes, yes. But I'm still active. I've got eight boards that I'm on. I've got two advisory committees. One of them is here at EDC. EDC keeps in touch with this total community. From April until October there are--usually the first Friday in the month they have a TGIF, and they bring people in. They charge ten dollars, and you get food and two tickets for wine or whatever. Usually it gets help from the other organizations, and they bring in their tables and their literature, and they make little speeches, and there's music, and people just love coming here. Seventy-five, a hundred people will show up, and we all exchange everything. It's just such a happy surrounding here. When I come to the EDC or when I come out to El Capitan, it's like settling down into a comfort of maybe like a down comforter that you put around you and you begin to feel so warm and easy. It's such a part of my life. I just love coming, I really love coming here.

Collings

Now, you said that the community of Santa Barbara was forever changed by the oil spill and that this set the climate for such an active environmental movement. How do people learn about the oil spill today? I mean, it was forty years ago. I mean, is it--

Rubin

Still the beach has oil on it. That's one thing. [Interruption]

Collings

I mean, is it something that people talk about it?

Rubin

It's still talked about because people go down to the beach. You walk on the beach and you get tar on your feet. So the question is, "What kind of tar is this? Is it from an oil seep? Is it a leftover of something? What is it?" Now, they claim that it's just a natural thing, but they also say that before the spill they didn't have it very much.

Collings

Well, isn't there a claim right now that if drilling was resumed that it would drain off these seeps? No, you don't buy that. Okay.

Rubin

No.

Collings

All right. Because last time you talked a little bit about Pearl Chase and how important she was, but she sort of strikes me as somebody who was perhaps more politically conservative than you and really more of a conservationist.

Rubin

Right. She was.

Collings

So I'm imagining that that provides a very important bedrock for the Environmental Movement in Santa Barbara.

Rubin

It did, and Pearl was a woman with means, and Pearl was a woman that attracted people of her caliber, her interests. She developed a lot of older environmental women whom were called Pearlie's Girls, and those women were very active in the El Capitan. And one of the things that the opposition did which is so cruel, they would go--they would find out if a woman living alone was going out with a petition. They would come at eleven o'clock at night to the back door and scare the life out of these people, and then warn them and frighten them. It was dirty, it was dirty pool.

Collings

It's terrible. Well, how did Pearlie's Girls, for example, get along with, say, the students who were involved?

Rubin

Oh, they loved them. They loved them. When the trial started, when the first civil trial started, their lawyers came in and they said, "We have 450 depositions and we're going to be bringing all these students." And the judge said, "Absolutely not." She was in the audience, and she had her girls in the audience. He didn't throw them out. He didn't throw them out, but he wouldn't let these lawyers--"Well, I'll let you have whatever, three, five." I've had the whole thing, all the legal documents. I've given all of the material that I have-- Frank gave me a lot of the legal stuff, and I've given all that to El Capitan. They have it all out there, and I was interviewed by one of their people. That was just specific to that area. And whenever I find anything that is applicable, I always make sure that Roger gets it. If you ever come into town and want to just go out, they've got a lovely place for lunch. If you're driving the coast and want to stop there for lunch, you can do that. There's a kiosk. You can come into the kiosk first and just say, "Well, I'd like to stop for lunch." Then maybe Roger will be around and take you for a ride.

Collings

So what was the average age of Pearl's Girls, do you think?

Rubin

Sixties to seventies.

Collings

So would you say that it was the involvement of this, quote, unquote, "elephant" that--

Rubin

Attracted everybody.

Collings

--that attracted everybody, that perhaps made the judge more concerned to take the signatures seriously?

Rubin

You know, everything works.

Collings

Everything worked.

Rubin

And in this community, Pearl Chase was an activist. The area which is now called Alice Keck Park Memorial Gardens was the Christian Herter estate. There was a hotel and cabanas out there. When he would come to town, he would entertain. And that eventually was sold, torn down, and they wanted to put up nine-story condos on that ground, and Pearl Chase led the fight, led the fight, as a result of which she lost her tax deductibility as Plans and Planning Group, I think it was. Twenty-seven people, community people, decided to buy that land, including my husband's boss, and so we were part of the opposition,

but we had to kind of--the job is at stake, so we can do things, but we can't be out there on the picket line and all the rest of it. Whatever we can do, we have to choose what area.

