

A TEI Project

Interview of Diane Donoghue

Table of contents

1. Transcript
 - 1.1. Session One (March 22, 2012)
 - 1.2. Session Two (April 5, 2012)
 - 1.3. Session Three (April 25, 2012)
 - 1.4. Session Four (May 2, 2012)
 - 1.5. Session Five (June 5, 2012)
 - 1.6. Session Six (July 12, 2012)
 - 1.7. Session Seven (August 2, 2012)

1. Transcript

1.1. Session One (March 22, 2012)

COLLINGS

Here we are on March 22, 2012. Jane Collings interviewing Sister Diane Donoghue. It has a G in it, but it's a silent G.

DONOGHUE

That's Irish.

COLLINGS

Let's begin with the very first thing that happened in your life, when and where you were born.

DONOGHUE

I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 26, 1931, and I was the firstborn to my mother and dad, Joe and Margaret Donoghue. My dad was from Des Moines and my mother was from Minneapolis, and so they kind of went back and forth. They were married in 1928, before the Crash, April 1st, and the Crash was April 29th.

[laughs] So that was the beginning. So I was a—the Depression was there and FDR hadn't been elected yet, and that was '32. So those were hard times, and so we moved back and forth from Des Moines to Minneapolis and then back to Des Moines and so forth. My brother was born in Des Moines twenty-two months later, so we're very close. Those were very hard times, and my parents separated. I've always said there's no family therapy, no marriage counseling, no any kind of support systems other than, quote, "your family." And the economic times in terms of jobs, just really, really hard, so there was a lot of stress. So in 1935, I was four. My mother and grandmother, John and I came to California. My grandmother had a pass on the Great Northern Railroad, so we had transportation. My mother's sister and her husband and my two cousins lived in Wilmington, and so we came to Wilmington, and we were there about six months and then located into actually Hollywood.

My mom got a job at the Biltmore Hotel for \$90 a month, so that was what she supported us on. She was a cashier and she worked most of the time the seven-to-three shift. Then she took the Red Car from across the street from the Biltmore, was the station, the Red Car station, up to Hollywood, and then she'd walk a mile from the station to our place. So that was kind of the beginnings.

COLLINGS

Were your parents immigrants?

DONOGHUE

No, they were second generation, but all Irish on both sides. My mother's maiden name was Shields. My folks were separated, and my dad lived in Des Moines, and then he came to California, Los Angeles, during World War II in 1942. Of course, he had a heart condition and he had angina, which is very high cholesterol, so he would get a job, have a heart attack, be in the hospital, get out, get another job, all in the defense factories. So Lockheed and Boeing and all the different defense plants were here. So he was here from '42, and he died in October of '44. So we had about two years of really being with him on weekends. My two aunts, his sisters, had

come to California, and they were very close to us and to my mother, so that that was very amazing that that family ties were so strong. So for that I am very grateful. So every weekend we would do something.

COLLINGS

What would you do?

DONOGHUE

My aunt and uncle, my uncle worked at Lockheed and he had a priority job, so we had a C-ration gas card, which meant unlimited gas. So they had a 1941 Plymouth Coupe, but it had this little sort of seating area in the back that you could put stools in. So it would be my aunt and uncle and my dad and other aunt and John and I, six of us in this little tiny car. We went to Capistrano. We went to the horse farm. I'm trying to remember the special Palomino horses that were out in the San Gabriel Valley. Everything that was a possibility of a place to go, we did. So that was always really fun, and to be able to do that and to share that. So we did that, and that was very, very good. My dad had a heart attack, and he was forty-three. So we would witness him having—like we would be with him on a weekend, and he'd start popping nitroglycerin pills. That was the only thing they had, so that that was that. So that was pretty much how it was. My aunts always paid for our school in terms of parochial schools.

COLLINGS

So you went to Catholic school?

DONOGHUE

So I went to Catholic school and high school. My brother went to Loyola. I went to Immaculate Heart. Then in my sophomore year, my mom said, "I can't afford the tuition for both of you, and I think your brother needs the oversight of the Jesuits, so you'll go to public school," and that was a real hard one for me. But that's the way it was, so that's—

COLLINGS

Why was that hard for you?

DONOGHUE

Well, because I'd gone to school with—you know, and I had all my friends, and to start in a new school, and L.A. High, they had very highly organized social clubs, and cliques were just so—and that was totally opposite to the way at Immaculate Heart. So you had to go through rushing. You pledged. You stayed with your group. I mean, it was just the antithesis, really. So I just said, "Okay, I'm going to make this and I'm going to get through it. I'm going to study and I'm going to go to college." I was the first one that went to college, and the only one I even thought about was UCLA because I knew I would have to pay my tuition, which I did. So that just was the way it was.

COLLINGS

I know that at that time and still today, but particularly at that time, fashion for girls in high school was very important.

DONOGHUE

Oh, it was incredible.

COLLINGS

How did you deal with that?

DONOGHUE

Well, everybody had cashmere sweaters, that was a huge deal, and what we called Joyce shoes. They were white wedgies. Everybody wore "Joycies," and it was a big deal to make sure that you had your Joycies and your cashmere sweater. That was just—you know.

COLLINGS

That was a uniform.

DONOGHUE

That was a uniform, and that was very, very true. So my grandmother used to babysit, and she got me my first cashmere sweater when I was sixteen, and I wore it the whole time I was at UCLA. [laughter] It was a special sweater.

Then after my mom worked at the Biltmore, my aunts, all my aunts and my grandmother were just fashionistas. They really were. My mother was a buyer then at Bullock's Wilshire. So you sort of get the sense of that.

COLLINGS

So you were taken care of in that department.

DONOGHUE

That, and then I got a job at Phelps-Terkel, which was on Miracle Mile. It was a great store, and you got 30 percent discount on your clothes. So I didn't buy any clothes except 30 percent off, and that was the way it worked. So I worked at Phelps-Terkel most of the time that I was at UCLA. I went to school Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and I worked Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. Tuition was \$40 a semester.

COLLINGS

At UCLA?

DONOGHUE

Yes, and \$25 for books.

COLLINGS

Right. Sounds good.

DONOGHUE

I could do that.

COLLINGS

So you said when you came to Los Angeles you moved into the Hollywood area.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Did you stay there?

DONOGHUE

No, no, we moved around. I knew every single neighborhood practically in L.A. because my mom was always thinking we could do better. So I went to five different Catholic schools.

COLLINGS

Oh, my gosh.

DONOGHUE

So when World War II, 1941, it was very hard to find housing, so we stayed put, and it was the first time I was in the same school for four years. So that was Cathedral Chapel and that was in the mid Wilshire area. So then we stayed put, and then we got our name on the waiting list for Park La Brea, and we moved in there the summer that I graduated from high school, and that was the first time we ever had a two-bedroom. Before, we had one bedroom and the Murphy bed in the front room. So my brother and I always—twin beds in the bedroom, and my grandmother and my mother slept in the front room, and that was just standard.

COLLINGS

Each apartment would actually have a Murphy bed?

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. Yes. Everybody had a Murphy bed. One-bedrooms and then a Murphy in a closet, and so that was just standard. So that was a big deal when we moved to Park La Brea and we had a real living room that I could bring people in any time of the day. So just in terms of kind of what you're used to and what's kind of standard.

COLLINGS

In terms of the people who were growing up with, did you consider that you were of the same class, shall we say?

DONOGHUE

Not really, because one of the things in Catholic schools, and especially at Cathedral Chapel, that was a very large parish in terms of the boundaries, and they went all the way to Hancock Park. So we had people from Hancock Park who went to Cathedral Chapel. So we had a huge range. So I had friends that lived in Hancock Park that I used to do sleepovers with. So I didn't have sleepovers at our place, but I used to go to their place. That was really amazing because it gave me a sense of not comparisons. We didn't wear uniforms.

COLLINGS

Oh, you didn't?

DONOGHUE

No, not at Cathedral Chapel. So I always felt like I fit in, but we knew, you know. My mother really scraped and saved, and she got bikes, rebuilt bikes, for us during the war. That was just amazing. There was a bike shop on Olympic and La Brea, right around the corner from our apartment. We used to go down and talk to the bike owner, and he used to put the names of the kids on their bikes. So we'd go down every day—my brother was down there more than I was—looking for his name on a bike. My mother was making payments, and so she was paying for it. So the Christmas that we got our bikes was 1944, and it was just unbelievable. If you can imagine putting two bikes with a Christmas tree and a Murphy bed in the living room, it was unreal. It was a really big deal.

COLLINGS

Where would you ride on your bike?

DONOGHUE

Well, to school, and then we would ride to Hollywood. We knew everything. The other place that we always went was Pan Pacific for

the ice-skating rink. When we would have rainy day session, that meant you got out at one o'clock. So if you thought it was going to rain that day, you brought your ice skates to school and then we'd all take off. It was only a quarter during the week to go ice skating. It was 50 cents on weekends. So we'd go to Pan Pacific and spend the rest of the day there.

COLLINGS

Sounds great.

DONOGHUE

So, I mean, we just went everywhere on our bikes and with no fear. All the kids, everybody had a bike, and we just—you know. That was the way it was. And knowing that, I mean, I didn't have any sense of class as such. I know I was very conscious of people that lived in Hancock Park, but it never made a difference in terms of feeling included.

COLLINGS

Do you think it had to do with the fact that everybody was at the Catholic school together?

DONOGHUE

Yes. We knew one another's parents. My mother never went to the Mothers Club meeting. I mean, she couldn't. My grandmother didn't feel inclined, exactly, so but it was really there. I never felt judged or that anybody had to know about where my dad was. He died when I was in the seventh grade, John was in the sixth, and that's just the way it was.

COLLINGS

What was the ethnic makeup of the school?

DONOGHUE

Oh, it was all white.

COLLINGS

Irish?

DONOGHUE

Irish. Well, a lot of Irish, but, I mean, you know, you had Italians. We had Hispanics. I'm trying to think. Just kind of a usual cross-section. No African Americans. The first time I was ever with African Americans was when I went to our camp, Camp Mariastella, in 1942. We had African American. That was the first year we had camp up in Wrightwood, and I went, and that was the first time. I really didn't have African Americans friends. I had some in high school when I was at L.A. High, because there were just a few. But there were more Jewish kids, and I got more of a sense of cross-section at L.A. Now it's almost 100 percent Oriental, mostly Korean.

COLLINGS

At L.A. High?

DONOGHUE

L.A. High, yes, because it's right in the middle of Koreatown. But it was amazing just to think of the differences. But I was so much more conscious of class at L.A., and it had to do with dress and where you went on vacation, what you did on the weekends. I mean, it was very, very elitist, is my only word.

COLLINGS

That sounds like it would have been a very difficult transition.

DONOGHUE

It was. It was huge, and I just put my nose in a book and decided this would be the best way out.

COLLINGS

So where were the different neighborhoods that you lived in? You said that you moved around quite a bit.

DONOGHUE

Let's see. Hyde Park, Crenshaw. That would be Crenshaw and Slauson. Then mid Wilshire on Norton, three different places on Norton. That would be between Crenshaw and Arlington, right in that area. Then mid Wilshire, and the longest was by Olympic and La Brea all through high school because we couldn't move.

COLLINGS

Because you were at the public school?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Then the next one was finally Park La Brea. Then I entered the novitiate from Park La Brea. So those were kind of all those different places.

COLLINGS

Which of those were good neighborhoods for a kid, do you think?

DONOGHUE

We had one place where we lived where it was like a duplex, and we had a yard. But when we lived in apartments, many places would not take kids. Now it's against the law, but then it was not. So we really had to be very quiet, and so we learned that mighty fast. If we were going to live in an apartment, we really—and we were always on the second floor. So that was of concern..

COLLINGS

Did you actually have the sense that you would be kicked out of your apartment?

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes, yes. A manager always lived right there onsite in the apartment and was the enforcer. There were not that many kids in the apartment, so we had to be really careful. My mother was very good in presenting us, and we were very well mannered in manners and politeness and being able to engage with adults. That was something we learned very, very young. So we made it. [laughter] And that was why it was important to live in the neighborhoods and

to know all the kids that lived there, because we played outside so much. My grandmother had a little bell, and she'd ring the bell and that was time to come in for dinner. But otherwise we were outside, and so that was important.

COLLINGS

Did you get to know a lot of your neighbors in the buildings?

DONOGHUE

We thought everybody had new friends in September because we did. We did. So we made friends very easily, and my brother and I were dependent on one another. In a new neighborhood, you go out together and meet the kids, and that's just standard.

COLLINGS

Yes. That sounds like good training, really.

DONOGHUE

I think it was. I really do. My brother is far more extroverted than I am, and he is. It's really fun. I love to watch him just whiz into a crowd, and he really enjoys it.

COLLINGS

What did he go on to do?

DONOGHUE

Well, he's Mr. Amazing. He got kicked out of Loyola High School in his junior year because my mother—first of all, there was snow in Griffith Park, and that was the big thing, so kids ditched school to go up to the snow. So he ditched with four of his buddies. We were behind in tuition, and so he got expelled.

COLLINGS

O, that's so harsh.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. The guy that was just a pistol was the principal at Loyola. So anyway, he got expelled, so he ended up, the two of us, at L.A. High, and we were both miserable, because his buddies—so he and a friend of his at L.A. High found out about getting a job working in the flour mills in Montana, Great Falls, Montana. So he and a friend took off and got themselves to Montana for the summer. He met my sister-in-law, Margie, in Great Falls, and he spent all of his money dating her. It was time to come home, and he had no money. So he found out about you get a sign-on bonus if you join the National Guard, so he lied about his age and got a bonus and was all ready to go, and the unit was immediately activated. So here he is, he's sixteen years old. So he goes in. My mother tried to get him out, and there was no way that we could get him out.

COLLINGS

Even though he was under age?

DONOGHUE

Yes. He was very tall and he looked older. So he was at Fort Lewis, Washington, so he was there the whole time during the Korean War. That's when that happened.

So he got his GED, and then when he was graduating, he got his GED, and Margie was the same, they're just a week apart in their age, and they got married when they were seventeen. They turned eighteen in December after they'd graduated. He's in the Army. She's the youngest of eight. So they had their first baby a year and a half later, and he got out of the Army, and that was G.I. Bill. So he went and signed up for Gonzaga, the Jesuit university in Spokane, and he graduated four years later Phi Beta Kappa, student-body president, four kids, and they got a G.I. loan for their house. Then he finished the basement and took in a boarder, so that was his house payment. He graduated as a chemical engineer and he worked for Shell Oil. Then he took an early retirement. Then they had a campgrounds and cabins up on Wannacut Lake, which is

five miles from the Canadian border, so they were up in that area, and they did that for fifteen years, and then they finally retired.

COLLINGS

Sounds wonderful.

DONOGHUE

So he's up in Kalispell, Montana, and has seven children, they're all married, and there's twenty-two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. And he's two years younger than I am.

COLLINGS

So it sounds like the G.I. Bill was really—

DONOGHUE

Was a godsend.

COLLINGS

—the thing that turned his life.

DONOGHUE

It did. It did. Well, his marriage turned his life around in so many ways, because Margie is just absolutely remarkable. She's a convert, and they're very active in their parish and they were active as first responders for Red Cross. They were in with [Hurricane] Katrina for three weeks down in New Orleans, and then they went back for [Hurricane] Rita. So they're just amazing. I'm going to go up there in April. I have six days I'll be up there.

COLLINGS

Oh, very nice.

DONOGHUE

So we'll have a little family visit.

COLLINGS

When you were in high school or when he was in high school, what kinds of messages were you getting from your mother and your grandmother about what you should be thinking about doing with your life?

DONOGHUE

Well, both of us were good students. My mom did IBM, International Business Machines, correspondence courses and then worked in a stockbroker's office. So she used to do her homework with us, and we'd all be at the table doing our homework. We never were pushed in terms of "Have you done your homework?" But we always did. We were both good students. But when I said I wanted to go college, it was understood that I'd be paying for that, and I was the first one in our whole family that went to college.

COLLINGS

What pushed you to go to college, do you think?

DONOGHUE

Seeing the possibilities of what education could be. My cousin got married when she was eighteen. My brother took off. It seemed like such a dead end in terms of just what you did with your life. All of a sudden you were a young adult and you were supposed to be working and self-sufficient, and at doing what?

COLLINGS

You had friends who were going to college, I'm thinking.

DONOGHUE

Everybody was going to college, yes. But what I did say was I'm not going to go through rushing and do that. So I got very involved at UCLA. When I was working at Phelps-Terkel there was a friend of mine, Kim, and she was a sophomore at UCLA. So she said, "I want to introduce you to my friends. I want to tell you about things that I'm interested in, because I know you're not going to go through rushing." So I had two very good friends who just introduced me to people, so I got very involved in student activities right from the

beginning, which was amazing. Then I got involved with Religious Conference. So that was counseling at UniCamp, being on the Panel of Americans, being in a discussion group called Bruin Board, and then when you were a junior you went to Student Board. So those were all the kinds of things. So my friends were all over the place, and they were all in student activities. Then I finally decided, well, why don't you try it? Why don't you just see? So I did go through rushing in my junior year.

COLLINGS

Oh, you did?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

How predominant was rushing that it was really something that you needed to make a decision about?

DONOGHUE

It was something that I wanted to see, because my rushing experience in L.A. High had been so disastrous, so I wanted to see if I could do it and get bids from several, which is what happened. So I pledged one of the top houses. I stayed in it for a year and a half, and then after I came back from India, it just didn't make sense, so I dropped out. I just became what's called inactive. But it was like it was something I proved to myself, and that's why I did it.

COLLINGS

Yes, that's important.

DONOGHUE

Just to know it.

COLLINGS

So where were you living when you first started going to UCLA?

DONOGHUE

In Park La Brea.

COLLINGS

You were just commuting to the campus.

DONOGHUE

Yes, on the Red Bus every day. I had to have eight o'clock classes, because I had to get all my classes in Monday, Wednesday, Friday. So I used to have to run for classes. There was no way to get to classes on computer, so you ran, literally.

COLLINGS

To the actual room.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

To be the first in line.

DONOGHUE

Yes. You talked about running for classes. The last class I'd run for would be my gym class so it was always eight o'clock in the morning. So lacrosse is what I got, so I used to play, running with that little stick. I didn't do that. I played volleyball and different—and I was a good athlete, so it was fine, but it was ironic to be out on the field at eight o'clock in the morning, but it was a real warm-up. You had to do it. Then I'd go from eight to usually about four, and that's a long day.

COLLINGS

It is a long day of classes.

DONOGHUE

I'd get a break. But I was a poly-sci major and so that was probably one of the best, from my point of view, in terms of liberal arts. So you got a lot of English and art and history as well as poly-sci. One of my best classes was the history of opera.

COLLINGS

Oh, wonderful.

DONOGHUE

We used to take our lunch, it was at noon, and Dr. Popper, Jan Popper, was just incredible. His wife, and he would play the piano, and she'd sing all the arias. Then we'd eat our lunch, and it was just a neat, neat class.

COLLINGS

It sounds wonderful.

DONOGHUE

I took it with good friends, so we really—I had no background. How would I ever learn that? But KFAC radio station, used to be AM, and that used to be the classic radio station, so then I started listening to that. It was in the Prudential Building where I used to pick up my bus. KFAC was there, so I knew what that was and how important that was. Then all of the exposure that I got through the Conference, public speaking and so forth, and being around Adaline Guenther was just amazing, as the independent woman who really just made such an impression.

COLLINGS

So you get to UCLA. You're there as a freshman. At what point did you get involved with the Religious Conference?

DONOGHUE

Right away because—

COLLINGS

Oh, from the freshman year?

DONOGHUE

Yes, because my friend Kim said, "This is where the action is. These are the people that really are interesting, and you'll just get so much out of it." So I got onto the Panel of Americans right away. The first time I ever went to San Francisco, 1946 would be I was driving, and it was a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Jew.

COLLINGS

1946 you said?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

So this was before you went to college?

DONOGHUE

That was my freshman year.

COLLINGS

In 1946?

DONOGHUE

Isn't that right? No, no, '49, '50, '50. Thank you. Yes. Thank you. I get them mixed up. Fifty. So that was when I went to San Francisco but on the Panel of Americans, so then it was—

COLLINGS

So what was the Panel of the Americans?

DONOGHUE

That's just marvelous. Started at the Religious Conference, and it was students talking to other students and adult groups about religious and racial prejudice and racism. We didn't have that word then, but we knew what it was. That was African American, Oriental, either Japanese or Chinese. Think about it, 1950, we had

Japanese students coming back. The Nisei Bruins were the first ones back.

COLLINGS

From the internment camps.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Then we had Latinos, Chicanos, and then Catholic, Protestant, Jews. So there's six on a team, and then with an adult moderator who would—and sometimes "Gramma" would do it—or we used to call her "Gramma," and so she would be the one. Or we had a marvelous group of volunteers that used to work with us. But on that particular one, it was a ten-day trip during spring break, and we went through the San Joaquin Valley. We went to Delano, huge anti-Mexican Chicano feeling, went to a naval station, very anti-black, got all the way to San Francisco. At those places we went to schools, to Rotary groups, and when we were in San Francisco we went to high schools and San Francisco State. They were just starting then. When we got to San Francisco, we had our reservation at a hotel, and the manager saw our Japanese member and said, "No Japs in here."

So we found another hotel where we all could go, that would accept all of us. But we would run into it in restaurants. We'd all go in together. And looking at the background was amazing. Then that was the first time I'd ever been to San Francisco, so that was a real big deal.

COLLINGS

What would your panel talk about?

DONOGHUE

Each one of us talked about our own traditions, our own experiences, and what it was to grow up. So I talked about stereotyping. I said, "With a name like Donoghue, what else would I be?" Then how people judge you in terms of—and the Japanese, of course, talked about the internment camp. Mexicans talked about—

we had the pachuco riots during World War II here in L.A. that were just horrible. So that was people lashing out against Mexican Americans and feeling in terms of African Americans, blacks. Truman is the one who integrated the Army after World War II. So when you think about that, in terms of what? Then we would answer questions. Our talks would take maybe eight to ten minutes, max. The six of us—no, they'd take four minutes, because we usually had an hour program for schools especially. Then people would say what about, or what about, and then we would take the questions. It was just marvelous just learning and integrating.

COLLINGS

What kind of groups would invite you to come and talk to them?

DONOGHUE

A lot of high schools, so we always did usually upperclass, junior, senior high schools, then Rotary groups, civic groups, Mothers Clubs, business groups. So I would go almost once a week on a panel, and that meant I was cutting classes, so I'd figure out what class to cut for that week. But the experience was so good.

COLLINGS

Is this something that had been going on before the war?