Rubin

So she lost that, and so I don't think she lost very much, because she kept on going. She just went on and on and on. Periodically in some kind of literature there they call me that, the Pearl Chase, but my role was quite different than hers.

Collings

How was it different?

Rubin

She was the organizer and the main leader. I was an organizer, but I was with other people, Norm [Sanders], other people that took a more upfront major role. I did what they call the Jimmy Higgins work.

Collings

The Jimmy Higgins work?

Rubin

The Jimmy Higgins are the people that go out and shovel and do the dirty work. They set up a meeting, they bring in the chairs, they make sure that everything goes right, they put the dirty things away. They're the essence, the union guys. I get more credit for leadership now, but the leadership was as I'm describing it, just working with the people. I didn't get up and make the public speeches. I didn't do the open press conferences. I would just stand. "We're going to have a press conference at the city hall on such-and-such a subject. Can you be there?" Yes, I was there. I was part of the crowd. If the camera went like that, it saw me. But most of the time it didn't see me up at the mic. But even since that time--and the leadership, the older people die out and Selma survived.

Rubin

And then, of course, now I can't stand, so I'm very selective about what I go to. I have a problem in worrying about how I'm going to get through this path, and there are a lot of people there, without hurting anybody--

Collings

Because of the walker, you're saying.

Rubin

With the walker, yes, so it's a different role today. But when I go someplace with people, I always ask somebody to kind of lead the way and make sure that I don't bump into somebody, and they'll go tap somebody, "Selma's coming through," kind of thing.

Collings

Yes. Now, in this book by Norm Sanders, "Stop It!", where he's talking about activist strategies for defending the environment, and he describes the El Capitan activity, he really doesn't talk about Pearl Chase.

Rubin

No, he doesn't. He hasn't got any of us in there.

Collings

He refers to what happened, but he doesn't mention you by name, I don't think.

Rubin

No, but in the--what are those words at the end of the chapter?

Collings

Footnotes?

Rubin

And then he refers to a speech, is there a footnote there? Or maybe not in that book.

Collings

No, because this is really more of like a how-to guide, like a guide to how to organize, what to do, and then he's talking about what happened as an example. But I guess what I'm saying, he's focusing more on the activism of the students, and he doesn't mention this more conservative, more established element, and I'm wondering, would you consider that to be an oversight?

Rubin

No. He's a very good writer and I think just what he really wanted to cover.

Collings

Yes, he's just covering it from that angle.

Rubin

It might have been because of his situation right at that time with the tenure. That is probable--is that one of the reasons? Norm has been back here a couple of times and you know what? Neither one of us had ever been up to El Capitan, and he was here like maybe as much as a year ago, and Mark McGinnis, who was also part of everything, wanted him to see El Capitan. So we made an appointment, and he got in the car with the present owner. There were four of us in the car, and he was amazed at what he saw. He was just amazed. There's more of a path now, and they've done more toward creating possibilities of people being there, and he was so happy. They gave him a T-shirt and they gave him a mug and they served him lunch, and he was just totally delighted.

Rubin

He has gone on. He left. He gave up his citizenship, and he moved to Tasmania.

Collings

Wow.

Rubin

He was on the equivalent of the board of supervisors, and he's been an activist for a very long time. And he was on that program that I was on a couple of months ago at the university. He came and spoke to an environmental class at that time. You know what I've got? I should have brought it. It's a rare book and it's fallen apart. I'm sure you could get it, though. It has a chapter that probably has a little more background than Norm's. Let's see, how could I get it to you? How can I get you the name anyway? I'll tell you what. Later today when I go home, or maybe tomorrow, I will send you the name. I know it's out of print, but it's very descriptive and it could be in this library here. The book that I have is sort of broken apart, and I'm planning to give that to Roger to put in with the rest of the books.

Collings

Yes, you should.

Rubin

But I was debating on how to--should I fix it first and put the book back together, or should I let him do what he needs?

Collings

Well, they probably have some restoration stuff over there.

Rubin

Yes, I should really do that with the book, but I think it would probably answer a few background things. Why didn't I--it's right there at the corner. You're going right back, right? You're going back to L.A.?

Collings

Yes. You know, last time you said that Santa Barbara was the home of the John Birch Society. How did that manifest itself?

Rubin

Oh, they had an activist group here. They won, the newspaper, this thing that we've got instead of a newspaper, won a Pulitzer prize on the write up, the follow up of--I don't know if it started here, but it was a very lucrative place, and they could do a huge amount of damage, which they did. It was a very right-wing organization. I think that it got its reputation more out of history than reality, because it was in 1962. We moved in '64, and we found enough politics and good politics in both the political scene and the movement scene to take hold, because we couldn't--Bill and I would not have been able to live in a real negative. I couldn't live in Santa Maria, for example, now, because there's just not enough. And at that time in the early sixties, it was a lot more Republican maybe, right wing.

Collings

Santa Barbara as a whole?

Rubin

Yes, yes, because the people with money came here. All these people that retired out of the banking industry, out of the manufacturing, you name it, Peabody, all of these beautiful homes. Actually, the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions came here in about '62, '63, and they bought the old Peabody estate, and that's where--I don't know if you know about that. You can get that from the library there, too. That involved, what's his name, Richard, Ford Foundation money, Hutchins, from Chicago, and that's what he had here. It was a real think tank.

Rubin

The people that was a consultant was Stanley [K.] Sheinbaum. Stanley was married in '61, and I believe they moved here at that time. They bought this property and they gave the Legal Aid Foundation--it was called the Teahouse, and they gave that as a wedding gift to Betty's daughter. It was called the Teahouse, and it was a cute little place, but the marriage didn't last, and so it went more into the market. But there were all kinds of people, like Paul [R.] Erlich was on a consultant basis. A lot of people lived here. The man who was the editor of the newspaper in Arkansas, where the children were first brought into the school, the first black children were brought into--

Collings

Was it the Arkansas Traveler, perhaps? [Arkansas Gazette]

Rubin

Was that the name of it? Henry. Those people, a lot of those people moved into this community. Russ Tugwell was here. If you get into that at all, you'll find all these names of people, and they were the follow up to the Birch Society, because one thing that happened is those dumb idiots from the Birch Society broke into their office, the home, the Peabody, and one smart idiot dropped his wallet. But those also smart idiots came and cut--well, my husband had some black friends who came to stay with us, and somebody in a truck saw us, and they cut eight tires in our driveway. That was the time that we had just moved here, and I told my husband it was time for rest and relaxation and let's not get involved so soon, because we know what we're going to do, but let's hang out for a while. And we go out there and we look at the car and we look at each other, and we said, "Well, vacation is over." And we got into CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] right away, and he got into two or three things in the farmworkers' groups, and we've gone ever since.

Collings

Did you find when you were involved in those groups that you and your husband were sort of older than--

Rubin

No, no. We were pretty much--I remember one of the women who was, "Selma, god, you're only fifty-six? I'm eighty. I'm going to be eighty-one."

Collings

Last time you said, "Well, Senator Gaylord Nelson didn't start Earth Day. It started in Santa Barbara."

Rubin

Yes, it did. And it's still going, and it was huge this year. They built a green house, an all-green house, using all the latest of everything in buildings. They did that right on the grounds, and we've been moving, because more and more and more people have been coming.

Collings

So do you remember the first Earth Day in Santa Barbara?

Rubin

I do. It was right in front of our office, and our office was at 15 West Anapamu, and they closed off that block between Chapala and State [Streets], and all of the organizations had their booths out there. So all of them might have been twenty-five to thirty with a table and some literature. And I was active in the Zero Population Growth at that time, in that early period. And CEC today-- we've been through many different places and different offices and different gardens, and we're now in the second story at 26 Anapamu, right across the street from where we started. There's incidentally a very interesting museum, the Karpeles Museum, which is right next door there, too. If you ever get into town for time to visit, they've had seven of these museums in the country, and they go out buying the Magna Carta and the first letter that Lincoln ever signed. They've got some beautiful, interesting stuff there. It's a two-story thing.

Rubin

It was the opening. It was the opening--

Collings

So why do you think that Earth Day started in Santa Barbara?