DONOGHUE

Yes. The panel started—that was one of the things that Gramma—and Tom Evans was the founder of the Religious Conference, but she was really the executive that really implemented. They worked with Rabbi Magnin, Archbishop McGucken. Father Cassasi was the president of Loyola, and it was before it was a coed school, so a Jesuit school. I'm trying to remember, and all I can come up with is Bloy [phonetic]. I think he was the Episcopal bishop. They were the real headliners. There was an incredible amount of white supremacy in L.A., particularly in the business community, and a lot of discrimination against Catholics, anybody of color, and Orientals, Japanese, then, of course. Especially during the war it became very evident.

COLLINGS

Because so many people were coming into L.A.

DONOGHUE

Coming in, yes. I think it existed before the war, but it really got a boost during the war.

COLLINGS

Because the need became so clear.

DONOGHUE

I remember an ad [large bill board] for Van de Kamps that showed the Italians, the Germans, and the Japanese, stereotyped cartoons, and it was when Italy was the first one to go. So it was "One down, two to go," and a big cross. And the stereotype, but that was an ad.

COLLINGS

Right. Wow.

DONOGHUE

It was horrible, and just knowing that. Then becoming so close with the experience of that. That format of the Panel of Americans was the ground source for Project India. So it was the same kind of background, but the topics were a little different, obviously. I remember the Mexican American guy, his last name was Guzman, and I think his first name was Alfredo, but his brother worked in City Hall, and that was a really big deal. Then Ed Roybal was the first Latino elected to City Council and then, of course, went on to Congress for many years. Now his daughter is still in Congress. She has a tremendous stature at this point.

COLLINGS

What you were doing on the campus with the Religious Conference, was that a big part of campus life, do you think, for a lot of people?

DONOGHUE

Yes, it was. Then I was in a program called Spurs, so that was the sophomore honorary, that was for student activities. Then just getting involved in so many—Project India, and I took a [unclear], or there's an excerpt that you may have seen. They dismissed classes, ten o'clock classes, for the whole campus to go to Royce Hall and hear the presentation of Project India.

COLLINGS

Oh, okay, because I was just going to ask you whether this cross-cultural understanding that you're describing was an important element of campus life overall at that time.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Sherrill Luke was the first African American elected student-body president. I was freshman, he was a senior, but you know when that happened. My friend Marty Rosen was one of the first Jews elected. Cross-culture was really important. See, UCLA kind of had the idea that was the red school, as in communist, and because there was a fear that they were so progressive that compared to USC, that USC was safe and UCLA was red.

COLLINGS

Where did you hear that?

DONOGHUE

A lot of that.

COLLINGS

Who would say that?

DONOGHUE

Mostly from my USC friends or people. That was a very strong stereotype and one that we talked about on the panel just in terms of what it meant to stereotype and talked about that.

COLLINGS

Why do you think UCLA had that reputation?

DONOGHUE

It's coming into its hundredth year now, but when it started, it was over on the City College campus.

COLLINGS

On Vermont, yes.

DONOGHUE

Over on Vermont, and then moved over. Just the fact of getting that, it was a land-grant literally, a land-grant college. Berkeley was considered avant-garde, you know, so then it was like you were exporting that kind of progressiveness down here. San Francisco was always much more progressive than L.A., and so it was like you were getting that down here now.

COLLINGS

Yes, I see. [laughs]

DONOGHUE

And there was a lot of resistance. 'SC was a commuter college.

COLLINGS

Was there resistance to the ideas of the Religious Conference on the UCLA campus?

DONOGHUE

No. There was and there wasn't. Let me see. Adaline Guenther was very skillful in recruiting student leaders early on. The experiences, she picked the student board and I guess there were fifteen of us. It was always the student-body president. It was always the campus leaders. It was movers and shakers. So she received Alumni of the Year, I think at one point, but she was acknowledged. But because there had to be such a strong separation between religion and church and state kind of thing, see, and the Conference housed all of the student religious activities. The only one that wasn't on there was the Newman Center, the Catholic center, and that was right on

Hilgard. But everybody else all had their offices, so the interfaith work there was right from the beginning. They used to say it was the Marys and the Marthas, and the Marys were the religious groups and the Marthas were the interfaith groups. But just that whole example of what is possible in terms of honoring your own faith tradition but finding common ground, really, that was very new.

COLLINGS

Would you say that the interfaith groups were concerned with social justice?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Beyond the question of just kind of like sharing insight, to actually go the point of seeking change?

DONOGHUE

Seeking change and understanding. For instance, the experience of going to UniCamp, all the kids that came to UniCamp were from very, very low-income families, mostly African American, Latino, and some, quote, "poor whites." That was from the Sawtelle area, and those kids used to come, and from East L.A. If you didn't have any sense of what poverty was, you got it just in listening to the kids or seeing the way they came to camp. You knew that something was wrong. One of our dear friends, his name was Ray Cardenas, he was a camper from Sawtelle. When he got to camp and had that experience, he said, "I'm coming to UCLA," and that made the difference. He was the presiding judge of the Superior Court.

COLLINGS

I thought that name sounded familiar.

DONOGHUE

Ray Cardenas, just a neat guy. He was also in Project India. He was on Student Board and he was one of the group. Knowing people's stories made such a difference.

COLLINGS

What kinds of lives were the kids living? Did you get a sense of what kinds of challenges they were facing?

DONOGHUE

First of all, most of the parents that lived in the cities were gardeners, so they did that but also—

COLLINGS

In the Sawtelle area?

DONOGHUE

In the Sawtelle area, and worked in factories, and probably came in as farm workers and finally were able to get into the city.

COLLINGS

These were Latino families?

DONOGHUE

These were all Latino families, yes. Then just mothers, women clean houses. That was just kind of what you did. The manufacturing mostly was more in Central and Eastside. So there wasn't that much factory. I'm trying to think if there was any much [unclear], I don't think so. I don't remember that so much.

COLLINGS

So what years were you a counselor at UniCamp?

DONOGHUE

Fifty, '51, '52, so three years. Then the next year I went to India, and then I graduated.

COLLINGS

So you had to go through the selection process for Project India, I presume.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

What was that like?

DONOGHUE

That was rigorous. The team, the '52 team, had—

COLLINGS

That was the first one?

DONOGHUE

That was the first one, and they had some people that were really promised to go, and so they said, "You won't make it this year, but you'll make it next year." But just getting the cross-section. What was helpful for me was the fact that I was a poly-sci major and I really loved politics. Our family always were very strong Democrats but very strong FDR, and we always talked politics at home. That just was part of the conversation. So that helped a lot. And the fact that I was involved in student activities and that I was on the Panel of Americans, so I was a known—they knew I could speak and so forth. So all of that was helpful. Marion Shattenberg had tried out in '52, and so then she made it in '53. Then Ching Chow Ling and Betty Yaki and Vivian Robertson, so there was African American, Japanese, Chinese, and two Anglos. Then, of course, we were set on different teams.

COLLINGS

So how many people were on the team? It sounds like it was a kind of a small team.

DONOGHUE

Twelve. It was six and six.

COLLINGS

So what are your memories of getting on a plane and heading off to India?

DONOGHUE

First time. I'd never been on a plane, and prop planes, so we had to stop in Kansas City and then to New York, and then we had interviews with the Ford Foundation. That was the first year they had sponsored us. Then we had USIA, the U.S. Information Service, USIS. They did briefings with us. First time in New York, and it was warm. Every place we went was air conditioned. Then you'd go out in the heat and air conditioning, and I got the most incredible cold. It was horrible. So I had to get a penicillin shot there because I came down so fast.

COLLINGS

Where, in India?

DONOGHUE

No, no, in New York. So finding a doctor and getting that. But I've always been allergic to air conditioning. I never was used to it, so I can pick up a cold today still if I'm in air conditioning too much. Of course there, everybody was so used to it. So then we went to France, to Paris, and then we had two days in Paris which was—

COLLINGS

That must have been very exciting.

DONOGHUE

Because the planes didn't go from India. I mean, we left from Paris and then went to Cairo and then finally. I've got the schedule, so if you want to look at it.

COLLINGS

Oh, yes, I'd love to. Yes.

DONOGHUE

I would not remember it. I forget this. But I picked it up in that interview that Adaline Guenther did. I remember when we got there, they let everybody off the plane, and they kept us there, and then they sprayed us with insecticide, for bugs. I mean, welcome. [laughter] Then to get off and into that heat.

COLLINGS

What time of year?

DONOGHUE

It was July. Let's see. When did we get there? The eighth, I think. So it was July and August and then to the fifteenth of September, so it was very hot. We landed in Bombay, Mumbai, and we went to the Majestic Hotel. We went back, thirteen of us went back, in 2005, which was just so much fun. We looked for the Majestic Hotel in Bombay just for old times, and it was still there. It was just amazing. But, anyway, then we had our teams, and then we went south. We went on trains. Once we were there we traveled by train, second-class. So we would get one car and then all twelve of us would be sleeping in one car just on mats, just about. Second-class would be the end of it, so all of the smoke would come in. It would be just incredible. We would be so dirty by the time we got off the train. So we went south and we were in Kerala.

COLLINGS

Oh, you were?

DONOGHUE

Yes. I mean in that area, Travancore-Cochin, that whole area. So that was the most communist, the highest literacy, and the most Christians. If you could think of that three, they had the most colleges, Catholic colleges, and so forth. That's where St. Thomas landed, so that's why there's so many Christians there. So we were there for approximately a month.

Then the USIS did our bookings, so to speak, and got us booked into colleges. Then we would give our little presentation and then

talk about—and we'd go to coffeehouses and students, and we stayed in student hostels. So that was a wood bed with a wood pillow.

COLLINGS

Talk about a firm mattress.

DONOGHUE

A firm mattress. But that's what they used. It was amazing. Then we came together in Bangalore and had kind of a sharing time, and then we went north to Calcutta, and we were in Calcutta for a month and wanted to do a work project. The other team had done a work project, and so we wanted to do. There's a good description of this work project, but it was a schoolhouse in a refugee camp, and that was when Muslims were going to East Pakistan, Hindus were coming in, and the camp was a combination, which was absolutely incredible. So finally we started out, and then we got students to volunteer with us and we finally got some of the villagers to come. It was really quite exciting. So the mud floor, bamboo siding, and a tin roof, corrugated iron. The 1954 Southern Campus, the annual, was dedicated to Project India, and the pictures of that building of the schoolhouse are in the front of the book.

COLLINGS

Oh, wonderful.

DONOGHUE

So I have a copy of it and I could show it to you.

COLLINGS

Yes, I'd love to see that.

DONOGHUE

But just because I don't know where you'd come up with one otherwise. It was just [unclear].

COLLINGS

What were your lasting impressions of India, of that trip?

DONOGHUE

The poverty. The poverty. And six years after independence, so that was just really such a critical time. Just to see it, it's rural. We were in cities, and the cities, the slums, they were there. People lived on the streets. They used to chew betel nut for kind of a pain killer, and they would spit on the street. It was red. I thought it was blood, and I thought, "What is this?" Just to see the stains. But people lived on the street. They used to take cow dung and make little patties and dry it out and burn it. That was their fuel. That's what they cooked on, just on the street.

COLLINGS

That must have been quite a shock to you.

DONOGHUE

Just to know people lived like that and then to meet students in upper-income schools. The British set up the education system, so everybody in the colleges spoke English, which was a godsend. They were in school while we were on vacation, because that was just the way it works. So we were able to talk. At the time, the three major questions were the Rosenberg trial and the execution of them, the Bikini Atoll atom bomb tests, and the Brown decision in terms of—

COLLINGS

Brown versus Board of Education.

DONOGHUE

Yes, Board of Education. And *Gone With the Wind* was playing all over, and everybody was sure that's where we came from. They used to refer to Bob Nakamoto, Japanese, as the gentleman from Japan. He said, "I'm American. My parents were born in America. I'm third generation." He just would stop them. It was just very, very interesting.

COLLINGS

So you said that people were interested in the Bikini Atoll testing and the Rosenberg execution.

DONOGHUE

Yes. We always had to answer those three questions first before we could get into anything else in terms of how we live, what our educational system was like, what are the kinds of job opportunities we had, what was discrimination, what was multicultural. We didn't have that word, but we talked about all the different ways in which the U.S. we were able to get along, all the different people that contributed and all the giftedness that came from that very diverse population. So it was an amazing experience. We talked usually at least two times a day, and then tried to have interviews with students and go in small groups. Everybody, except me, lost weight, and I gained five pounds.

COLLINGS

You must have enjoyed the food.

DONOGHUE

I did. I did. I was the only one that gained weight. They'd lose twenty pounds . When we came home, we could only carry fifty pounds, so we all put our clothes on, so we had layers of clothes coming home. We stopped in Rome on the way, so we had two days in Rome, which was marvelous, and then New York and then Kansas City and then home, so it was pretty amazing.

COLLINGS

What kinds of attitudes did the Indian students have about America?

DONOGHUE

Mostly from movies. Because, again, Adaline had such good contacts, we went and talked to movie producers about the stereotyping in terms of how they saw the Wild West, our Westerns, Gone With the Wind and the stereotyping there, just some of the

images that we communicate through film and what that was. So that was huge to—

COLLINGS

Yes, because they have a huge film industry.

DONOGHUE

Oh, Bollywood, yes, now, but, of course, they didn't then. But much of what they started with was to capture and save their own cultures, because they were being so Westernized. So that was very, very important.

COLLINGS

Now, one of the sort of foundational aspects of Project India, as I understand it, was that there was communist inroads in India.

DONOGHUE

Yes, that was in India, and we talked about that, and there's real mixed thinking, in retrospect—you know, hindsight's always more intelligent—as to whether or not we were literally being used by the State Department. I can only speak for myself. I felt that we were given an opportunity to clarify and to talk about what democracy offered us and to observe the incredible inequities in India. They have a middle-class now, but they didn't. It was extremely poor and very rich, and communism, socialism feeds on that kind of gap where there is no opportunity, no ladder of mobility, so to speak, nothing that is going to give you any promise of anything different. What India has been able to do as a nonaligned country, and, of course, the polarizing, you're either for us or against us, and they took that third rail, literally, and said nonaligned. That was the genius of Nehru and of the Congress Party, was to build on that and to really address what was happening.

So the State Department withdrew funding. When we went the first years, we had Ford Foundation, and then after that State Department took over. It was eighteen years, so a piece of time, and there was a lot of political enlightenment in terms. One of our

members, Judy Graven, has done an incredible book, with a chapter on each year, and we're going to be self-publishing it this fall. It was the foundation for the Peace Corps, and we have documentation for that, that talked about the whole idea of Kennedy and where they got the ideas and the input and the training, and so much of it was based on what we did in Project India. So we saw communism, but at the same time we saw communism as the Cold War, the Russian threat, and then to see why was it so well grounded in Kerala with very high educational and people understood what could be. So it was very understandable.

COLLINGS

I'm really intrigued by the idea of the situation that's after World War II, this great cataclysm, and here you have these groups of young people with all of the wonderful energy that young people have, going and meeting these other groups of young people. It almost seems like it's an attempt to mark a new beginning.

DONOGHUE

Yes. I think that was very much what we saw it as and that we wanted to continue. I was a part of groups and we used to have a Legacy dinner, and I used to go. After I was out of the novitiate, my uniform and so forth, I'd go to the dinners just to encourage and talk about. Then we'd have reunions. We had a weekend reunion out here in—I was trying to think. I was at Berkeley in graduate school and worked. Anyway, I had a reunion here in '69 of the teams, the first five years, which was marvelous. We stayed overnight.

COLLINGS

How well did everybody on the team get to know each other?

DONOGHUE

Oh, very well. I've got some pictures of three of the guys, Bernie and Skip and Bob, doing their wash in the shower, and all they have on are their shorts, because they became very much, you know—we

were a family in so many ways. Still, as I said, we did the reunion. We had a reunion, I think I told you, last September for Labor Day and had it at the Alumni Center and had 120, 80 of whom were Project India and spouses, which is amazing.

COLLINGS

Do you have a particular sense of how the program came to an end? [interruption]

COLLINGS

We have the recorder going again. So I wanted to ask you how you dealt with the issue of religious diversity on the Project India trip.

DONOGHUE

One of the things that we were very conscious of was moving all of the Muslims into what was then East Pakistan.

COLLINGS

Right. The Partition.

DONOGHUE

The Partition, and then bringing all the Hindus back in. We didn't see any of the religious kind of warfare terrorism kind of activity. We were not party to that, never saw it, and it wasn't mentioned. It was much more as if it was cultural and that you want to have like-minded people together kind of thing. Having said that, there was far more divisions between classes. For instance, we met Mother Teresa in Calcutta.

COLLINGS

Oh, my goodness. You did?

DONOGHUE

Yes, because she was just getting started, and she was at the Kali Temple, which was the Goddess of Death. But more to the point, people used to abandon their sick in front of the Kali Temple and then leave them to die. What she did was rescue them, to give

them a decent and a worthy experience of being cared for and revered and then died. So we asked her how we could help her, and she said, "I need an x-ray machine, because I would like to be able to figure out in what condition people are as they're coming in." So we made a contribution from among ourselves, and then we got people from the USIS to make—and we had enough to give her for an x-ray machine. Actually, I was the one that went over and gave it to her.

COLLINGS

Oh, amazing.

DONOGHUE

Then we were in contact with her. The next year I went back and I got the Newman Center to collect medical samples and sample medicines, and then we'd package them and send them over. So we did that for that year. But that was a real experience to meet her.

COLLINGS

What was she like?

DONOGHUE

She was very engaging. She was very interested in the fact that we were doing this and that we were so kind of entrepreneurial in the way that we got ourselves around, that we took streetcars, that we walked, that we engaged students, that we were friendly, and that we didn't seem to be judgmental and we seemed to be comfortable in whatever setting we were in. So it was a very good experience.

COLLINGS

What did she look like?

DONOGHUE

Oh, she's so small. I mean, she's very diminutive. I watched her funeral. Hillary Clinton went to her funeral, and it was on TV and I got up at midnight and watched it until like four in the morning. But she was so wrinkled and so weather-beaten, literally, even then, but

she had an incredible smile and a graciousness about her that was just lovely. I kept a journal, and I remember I thought, am I making this up? Did we really meet her? So I went back to my journal and looked at it, and yes, we did, and I've got the date and the time and so forth, that we really did that.

COLLINGS

So you were talking a little bit about the class differences.

DONOGHUE

The class differences were so profound in terms of the Untouchables, and it was okay that people lived on the street. There was a servant called a bearer. A bearer used to sleep outside our door to be of service, and that was his job. No, he just slept on the floor. He used to bring our tea and banana in the morning in the hostel. But that was his world, that was his job, that was his life. And it was okay? No, it was not okay, for us. It was really hard for us to accept. Then when we started building the schoolhouse, students would say—we talked about the fact that work was worthy, that getting your hands was a good thing, that there was dignity in work, and we were all proud to be able to do that.

COLLINGS

Yes, because I was wondering how it would be perceived that these foreign visitors would come and be doing this manual labor.

DONOGHUE

So we asked them if they would help us, and little by little by little, then pretty soon the visitors who lived in the camp were helping us. That was a big thing, so that we used to take a streetcar out to this camp every morning early and then work until around one and just come home beat. They watched us and then they joined us, and that was really an incredible experience.

COLLINGS

So the ones that joined you would not normally have been doing any manual labor?

DONOGHUE

No. No. I mean, that's beneath your dignity and you would never do that. Then for them to see women, young women, getting in as much as anybody else, that was a whole new world.

COLLINGS

Did you have a sense then of how optimistic you were? Did you have any sort of self-reflexive sense of that?

DONOGHUE

First of all, I went back and looked at my journal, and I know when we first got to Calcutta we couldn't figure out how we could make a connection, how we could get students, that whole kind of recruiting. We only had three weeks left, and how could we get this done. So we hit a lot of low points. We all were not pie-in-the-sky and just on top of everything. We had no idea how we were going to get this thing done, and it kind of fell into place. But there was a real sense of, "Is this going to work?"

COLLINGS

While you were there—you were there for two months—how did your goals change over that two months, based on what you were learning each day?

DONOGHUE

I think probably as long as our goals were to be learners and not to teach, so to speak, we would answer questions. We'd make efforts to have exchange. The British education system has a great priority for debating, and we got into some debates. But we were much more comfortable with discussions, with conversation, with exchange, and not to be learners, to not so much to come with a message, and to the extent that we had that kind of sense of reciprocity, that we would learn, and then if we could have exchange, that was good.

Certainly the "Ugly American" was a later iteration, but the whole idea of just Americans who are arrogant and insensitive and

dominant, and we were very sensitive and cautious, and, I think, skilled in understanding the importance of that. And because we were so young, we were not as suspect, so to speak. So we had a way of being able to make an entrée and it wasn't naiveté, but there was a kind of wholesomeness that was attractive.

COLLINGS

Now, when the students would go back year after year, were there repeat visits to a number of these institutions?

DONOGHUE

They tried not to repeat so much, and tried to find new experiences and then also tried to keep correspondence going, and I did. I wasn't able to continue it when I was in the novitiate, so it stopped. When we went back in 2005, we met some of the students, the contacts that we had kept, so we had that benefit, and so we saw people. So that part was really nice.

COLLINGS

Are these photographs from your trip?

DONOGHUE

Yes. This is a picture of Gram which I loved.

COLLINGS

Oh, here she is.

DONOGHUE

Yes. This was filling out our papers in the airport, and you can see how we're dressed.

COLLINGS

I was just going to say you're all so well dressed, the men are wearing hats, the women are wearing hats.

DONOGHUE

Yes, women are wearing hats. Here's our picture. That was the publicity pictures that they took for TWA.

COLLINGS

Which one of them is it? Is this you?

DONOGHUE

This was home.

COLLINGS

Once you got back home again.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

So everybody is so well dressed, the suits for the young men, and the women are wearing heels and stockings and little hats.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Listen, we wore stockings with garters, garter belts.

COLLINGS

The whole time?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

In the heat?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

That must have been pretty difficult.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes. This was a couple of pictures of the guys are up on a—you see there's Indians on that roof. That's the schoolhouse. These are the pictures building the schoolhouse, and that first one's me.

COLLINGS

Oh, my. Wow. This is quite a large group of young people working on this project.

DONOGHUE

Yes. See, that was the best part.

COLLINGS

The schoolhouse was not to benefit these young Indian people who participated, I presume.

DONOGHUE

No, no, no. This was the refugees. They were the ones coming in and resettling, so these would be all Hindus getting resettled. This was a picture making a presentation.

COLLINGS

Oh, a very large group of Indian students at their university listening attentively to—

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

This is a very diverse group. You have an African American man, two Asian women, and that, of course, was an important part of the Project India.

DONOGHUE

That was the message, yes. We met Nehru.