Rubin

Well, here I think it was a need to acknowledge the beginning of the heavy-- from the oil spill, the beginning of acknowledging and being able to teach the community, open up doors, open up windows, organize people, because it always brings out a lot of people that are interested. And the more it goes on, it grows and grows and grows and grows, and today we have all of the health-giving foods, for example. There's a car show, which some people deplore because we're trying to get away from cars, other health-giving whatever, creams or soda pop or whatever is current. But everything is dialectic. It just keeps on moving and moving and moving, and you pick up something and it says, "You don't have to buy toothpaste. You can use bicarbonate of soda," right? And everybody gloms onto something that is good for them. All kinds of things get started because somebody sits down and thinks of a good idea.

Rubin

For example, I met my friend this morning, because we had a coffee date early, and when I came in with my walker, I came in and sat down at this little coffeehouse, and there's a woman sitting right there, and she said to me, "Can I help you with your walker?" And I said, "No, I'm just doing fine, thank you." And she said, "My brother has a walker, and we talk about a lot of little different things and you know, I made a suggestion to him that somehow there should be something in the way of a plate," what do you call them, put on your car?

Collings

Bumper?

Rubin

Well, no, no, the plate.

Collings

Oh, license plate?

Rubin

License plate. And we should have a place here, and we should be able to hang it on this, like this is a real piece of machinery. I said, "My god." And you know how many people I know that have these? In all of these rest homes, almost everybody. I said, "Oh, what a market. What a market." Right? So if somebody gloms onto that--

Collings

Yes, it's quite a market.

Rubin

If somebody glommed onto that, they could do some--and it's something that's needed. If nothing else, you could put your name on it. I have a little whatever I have here, a little piece of something that hangs on there, but for innovative people there are things that are going on in their heads, in the minds. They see a need and they do it, and that was a need. That was the need. It was just--

Collings

The Earth Day was the need.

Rubin

Yes, it was the need.

Collings

Yes. You know, there's something I forgot to ask you. It's kind of a specific question, but there was that big anniversary, one-year anniversary of the oil spill, which was an important meeting, and it happened several days after the bank burning.

Rubin

The big event was January twenty-eighth, 1970, which was a commemoration of the oil spill.

Collings

Oh, okay. So that would have been before the bank burning.

Rubin

Yes. Yes, it was. The bank burning was like--

Collings

It was in February, I believe, wasn't it?

Rubin

No, I think it's closer to May. I think it was in May, because that's when we had this conference, and I was in Chicago. That was the one that there were 1100 people at that meeting, and that's the one that gave birth to the Community Environmental Council, which is going to be celebrating its fortieth anniversary in April, and the man who was the executive director, whose name is Paul Reliss, is writing a book and we're all contributing to that, and he is planning to have that published in time to have whatever we decide, an anniversary dinner, whatever we decide to do. It will be in April of 1970 (sic), that's our fortieth year. And Mark McGinnis and a man by the name of John Mings and I were the ones that were the officers, and we got it started, and I think April was when we got our formal papers and became an organization and rented the little office on Anapamu, and life began.

Collings

Let me just pause for a second. [Interruption]

Collings

Okay, we're going to go back and talk a little bit about the bank burning in February, and in May there was another riot, where there was the death of the young man, Kevin Moran.

Rubin

Kevin Moran. And there was a lot of tension, a lot of fear, a lot of worry going on. Who's taking sides? Who are the people involved? What are the classes? What's going on here? And it was kind of confined into that whole Isla Vista area. I think probably a little too much socializing, probably a little too much drinking at that period, but it was an unhealthy, frightening period. The administration really tried to keep things under control and quiet, and then something would break out. Somebody would just have a fight. But the tone of the county was not as good as it should have been, and they allowed Captain Honey, who had--I don't know what he had on him, but like an ancient sword. He would walk around with this, very threatening, threw people in jail like crazy.

Rubin

My two friends--I had two friends. He was working on his Ph.D. in music, and she was maybe just behind him, and he was standing on the sidewalk and just got picked up, and that's what they were doing, just picking them up and schlepping over to the jail. And she got so scared, and she came to our house.