COLLINGS

On what occasion did you meet Nehru?

DONOGHUE

When we went to Delhi and we met the vice president. This is Prasad. That's Prasad, that's the vice president. That's me and [unclear] there, and then this is Chip Bolen, and he was the ambassador.

COLLINGS

Ambassador Chip Bolen.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

The American ambassador to India. Was this when you were arriving?

DONOGHUE

No, no. This is at going home. So we had made our mark, and so they were very good. Here's the guys washing their clothes.
[laughs]

COLLINGS

So it looks like they're washing their own clothes. It looks like they didn't have the bearer wash their clothes.

DONOGHUE

Sometimes we were able to get laundry service, but very often we did our own, and I just remember some of that.

COLLINGS

Do you have any sense of whether the fact that you were doing those kind of things for yourself made an impression while you were there?

DONOGHUE

I think so, yes, but it was hard. We lived in student hostels, and they saw us working. Oh, here, Panel of the Americans. This is at the Taj Mahal.

COLLINGS

So it says "What is the Panel of Americans?" And it says "These are Americans: Catholic, Jew, Negro, Protestant, Oriental, American. The Panel is one way to examine the religious, racial, and cultural differences among our citizens to encourage understanding and appreciation of these differences in an effort to decrease social tensions, to build better human relations within our communities."

DONOGHUE

So that was before I went, and that's—

COLLINGS

Right. This began in 1928.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Long before the Civil Rights Movement.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. It was remarkable.

COLLINGS

So the Panel of the Americans is really the foundation for Project India.

DONOGHUE

It is, yes, absolutely.

COLLINGS

With the idea being that you would take these messages outside of the country.

DONOGHUE

Right.

COLLINGS

How was it that Project India came to a close?

DONOGHUE

We had the shootings at Kent State, '67. Is that right?

COLLINGS

I remember it occurring, but I don't remember the exact date.

DONOGHUE

It was right about that time.

COLLINGS

It was about that time, yes.

DONOGHUE

People were very disenchanted with what was happening in our country, and why did we think we had a message overseas when we couldn't even get it together here, and the demonstrations against the Vietnam War, the number of people who were trying to get sanctuary and were going to Canada. I was in San Francisco at the time, and I know that I was in every Vietnam march there was, just because it was so strong. Of course, there was the draft. I was working with students then, and many of the young men that I was working with wanted to be conscientious objectors, and I used to write the letters for that.

COLLINGS

Oh, did you?

DONOGHUE

Because I knew them personally, I knew where their values were, and so I did that. It absolutely stuns me that we have been in this war in Afghanistan for the amount of time we have, with no—

COLLINGS

Because there's no draft.

DONOGHUE

—draft. And if there were the draft—

COLLINGS

Well, there is a draft, but it's a different kind of a draft.

DONOGHUE

That's right. So poor folks that don't have any other chances and think maybe—and I have a young nephew who is in the Seabee training program now. His older brother has enough to make it in terms of college, but he didn't have the grades to do it, and so he's seeing this as an opportunity. So he's in that training program down in Orlando, Florida.

COLLINGS

And the cycle continues.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

But I'm just kind of interested, because when Project India was coming out of the World War II experience and the internment experience as well—

DONOGHUE

Right, exactly. Both Betty and Bob were interred. Bob especially, his brother was a translator and was captured by the Japanese and was in a concentration camp in Japan while his family was interred. That was just so incredible. Bob is a medical doctor, got his training at

UCLA and USC, and was an obstetrician. He could not get an assignment in terms of a residency in a hospital. One Catholic hospital, Mary Help of Christians, took him in so that he could have a hospital to refer. Then it was the time of the Japanese were developing their own defense system and they were sending people over here to Boeing, so they had all of these Japanese-speaking families, young families, who wanted a Japanese obstetrician. So Mary Help of Christians just flourished, and he became chief of staff there.

COLLINGS

Oh, good.

DONOGHUE

That was the only hospital he ever worked in. I still have contact with him and see him, and he's retired now.

COLLINGS

But I guess what I was thinking was that Project India, you're saying that it kind of ended because—

DONOGHUE

There was so much disillusion over the Vietnam War, and then that was the whole time of "God is dead," if you remember that. So where was the incentive? What was the message we had? How did we think we had anything to offer?

COLLINGS

Because you felt that people were not interested in having these [unclear] discussions?

DONOGHUE

It was that we had such a controversy and such lack of consideration and fairness and it was the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, and what was that? Martin Luther King was speaking out against the Vietnam War. So it was very, very important to look in our own mirror and not think that we somehow

were capable. Also the State Department had been doing the funding, and they pulled out so that there was no—just to put this on was a huge fundraising effort, and the Conference. Adaline had retired from the Conference by that time. She was there. I have to look at her dates again. Luke Fishburn had taken over in the Conference, and he was not as committed to the fundraising part, for one thing. His whole interest and message and involvement was in UniCamp and that's where he felt that was the best teaching opportunity and outreach for the university and for student learning. So that was the difference as well.

COLLINGS

It sounds like the fact that Adaline Guenther retired probably had a tremendous amount to do with it.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, because she's the one that really had the connects and really did an amazing job in terms of the fundraising.

COLLINGS

It was really her project.

DONOGHUE

It was. It was.

COLLINGS

All right. So you graduated from university in 1954.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

What were you thinking that you might be doing after you graduated?

DONOGHUE

I got this job with the American Red Cross, which I really enjoyed, and we did a lot of work with high school students, and we had a leadership camp. There were five of us. Each one of us had a region of actually the county. So we worked with high schools and with civic groups, just to give the message of the Red Cross, organize blood drives.

COLLINGS

Sort of communications and outreach, perhaps?

DONOGHUE

Yes. With a good cause, you know. I really, really appreciated it. Then I was affiliated with the Catholic Alumni Club, which was for college graduate singles, and so we had all kinds of projects, one of which was working with the Sisters of Social Service and doing volunteer work. So that's how I met the community. I was a sponsor of a Girls Club in East L.A. in the projects in Ramona Gardens, which is really a very tough area. So I worked at a Community Center, and now I saw what the Sisters did, and a year later I was in the novitiate. So it was a fast decision, so to speak.

COLLINGS

It sounds like it was very soon after college.

DONOGHUE

It was. I got my job at the Red Cross in September, and I started doing this volunteer work, and by March of '55 I really knew that's what I wanted to do. It was very clear. So the entrance date was in September, so I was at the Red Cross for exactly a year. Then Mary Ann Bonpane was there as well, and then she came the next year, which was amazing.

COLLINGS

Would you like to conclude—

DONOGHUE

Yes, this would be a good time.

COLLINGS

This would be a good place. All right. [End of March 22, 2012 interview]

***1.2. Session Two
(April 5, 2012)***

COLLINGS

Good morning.

DONOGHUE

Good morning.

COLLINGS

This is Jane Collings interviewing Sister Diane Donoghue, April 5, 2012, at the Sisters of Social Service retreat. Backtrack just a tiny bit from last time, and I would ask you to share your memories of Adaline Guenther, "Grandma."

DONOGHUE

Grandma. We always called her Grandma, and so it just came very easily. She was very important to me just in terms of a model of the independent woman. Here was a woman who was self-propelled in terms of her ability to engage, to articulate, to stand up and stand for. I come from a family of very independent women, and so I knew what the marks were in terms of somebody that I really identified with, because my mother, my grandmother, my aunts were all very independent women. So when I saw Gram, it was a delight because she was such a self-starter. I, as a freshman, was introduced to her and was encouraged to go on the Panel of Americans. So I was on the panel for five years, and so I was very close to her. I was a counselor at UniCamp and, of course, she was involved in that, and then Project India. So I had all of these opportunities to connect and be in different settings with her. It was a real learning experience. I often said that I got my degree from UCLA, but I got my education from my experience at the Religious

Conference, because it just was such a milieu of adventure, education, and it just meant a lot to me.

She particularly was amazing. I don't know if anyone ever told you about her knitting, but she used to knit because she was in so many meetings. So she made the most incredible knit dresses.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes, and she always wore them.

COLLINGS

Oh, how interesting.

DONOGHUE

She had a very nice figure, and so she always looked very good, but she wore those knit dresses, and they were just knockouts. So she had that amazing ability. And you could sort of hear and see the knitting needles going. I often thought that it helped her not to talk in a group, but to sort of preside and to call forth. So she was concentrating on keeping track of the stitches, but listening so carefully. I thought that's a marvelous attribute, to be able to be so present and obvious in the sense of your intent and your intensity, but at the same time to be reflective and taking in. That was just a very good model. I wish I had more of it. But at least I have somebody that I can refer to who really did that, and she was just amazing.

COLLINGS

Did she mentor the male and female students differently?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Well, I wasn't conscious of it as such, and I think—I was trying to remember—I never felt less than. On the Project India groups and in the Panel groups, the message was team. So each one of us

played our part, and gender, to me, just wasn't there. Having said that, we had team leaders, both in Project India, Brent Bowen and Don Ulrich on our team. But I just never felt less than, and I always felt equal to and a part of. That was the way that, to my way of thinking, that Gram mentored.

She was so powerful with the religious leaders that she—and I think I mentioned them, Rabbi Magnin, Bishop Cantwell, Father Cassassa. Those men paid attention to her and took her leadership, and it was very strong. So she held her own, and that was an example for me, not so much domination, but holding your place. And she did that.

COLLINGS

It's just interesting to think about her lifespan because she was born in the nineteenth century and came of age before World War I, even.

DONOGHUE

Yes, exactly. She never talked a lot about her own personal. It was like she came to life when she came to the Conference and met Tom Evans. He retired and she took over, right from the get-go. When I came on campus in 1949, the old Conference Building was still intact. She raised the money for the new Conference Building, the one on LeConte and Hilgard now. She did the design of that, and the whole just vision of that was hers. She did that. We moved into that building by the time I graduated. To have raised the money, and, looking back now just in terms of my own experience, to have gotten the land, raised the money, and got through the construction in that amount of time was terrific. It just spoke to her multiple abilities in terms of envisioning and then strategizing and then implementing.

COLLINGS

Why do you think she commanded such a great deal of respect?

DONOGHUE

She was very articulate and she was very selective about the students that she selected, and she was criticized for that.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

In the sense that she always looked for student leaders to be a part of the programs, and so there were the innies and outies. I never felt like I was somehow selected. A good friend of mine, I mentioned Kim Murray, said, "You know, I want you to meet my friends, because these are the people that are doing something on campus, and this is a terrific group and I want you to meet them." So early on, I was just a part of, and so it was natural selection to me, but I know that there was some tension, and it's been referred to in other writings about the tension between the dean of students on campus, and then she had this very select group of students that operated off campus and did all these amazing things. So when you look at the composition of Student Board and at the Project Indians and so forth, you had all of the student leaders being a part of that.

COLLINGS

But she had to keep it somewhat separate because it was a Religious Conference.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, exactly. It was very clear in terms of all of the religious fellowships, I think is was what they called them at that point. But the Newman Center, the Catholic Center, was the only one that was not a part of the building structure, but everybody else had an office. So it was on the first floor and the second floor. I think I told you it was referred to as the Marys and the Marthas, and the doers were the Marthas. Those were all the interfaith operations that took place. So she was very selective about all of the groups that were represented and made sure that all of the religious groups and affiliations had representation in the Marthas' operations.

COLLINGS

Did you sort of feel that what her groups and organizers were doing interfaced seamlessly with what the rest of the campus was doing, or did you feel that there was a bit of a cultural divide?

DONOGHUE

No, I thought there was. No, because we used to have the Mardi Gras festival which benefited UniCamp, and we had all of those games and activities and everything, and everybody from the community of Westwood, as well as the campus, took part in that. The whole all of the proceeds went to UniCamp. When it stopped, it was because we had outside groups coming way far from, and it was a lot of student violence and there were gang fights, and that's when they stopped the Mardi Gras. But for the years that I was on campus, it was just very much understood and accepted. Then I think in that one draft that I gave you, it talked about the fact that we had the—I mean, classes were dismissed and everybody was invited to come to that ten o'clock session in 1953 to hear about Project India. So it was very accepted. And Chancellor Allen was—we went up to the chancellor's home before we left, sort of, to have a kind of orientation. So at least on the surface, and that would be probably how I would look at it.

COLLINGS

It sounds like a wonderful period.

DONOGHUE

Well, it was in the sense of a sense of collaboration, and so the rivalries or the positioning just—

COLLINGS

Positioning between religious groups or ethnic groups?

DONOGHUE

No, campus and the Conference, just to my way of thinking it had not come. It came in later years.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

I think so. I was not a part of it, but I think it came more.

COLLINGS

So you were there at the—

DONOGHUE

I was there at the beginnings and in the birthing and sort of the growing time, and that was a great time to be there.

COLLINGS

Right. It sounds like it.

DONOGHUE

So after you graduated from UCLA in 1954 and you went on to your job at the Red Cross, which you said last time had to do with outreach—

COLLINGS

Yes. It was working with American Red Cross and the Junior Red Cross, so we did a lot of assemblies at high schools, and then we ran blood drives all over the place and on campus. So I coordinated the blood drive for campus in 1955, and they had regular blood drives on campus. Because I was so familiar with the setups and who to contact and so forth, so it was very understandable that I would be the coordinator. But there were five of us working together, and we each had a region of the city. So I worked in the South Central part of the city, which it was on Central Avenue, that was the African American, but it was African American and it was very segregated. So I worked with the high schools in that area, as well as the schools in the southern part, and it was a great experience.

COLLINGS

So what did you learn from that experience?

DONOGHUE

Well, just interfacing with high school students and talking about the work of the Junior Red Cross. What they used to do is pack supplies, little—I think we called them learning kits, but anyway, it was to send overseas to areas where children did not have educational opportunities. So that would have been India. That would have been Africa. That would have been parts of even of Europe, because this was right after—I mean, Europe was just coming back after the Marshall Plan. I think even at that time there was still food rationing in Europe, and especially in England, so it was a time still of recovery.

COLLINGS

What was in the kits?

DONOGHUE

Pencils. We didn't have computers, but just small books for learning in terms of math problems. I honestly cannot remember the contents specifically. I just know they were directed toward student learning and young grammar school, so elementary age. So we did that and then talked about the importance of what we had as Americans to share and why that was important. Then the work of the Red Cross in terms of just—then there was a leadership camp that we took high school students to, so we recruited and every high school could send two or three delegates. So we had this incredible leadership camp, two different sessions in the summertime.

COLLINGS

The leadership camp at UCLA or at Red Cross?

DONOGHUE

No, it was Red Cross, and so it was up at Camp Seely, was the Red Cross camp. So we had boy and girl students, usually juniors and seniors in high school, and then we would set up local Red Cross

units in the high schools with these students leaders. Again, using the experience of Project India, the Panel of Americans, interfaith, intercultural, interracial, looking at what prejudice does in terms of racial prejudice. We didn't understand what sexism was at that point in time, but understanding very much what racial prejudice was and religious prejudice. So that was a very good experience.

COLLINGS

Do you remember any of the kinds of conversations that you would get into with the students at—was it at Central High School?

DONOGHUE

It was high schools all over Los Angeles, so you had Westside schools, Beverly Hills, East L.A., Roosevelt High, South Central, Jefferson, Manual Arts. Those are the big schools, and they sent representatives, so it was terrific.

COLLINGS

But when you were working in the South Central area.

DONOGHUE

I don't remember those as well. It feels like a fog in some ways. There's some things that you remember very clearly, but I do remember the leadership training camp and just the opportunities. My own background at UCLA just fit so well into leading those and having those discussions.

COLLINGS

Did you say that you had done some work in the housing complex Ramona Gardens at that time through the Red Cross?

DONOGHUE

Not through the Red Cross. I was a volunteer with CYO centers.

COLLINGS

Oh, so that was when you were with the Catholic Youth—or no.

DONOGHUE

No, no, no. It was before.

COLLINGS

Before.

DONOGHUE

Yes, it was way before. It was how I met the Sisters of Social Service. I was in a group. It was called the Catholic Alumni Club, and it was all graduates, single Catholics, coming together, who had graduated from college. So I was in that group, and we used to do community service volunteer work. So one of the things I did was volunteer at Santa Rita Center on North Main, and that was near Ramona Gardens. So I had a Girls Club, and I met with them every Wednesday night, and we used to play volleyball and have a little meeting. Then we had Camp Mariastella, the Sisters had Camp Mariastella. We went up to the snow when it would snow and have the day. The kids had never been in snow before, had never seen that. So just those kind of opportunities.

Then that was when I met the girls from Ramona Gardens. I remember when I decided I would go in the novitiate, I had all these formals, so I brought my formals to Santa Rita Center and just handed them out to the girls because they didn't have them.

COLLINGS

They must have been delighted.

DONOGHUE

It was. It was a scream. [laughter] But walking in with—but that was just part of the things that you had if you were in college. You had prom dresses and formals and so forth.

COLLINGS

I hadn't heard that from you before. Was that a big part of your college life to attend dances wearing a formal dress and so forth?

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, because I was in a sorority, Pi Beta Phi, and we used to have formals. So that was a part of it in terms of dating and so forth, so that was a big part of it.

COLLINGS

I don't want to just get off track, but you had mentioned that you had decided that you were going to go through the experience of rushing, and you did. You said that you got into what you called, I think, one of the better houses. I was just wondering what you meant by that.

DONOGHUE

At the time, you know, you had the Kappas and the Thetas and the DGs and the Pi Phis, so that was sort of like the top of the line.

COLLINGS

In what sense?

DONOGHUE

The way they had a lot of student leaders, they had a lot of the prom queens, they had people who were active on campus, and so it was very selective and it was deadly, to my way of thinking, in the sense that you got boxed very quickly as a Pi Phi, as a DG, as a Theta, as a Kappa. That was the thing that I was so turned off by in high school. It's kind of a both-and experience. You're talking about inclusion. You're talking about outreach. You're talking about not labeling. And then you go into some organization that has an initiation ceremony and you wear a pin and you stay with your group and you're excluding and exclusive. So it's both those things working out at the same time. All of a sudden you see what a hypocrite. It's hypocritical, and so I got out.

COLLINGS

Yes, because the interfaith work was the exact opposite.

DONOGHUE

It was the exact opposite, and it was the thing that was far more motivating and it was the higher good. It became really a matter of conscience for me. "Diane, look what you're doing. You're saying this and you stand for this and you're doing this?" So it took me a year and a half. It was like, "Okay, now you did it. Okay, now let's go. Come on."

COLLINGS

Were you able to buy the dresses because you were still working in the dress shop?

DONOGHUE

Oh, I had my wonderful aunts who always bought my formals.
[laughter]

COLLINGS

Oh, that's nice.

DONOGHUE

So, no, because the dress shop did not—it was just sports clothes and campus clothes, and so that's where I got my 30 percent. But I had to go to Magnin's or Bullock's Wilshire to get the formals. So my aunts used to do that for me.

COLLINGS

That was nice of them.

DONOGHUE

Yes. I usually got a couple formals a year. It was like you didn't wear the same one twice, which was crazy. So even that, you know.

COLLINGS

You really didn't wear it twice at all, or not just twice in a row?

DONOGHUE

Twice in a row. No, no. No, no. Then you had the full dresses, and then they started having shorter ones which they were so much

easier to dance in, that you didn't have a full-length gown, so I had a lot of shorter ones, and those were the ones that I preferred. But, anyway.

COLLINGS

I did want to ask you a little bit about your experience at Ramona Gardens because that was probably your first contact with a housing development or project.

DONOGHUE

I didn't go to their homes, though. They came to me, and they would not have felt comfortable asking me to come to their home.

COLLINGS

Or to the Community Center?

DONOGHUE

They came to the Community Center and I came there, so that's where I met. The sister, Sister Laurentia [phonetic], was the director at the Community Center, and she used to go to their homes. There were CYO staff who used to visit there, but it wasn't appropriate for me to do that. The other thing was I would be there at night. I wasn't there during the day. They would be visiting during the day and they would be talking to the mothers. So I didn't even get a sense of what those living conditions were except to know they were crowded. They were what we referred to as "the projects." When you lived in "the project," you talk about being labeled. Now Ramona Garden has mixed income, has highrises, has condos for sale. It's a whole 'nother world, but it's sixty years later. So when you think about what it was in the fifties, that's something very, very different.

COLLINGS

Where was the Community Center?

DONOGHUE

Community Center was on North Main, 1414 North Main. See, I can remember something like that. [laughter] Of course it doesn't exist now. CYO had centers in Glendale, East L.A., Watts, San Fernando. I'm trying to think. And then one over by St. Vincent's called Santa Niño. So those were the places where African Americans, Latinos predominantly came, because segregation. We were a very segregated city in terms of neighborhoods. The CYO centers were always in the poor neighborhoods and did all kinds of outreach work. So that's where I got, again, affirmed from my previous background to see what the Sisters of Social Service did and the kinds of priorities they had from day one. Sister Celine Vasquez was one of the first Mexican American sisters in our community and went to George Washington University in St. Louis, got her master's in social work and especially in Community Centers and Jane Addams' whole idea of what a community neighborhood center should be. That was her vision, and she's the one who got all the Community Centers going at CYO. She was just an amazing, and my very strong mentor for me, just in knowing.

COLLINGS

So you worked directly with her when you first got involved with CYO?

DONOGHUE

Yes, she was my supervisor, and then Sister Laurentia was the director at Santa Rita Center, and so I used to talk with her and just ask questions and so forth. Then just really decided that this meant so much in terms of how I wanted to spend my life, and I could see in terms of the ministry and the commitment and working with a community of women who had such strong social justice backgrounds in commitment, so that that was such a fit.

COLLINGS

So you joined the novitiate in 1955 then?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

What did that process entail?

DONOGHUE

It's right down there. [laughs] It's three and a half years, is that right? Let's see, '54 to '58, yes. It's almost three and a half years, yes. You come in as a postulate. That means "to ask." To pose a question is a postulate. So you ask for admission. You're a postulate for about nine months, having classes in community history and theology and church history and then learning how to become a part of a community. There were five of us, and then there were about twelve first-year novices and I think eight second-year novices. So that was the community. We were, whatever that is, twenty-five or so of us. That was very interesting because we would have visiting Sundays, and our families would be able to come and visit on the first Sunday of the month, and so my family would come. The novice mistress was Sister Roberta, and there were many sisters who did not have families locally, and so she would kind of take them aside and so they would have their kind of visiting time. It felt like a divide. It felt like a tension. I was observing it, but I couldn't name it.

Then in December I found out that Sister Roberta had very strong opinions about what a novitiate and what the direction of the community should be. She felt that it should be more monastic, it should be more cloistered, that it should not be so involved in ministry.