We had only met her once or twice before. She came to our house, she says, "Marty's in jail. We don't know what to do." So she said she remembered that we were involved with the ACLU, so we loaned her like \$300 and she was able to go over and post bail and get him out. But that's the way--people were just--their civil liberties were just mangled. They just whoever they saw--there was no cause for it. They're just standing on the street. They'd come out of their apartment just to see what was going on, so it was very unhealthy, probably frightening. You didn't know who was going to be picked up. You didn't know where your friends were. It was, I don't know, sort of a counterrevolutionary, if you want to call it that, kind of a period for us.

Collings

Right. What would, for example, Pearlie's Girls have to say about what was going on?

Rubin

They would be active. They would be active. They would want to know what was going on. She was in the good leadership with that. I don't think they would go out there and violate. I didn't go out there myself. I wouldn't go out, my husband wouldn't go out, unless we were needed for something. But it was more of an armed camp, I'd say, than anything else at that period. Eventually they were able to quiet it down. There were a number of very good, smart, active people in the Sociology Department that really stepped in and were the mediating forces. They would also meet with the chancellor. I think it was Huttenback at that time. And constantly they were trying to run their classes, they were trying to keep people calm.

Rubin

It was a frightening kind of thing, because you were going from the campus right into that armed camp in Isla Vista kind of area. The people were afraid to shop. They were afraid to eat in the restaurants. They didn't want to be out on the street. They didn't want to be away from their apartment, and there was an element of fear that was pervasive in that period. So if you had a high school graduate, you would think a hundred times before you'd think, "I'm going to get my kid into that area, where they have to live in Isla Vista?" No, and so it was detrimental. It was detrimental to the campus itself, the campus life, to the professors, to the administration. They didn't want this kind of stuff. You're going all over the country recruiting people to come to this wonderful school, but into what? So it was miserable and unhappy and frightening. It was hard to keep your balance. Like the kids that were in our house, they didn't want to be on the street there, and they would, as I say, sleep in the bathtub just so they didn't have to be where the danger was.

Rubin

And, of course, I don't have to tell you how parents felt. You'd want to come and get your kid and take him home. You don't want him in that atmosphere. So it was detrimental. It was important to quiet it down and get things back to normal as quickly as possible, and I really give the Sociology Department a lot of credit for the way it handled. And some of the people--one person who is a retired professor now, his name is Richard Flacks. Richard Flacks came to Santa Barbara in 1968. He had been a professor at the University of Chicago, and he was part of the SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] movement. One day somebody called him and said that they wanted to interview him, and they couldn't make it till six o'clock, when the buildings are empty. They were some magazine that was going to come and so on. So he went back to his office and he opened the door when they knocked on the door, and that was the last he remembers of anything conscious. He was left on the floor in a pool of his own blood. He was hammered on the head. His hands are still in very bad shape. They were trying to kill him.

Collings

Wow.

Rubin

And it was a terrible atmosphere for him, and he didn't want to stay there at all. Now, his sociology colleagues knew there was an opening in Santa Barbara, and some miraculous way they were able to get him here and get him hired before it became too well known what had happened. But when it got known-- [Interruption]

Collings

Okay, you were saying that his colleagues were able to bring him to Santa Barbara?

Rubin

To an opening, and he really got hired, and his history wasn't recognized until somehow the same famous News-Press got wind of it and wrote some terrible, terrible editorials about him. He's a professional, he's a brilliant man. He's attracted more students than any other student (sic) you know, and over the years they've sent out thousands of trained people and at the drop of a hat--he was retired a year ago with more people coming to his party than had been known in history. He's been writing a huge number of books, and he was an influence in that moderate, bringing peace, peace and understanding to the kids and talking to them. They really respect him, and students over the years have fought to get into his class. And he's a guy that has an open door. "You want to talk about something? Come over and talk to Dick."

Rubin

And he was one of the very few--I would say in the course of my being here, I have been conversant, tops, with ten professors who were able to come into the

community and do any kind of work with us, but Richard has been here since day one. He's been on every committee. He and his wife have started several of the committees. Her name is Mickey, and she's on the affordable housing. To this day she's kind of considered one of the authorities on that. And Dick has been in many of the organizations. He's still with us, and he's still the same really nice guy.