COLLINGS

I see. Which was exactly why you got involved in the first place.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So she decided that she would leave, and she took half the novitiate with her and she went to San Francisco. It was a terrible tear, a rip in our community, and it had some lasting consequences, but I was party to it. So we were down to twelve from twenty-five. Sister Elizabeth, who had been the director of retreat here in Los

Angeles, came out to be the novice mistress, and she was the novice mistress for, I guess twelve years. She was amazing. She and Celine and Sister Frederica, very, very strong women, and I've got pictures around of them. So that novitiate was really quite amazing, and so to have the support of sisters, professed sisters. Part of our training was to serve retreats, so we used to go in and help serve retreats, do the dishes, do the cleanup, and so forth every Saturday and Sunday. So we did that, and so the postulates always did that. So we'd go in on Saturdays and so Sister Frederica would talk with us about kind of—then she always gave classes. She came out to the novitiate and gave classes, and so we got the history and so forth. But the healing, it was a real time of healing. None of the postulates left, it was just the novices that left, and so we started over. So when Sister Elizabeth came, she would say, "Well, now, what's next on the schedule?"

And, of course, I would tell her, "This is what we used to do." So it was a very funny position to be in. Then she didn't drive and she always needed a driver, so I was one of the drivers. She was always going into town, conferring with Sister Frederica. So I'd be driving, we'd have a little conversation, say the rosary. It was an amazing formation time.

COLLINGS

Now, when you say Sister Frederica, do you mean the original founder of the Sisters of Social Service?

DONOGHUE

Yes. She was in Los Angeles. We were founded in Hungary in 1923. Sister Margaret was the first woman elected to the Hungarian Parliament, and then this was during the—Europe was experiencing an incredible depression. So sisters were sent to Buffalo, and Sister Frederica was sent to Buffalo and she couldn't take the climate. So she came to Los Angeles by herself, and then she was contacted by Bishop Cantwell, and he knew of the work the sisters did in Buffalo. So he said, "Could you do that kind of work?" It was to take a census of the community in the Cathedral of St. Vibiana's. Sister

Frederica spoke Hungarian. She learned Spanish and took the census of the Spanish-speaking people in St. Vibiana's. She learned English to converse. So she was Spanish-speaking, English, and Hungarian. So she started and did this incredible job of census. So Bishop Cantwell said, "Can we get more sisters?" So two more Hungarians came, and then Sister Lucille and Sister Joan worked as volunteers and said they'd like to be, and they were sent to Hungary for their novitiate, if you can imagine. But after that, others came. Celine was one of the youngest ones coming, newest ones, and so the community grew, which was amazing. So Bishop Cantwell got a house on 707 West Second Street on Bunker Hill, and the sisters moved in there, and then in 1931 moved over to Westchester Place. So it was just amazing the way the community grew. We had sisters. Lucille was German American, Joan was French American, their parents, and they were both German- and French-speaking. Then we had Mexican and Irish and so forth. But from the beginning we had a cross-section which was very different.

COLLINGS

Was the focus of your order more oriented towards social justice than others that you might consider?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Nobody did that. Nobody worked alone, went out at night, drove a car, and worked out in the community. No sisters did that. That was the work that Margaret envisioned in Hungary, and much of it had to do with because it was an agricultural country and saw what was happening to women and children coming into the cities, child labor laws. That's what she worked on. Rehabilitation program for women prostitutes, women who came in and could not support themselves and became prostitutes and were arrested and put in jail with men, not in even separate cells. She worked out a whole system of what the jail time should look like and what rehab should look like, and she was very much known for that. So that whole idea of outreach was very, very important, and started a School of Social Work in Budapest. So we had all of those things going, and that was

the frame of reference that our sisters came with and began to teach and implement here, and it was very different.

COLLINGS

When there was the split between the more socially engaged and the more monastic, did it have to do with the social engagement part of it becoming more pronounced?

DONOGHUE

Yes, that was a part of it. What we said was the Benedictine rule, motto, is prayer and work, ora et labora, prayer and work, and we said they go together and they complement one another. So what is very important is that you have a faith community, women living together expressing their faith and commitment in community prayer and then going, strengthened by that, into community and implementing the message of the gospel. Mathew 22:25, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, seek justice for all. That's what that's about.

COLLINGS

So it wasn't a question at that time of the monastic part of it becoming more pronounced when the split occurred. That was sort of staying where it always had been, but this other part of the order was just becoming more vibrant.

DONOGHUE

Yes, right. We had had a split in Hungary where the foundress was Edith Farkas. They started out in the Benedictine tradition and she said, "I think we should be more Jesuit." So the Sisters of Social Service said, "We want to be Benedictine," so they left and founded themselves. There were thirty five who started, and Frederica was a postulate then. She hadn't even taken her vows. She went with the ones who said, "We want Sister Margaret." So Margaret started Sisters of Social Service, May 12 1923, and she was a member of Parliament at that time. She did not want to be removed from Parliament, and others went with her. So that's how that happened. So we have had a tradition of breaks already, and so then here's

another one. But that one, we survived, and that was 1954, and we survived that and so here we are.

COLLINGS

When the group was becoming more socially active at that time, and this was in the mid to late fifties, was it in response to things going on in the broader society, the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement?

DONOGHUE

Well, yes, the sixties in terms of you have to think about Vatican II was '63, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement. I was in graduate school at Berkeley. I was doing my fieldwork in Haight-Ashbury in 1967.

COLLINGS

Oh, that must have been really interesting.

DONOGHUE

Very. I mean, that was just absolutely incredible. I did my fieldwork at the Neuropsychiatric Institute, NPI. I was in my second year, and we had what we called immediate treatment service. Anybody could walk in, loaded or not, into NPI and get into an immediate treatment session. For seven sessions you could go in and talk to a counselor and be a part of a group. I was, as part of my training, was part of that immediate treatment center service. So you'd just meet all kinds of folks. So that was an amazing experience.

COLLINGS

Let's get into that. So you were a novitiate until 1958.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

And then you entered the order formally.

DONOGHUE

Yes. You take promises for six years, then you take final vows after that, so I took my final vows in '64.

COLLINGS

Then you were employed with the Catholic Youth Association starting in 1958.

DONOGHUE

Yes, I was in Los Angeles and in Sacramento and in San Francisco, all in CYOs. Again, the whole idea of CYO started in Chicago, and then it went all over the country. So it was outreach, and each CYO in each city was different. There were certain similarities, but the ones in L.A. were very advanced, because we had the Community Centers, we had the athletic leagues. So all the different Catholic schools had a CYO League and played in athletic leagues. We had a CYO camp. We did day camp. It was an amazing experience.

COLLINGS

How does it work that you were a member of the order but you also had this other employment?

DONOGHUE

You got assignments, and so at that time you didn't go out and look for a job or ministry; you were assigned. So we were assigned our ministry still in 1968, and then at a chapter we made the decision that you could initiate your own assignment, rather than being assigned, and so we did that.

COLLINGS

So you had been assigned then to the Catholic Youth.

DONOGHUE

Yes, that's right. So I was three years in L.A. and then three years in Sacramento, and then I came to San Francisco, and I was two years there. Then I asked if I could go to school, and I got accepted

at Berkeley. CYO paid my tuition at Berkeley, and I agreed to work every weekend for what we called the CYO Search, which was a special retreat program on weekends for high school students, and then we had college students who were kind of like the counselors and the presenters. We talked about what it meant to be searching for Christianity and what it meant to be an implementer of the gospel. The college students used to give the talks, and then the high school, and then we would have discussions, and it was called "the Search." It was a terrific program. So I was responsible for training the college students, and then I would take part in the Search program. So I did that on weekends, and so I've never gone to school that I haven't worked.

COLLINGS

It sounds like a really busy schedule.

DONOGHUE

It was, but it worked, and so I was able to do that.

COLLINGS

What kinds of questions were people bringing to those sessions? You're talking about Berkeley in the period of 1967 through 1969. What kinds of issues were being raised?

DONOGHUE

At Berkeley?

COLLINGS

Yes. Weren't you doing the weekend sessions while you were—

DONOGHUE

Yes. I was at Berkeley during the week.

COLLINGS

Oh, I see, and you went outside.

DONOGHUE

—and go to school and did my fieldwork, so I was in the Haight-Ashbury, I was on campus, and weekends I was up at camp. So I never did have a day off. But you can do that when you're thirty.

COLLINGS

Yes, of course. [laughter]

DONOGHUE

You just kind of figure it's standard procedure. But I'm remembering when I was at Berkeley, the Black Panthers were very active in San Francisco. They came on campus and spoke to the School of Social Work and challenged the school students about affirmative action and the lack of people of color in the School of Social Work. So the school went on strike, if you could imagine, and we were picketing out in front, and the school including the teachers, the professors. So we used to have class in professors' homes my second year. So I never was in on campus in that sense, in a classroom. I was always in somebody's home for class.

COLLINGS

Oh, gosh.

DONOGHUE

So we did that and then we'd picket. Somewhere there's pictures of me with my uniform on and hat and veil, carrying a picket sign. Then what was amazing was we did that and we didn't get kicked out. San Francisco State went on strike. Hayakawa, I don't know if you remember him, but he was a senator, and he was the president of San Francisco State. He dismissed students and expelled them. We never got expelled, which was kind of amazing.

COLLINGS

It was in the aftermath of the Free Speech Movement.

DONOGHUE

Yes, and I was on campus for the Free Speech Movement. I was right there in middle. I was there from '67 to '69, and we had the

People's Park Movement. I mean, there was just so much activity. Again, it was an amazing time just to know.

COLLINGS

So what was the aftermath of the strike? Were changes effected?

DONOGHUE

They changed, yes. They changed the admission policy tremendously, and so African American, Latinos, we had some Japanese students, but it just was amazing and it made a difference, and it was immediate. So that was very, very interesting.

COLLINGS

So what did you do for your thesis work?

DONOGHUE

We didn't have it. That was the best part. [laughter] When I left UCLA, you used to have to take a senior graduate record. The year I graduated, they abandoned that. The year I entered Berkeley, used to have to take an entrance exam. They abandoned that. When I left Berkeley, they abandoned the graduate record.

COLLINGS

So you really lucked out.

DONOGHUE

I did. My typing skills are just atrocious. I'm still hunt and peck. The only C I ever got in high school was in typing, and I'm horrible. So even when you see me on the computer, it's hunt and peck. But it was a godsend not to have to do a thesis, and so I didn't. I did what they called the group work sequence, but it was as a community organizer. So I didn't have to do a thesis, which I was most grateful.

COLLINGS

But what about your fieldwork? You did some fieldwork.

DONOGHUE

Oh, the fieldwork was terrific. The first year I worked in a day treatment center. That was for people that had drug problems and who were able to live in rehab centers but came to a day treatment program. So I was part of a day treatment and then was a group leader in a small-group setting, so that was terrific experience. I took a class just to get familiar with it, that was sponsored by the university off campus kind of stuff, and it was called "Junkies, Heads, and Freaks and Other Social Types." It was a class that we learned and had people come in and talk about their experiences and why they got into drugs and what that whole thing, including the guy who organized Woodstock came in. So when you think about those kinds of exposures, it was remarkable.

COLLINGS

Why did you decide that you wanted to do your master's at Berkeley?

DONOGHUE

All of our sisters were going to Washington, D.C. to Catholic University, and I had graduated from UCLA, and I just felt that Berkeley was way ahead. This was before the Free Speech Movement, but certainly I just felt there was so much happening at Berkeley. I felt that I would probably always be in California, and I just felt a California credential, diploma, was—and I think that was a very good move.