Rubin

One of them went to teach at the London School of Economics, and he's now at Columbia [University]. He resigned from here, from that department. But they had their fingers on the nub of--Harvey Molich is also an activist and helped to write in 1971, '72, '73--they wrote a book called "Limits of Growth" on a population set of 85,000 in this community. So as I keep thinking about this community, and I think about the different elements that had been involved with us and gave leadership and gave a lot of help into so much of it and so many--the use of statistics to set up--they taught us how to do interviewing, how to do writing up of grants, all this kind of work that needs to be done.

Collings

So you really think that the input of these academics was a big part of shaping the success of the community environmental work in Santa Barbara?

Rubin

I do, I do, I do. Now, some never got off the campus in that sense, but they were still participants. I think the student curiosity, the student interest in what was going on, because we did have a lot--they're young people, they want to be where the action is. So if there's a walk on the beach, there's a protest rally on the beach, that's where they're going to be. That's where we want them, too, because we need their leadership. We need their leadership. I just love it when these people come up to me--god. This guy comes up to me, I'm sitting at the table, and he stands there and he's looking at me and looking at me, and I sort of don't recognize him. He said to me, "Selma, you don't remember me, do you?" And I said, "To tell you the truth, I don't." He said, "Selma, I lived in your house for six months." [laughs]

Collings

Oh, yes, because you have interns come and stay in your house.

Rubin

So we've got another one coming on Wednesday--

Collings

Oh, wonderful.

Rubin

--and he'll be coming down here, and I live on the bike path, so he gets on his bicycle and he's downtown.

Collings

That's perfect.

Rubin

And they give me sustenance. They give me strength. They give me what I need for my life, to keep me busy. I'm a very happy person. I was trained to be happy by my father. He taught me a lot of great things, like, "Money is only good for the good that you can do with it." And so when my husband began to come down with Alzheimer's in a serious way, we did a will and a trust, and at that time we were worth around two million dollars. And I said, "Okay, that's what my father told me, so what do I have to do with my money?" I have three young minority women that I've sent through. Two of them have their master's. I couldn't be prouder of them.

Collings

Yes, that's great.

Rubin

Considering that I didn't want to have children of my own, and I've helped people. A lot of people are in the community that owe me money, and I'll never collect it, and I don't really care. I've got enough to live on, I hope, to last me as long as I live, but that's not important to me.

Collings

Well, I think we're sort of wrapping up now. Is there anything that you would like to add as kind of a final thought or a final note for the interview?

Rubin

Only the way I have lived my life and adapted to my community by always being an activist, doing whatever I could do within my health, my finances, my interests. I just kind of like myself as a person.

Collings

That's wonderful. You're so lucky.

Rubin

I know. I know. I come from good stock, too. My father and mother were very wonderful people. I was thirty-two years old before I got married, because I was looking for a husband who was like my father. He was such an honest, devoted person that lived through the depression and felt everybody's pain, and I'm also a child of that depression period, so I'm thinking and I'm worrying today a lot about what's happening with the economic situation. I tell you, I get visions of the people being kicked out of their houses, and their belongings being kicked out, and they're on the street. I remember the worst part of it was how men reacted to this. When men can't feed their children, it does something horrible to them. You know? This is why we had the hobo jungles. They can't face it. They can't really face it. And women, what happens to us? We're then left with nothing. You haven't got a house and you haven't got a husband, you haven't got furniture, you've got kids that are hungry. It's so frightening, it's so

frightening, I tell you. Sometimes I dream about that now, and I'm really touched, and I'm listening and I'm hoping, and I don't think things are getting better.

Rubin

You know the situation with General Motors right now? I read a fabulous article by Michael Moore. I should send that to you.

Collings

Oh, please do.

Rubin

Yes, you should really read that, because he comes up with, "It's time to close down on the trucks and the cars, and it's time to build environmental needs. There's a lot that we have to do." And he points out what happened to Roosevelt and how he closed down the automobile industry and went into the war effort, and how that happened and how quickly that happened. And then he says, "That's what we need now. We need the solar, we need the wind, we need all this green stuff." It's a beautiful article.

Collings

That would be great.

Rubin

I'm going to send that to you. It's worth it. Well, it's been a great--

Collings

Yes, it's been wonderful. Thank you so much.

Rubin

I just appreciate that, and you'll let me know what happens. All right?

Collings

Okay. All right. [End of interview]

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