Sister Rosemary was in charge of education, and her brother was a very good friend and was an advisor to the School of Social Work at Berkeley. He was a pastor, and I went over and asked him if he'd write a letter of recommendation for me. So I really made an end-run around Sister Rosemary, because she wanted me to go to Catholic University. She says, "You know, I'm the education counselor. How would you possibly make an application to Berkeley?" I said, "Well, Sister Frederica said I could." So I did. Then I got monsignor to write a letter, and so I got accepted. Sister

Frederica had asked me to go to Catholic U. I had a C-plus average at UCLA. I was so busy doing student activities and so forth that I just always maintained a C-plus.

COLLINGS

You had the gentlewoman's C.

DONOGHUE

The gentlewoman's C. So therefore I knew that I would have to have some experience that would sort of certify my abilities when I was in graduate school. So I figured I had enough experience and that this would be now the time to be able to make an application, and I had an A-minus average the whole time I was in graduate school.

COLLINGS

So when you wanted to go to Berkeley, were you attracted by the social scene of San Francisco and Berkeley, by the politics?

DONOGHUE

Well, I lived in San Francisco, so I was in every single Vietnam march. I was very involved. The University of San Francisco, USF, was a Jesuit university. They were very active, and they had Hans Küng, who was an outstanding Catholic theologian, speak. He talked about the importance of Vatican II, about renewal, and I just felt that what was happening in the church was happening in politics, was happening in civil rights and was exemplified at Berkeley, and I wanted to be a part of that.

COLLINGS

You said that at the time you were wearing the uniform.

DONOGHUE

Yes. I have a picture of it. I'll show you.

COLLINGS

How did people react to you? Because this was the anti-establishment—

DONOGHUE

Everybody was in costume. Everybody had something. I fit in. It was the funniest thing in the world, because there were other sisters who were at Berkeley. I was not the first one there. There was another sister who was actually in second year when I was first year, Sister Regina. She always wore her hat and veil, I never did, and we were a little bit of a contrast. But everybody had something different on. You just blended in. There were all kinds of tie-dyed shirts. That was the whole tie-dyed time, everything. So it was not different at all. It was a kick.

COLLINGS

You said that you were there during the People's Park episode. What are your memories of that?

DONOGHUE

Well, I remember we wore black armbands on our cap and gowns, on our sleeves, to indicate our support of the People's Park. So everybody in my class had a black armband on. Then I remember the students giving the graduation addresses and then standing up and walking out before the ceremony was over.

COLLINGS

Oh, right. Was that your graduating class?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Oh, my gosh.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So everybody walked out at the same time. It was a kick. It was a whole different world. And, of course, the contrast of that in

San Francisco State with all the expulsions, and Berkeley was able to handle that, which was amazing.

COLLINGS

So what were your general impressions of the community of the Haight-Ashbury when you were doing your work there? How would you describe what you saw?

DONOGHUE

Well, I remember somebody brought me some brownies and wanted me to try them, and I didn't, because I saw how crazy people were when they were high. So I never have tried marijuana, but I know that it was pretty popular, and I certainly know what the scent is. I guess I never felt so constricted and so inside a box that I had to be sort of liberated, and to the extent that I would try something that was so mindboggling, I mean, mindboggling is really what I mean. I just felt that I wanted to find out why people tried stuff, but I had no temptation to go there. But at least it helped me have some understanding of how constricted people felt, and so that was a big understanding. When you realized, when you saw all the houses in the Haight, how they were painted, that whole idea of somehow breaking all traditions.

COLLINGS

All multicolors.

DONOGHUE

Multicolors, that was such a symbol of that. Now you go up and you see how they're all painted properly, which is really interesting, but I was there when they were all multicolored. It was just another kind of world, and it was one that I wanted to know about but I didn't feel attracted to. It was also the time of incredible folksongs and folksingers, and that was something to see. That era, I love that music scene very much. So those were the things that I embraced, so to speak. I was up at camp in the summer, Redwoods Camp, and was there. We had boys' and girls' sessions. They were separate. But it was a tremendous opportunity to be with young

people and to just be able to share with people what your commitments to life and future and the world were and what a social justice ministry stood for. That, to me, I really could understand that.

COLLINGS

When you did fieldwork at Haight-Ashbury, that was your choice that you were going to work with this particular demographic?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Well, I asked to. First of all, my friend Pierre Mornell, he was doing his residency in psychiatry, and he and I were very good friends at UCLA and we were UniCamp counselors together and we go way back. So he was doing his residency and he said, "Diane, I think this would be a great opportunity for you, so why don't you try and see if you can come here. This is just a learning lab par excellence." So I said okay, and so he put in a recommendation for me, and I got it, and it was a primo fieldwork placement. I was the only one there from Berkeley.

COLLINGS

What did doing the fieldwork consist of? Was it like surveys of some sort?

DONOGHUE

No, no. It was like being in a group, leading a group, co-leading a group. I was with all of the residents who were in psychiatry, first-year residents. I wish I could get the name of the doctor, because he's famous. He's a Jungian analyst. His brother—oh, shoot—his name goes out of my head, and it'll come back later. But, anyway, he was primo, and he led the group, and I was the only social-work student in that group. He was so including of me. It was just amazing. So what we used to do was debrief what our groups had been, and each one of us would say what our experiences had been, and then we'd talk about it.

COLLINGS

How would you get the experiences?

DONOGHUE

Being in the group.

COLLINGS

No, but I mean with the people that you were studying.

DONOGHUE

They would talk about what their day was. It was kind of everybody, seven to eight people in a group, so everybody could have their say. So in facilitating it, you make sure that everybody speaks and nobody dominates, and that you ask clarifying questions.

COLLINGS

So this was a series of seven. People could come in at any time?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

They could come into hospital and they could participate in these group therapy sessions.

DONOGHUE

Yes, in these small groups. Then they would also have one-on-ones, and I would have a one-on-one as well. Then I'd have to record. Not record it like this, but afterwards I would take a few notes, and then I would record on a tape. Then somebody else would type it up.

COLLINGS

What kinds of conflicts were people experiencing?

DONOGHUE

Well, I had this one guy who I remember. He heard voices and he was married and had kids and was taking drugs and was just so conflicted. But the voices were the scary things for him, and so he

would talk about what the voices would tell him to do. For someone to be able to talk about that, and then to try and bring him back, and then to go to Dr. [unclear]'s group and say, "This is what happened, and this is what I did. What do you think?" kind of thing. It was an amazing experience, it really, really was. It just widens your world in understanding where other people come from and what their experiences are.

COLLINGS

How do you feel that that impacted your work going forward, what you learned from the master's program? You went back to Catholic Youth Association.

DONOGHUE

Yes, I went back to CYO. That was really interesting, because I was on the Search program, and the priest that I worked with was counseling all of the guys—this was during the draft, Vietnam War—to go into the Marines, and I was writing their conscientious-objector letters and signing them. He hit the fan when he found out what I was doing.

COLLINGS

Really?

DONOGHUE

So I just told him that I could not support the war and I could not support sending these kids into the Marines and so forth, so I got fired.

COLLINGS

Do you feel that your conviction came out of your time at Berkeley, or was it prior?

DONOGHUE

It was reinforced and affirmed at Berkeley, and my voice was affirmed in terms of speaking up and standing up and speaking out. I mean, all of that was affirmed.

COLLINGS

So you were actually fired at that time.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So that was fine. I mean, I just would not. I could not.

COLLINGS

So were you known as somebody that people could come to for conscientious-objector letter?

DONOGHUE

Yes, and I would have sessions and talk with them in finding out. It's more than just avoiding the draft. You could go to Canada. You could do whatever you had to do.

COLLINGS

Do you know how many of these applications were successful?

DONOGHUE

I have no idea. But it was something that I felt very clear about and very strong, and that was no compromise.

COLLINGS

Did you receive support for that position from your order, from the Sisters of Social Service?

DONOGHUE

When I got fired, then I got a lot of support in that sense. One of the things that I was very pleased about was that we did not send more sisters into CYO in those areas in San Francisco. We did not assign sisters then. They would want to have sisters there, and we didn't.

COLLINGS

You didn't send them because you felt that they were helping with the draft effort?

DONOGHUE

No. No, because it was not a healthy situation, and the priest later was accused and dismissed for abuse.

COLLINGS

Oh.

DONOGHUE

And I was not aware that that was going on.

COLLINGS

I'm sure.

DONOGHUE

We got out early, which was good, but that was very bad.

COLLINGS

So what was the reason that the sisters got out of those situations?

DONOGHUE

Well, because they were untenable in the sense of working with priests, with clergy who were so dominating and so entitled in their thinking. We really subscribe and believe in collaborative relationships. I don't think we had the words for patriarchy at that point in time. We certainly do now, we know what that means, but that entitlement mentality just is counter to as feminist spirituality has developed in this work.

COLLINGS

Quest for the Living God, Elizabeth Johnson.

DONOGHUE

She is the one that the bishops went after and said seven years after this book is published that they have questions about it. She said, "You didn't say anything when this was first published, and now you're asking me and so forth." This is recently as last year.

But the whole understanding of what it means to be created by god equally, understood that we are created in the image and likeness totally, not second-class, that's what this means. This is a profound book, and our whole community is reading it right now and we're going to have discussions at our Pentecost assembly. But it's a wonderful book. My point is that going back to our founding, that we are advocating for equal access, and the most downtrodden women and children, that was where we started, and we've not lost that. It takes on different dimensions in each era, and so in the sixties it may have been the People's Park and it may have been walking out of school and so forth in 2012. It has very much to do with sexism and gender equality, and that's a big issue.

COLLINGS

Who is Elizabeth Johnson? What is her background?

DONOGHUE

She teaches at Fordham. She has been president of the Catholic Theological Society. She's a primo in terms of just her own background and what she has been, a distinguished professor of theology at Fordham, numerous awards in religion, American Academy of Religion Award for Excellence, Book Award for Catholic theology, etc. Any awards that have been given, she's won them.

COLLINGS

Are there other orders that you can name that you would point to as being similar to the Sisters of Social Service in your thinking?

DONOGHUE

Today?

COLLINGS

Yes.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. Elizabeth Johnson, that's the Immaculate Heart sisters in Monroe, Michigan. The St. Joseph Carondelet. The Notre Dames.

Every women's community today. You don't have the traditional ministries of hospitals teaching. You've got the wider, and so every community is in the arena, and we work very closely and collaboratively together. That was the instigation of the investigation of women's communities, the active communities. Not the Carmelites, not the cloistered, the active communities, and that investigation is over. But it was instigated because of the scope and of the work in speaking up and standing up for social justice, and that's where that is.

COLLINGS

We'll have to take more about that.

DONOGHUE

Yes. [interruption]

COLLINGS

Good afternoon now, Diane, Sister Diane. We are back again on April 5, 2012, and we sort of concluded with a discussion about the fact that you were fired for writing conscientious-objector letters.

DONOGHUE

Well, that was the part of it, but it was just that I was taking stands and questioning procedures that I felt were just not appropriate. So it was really coming to that.

COLLINGS

What other kinds of procedures were you against?

DONOGHUE

It leaves a bigger question if I don't identify it, so I'd better [unclear], I know. It had to do with the way that the camp was run and with the counselors and the fact that he was serving alcohol to teenage minors, and it was not appropriate. And to talk about the fact that just the way the camp was run, so I challenged him on it, and he said, "Out of here." So I went, which was fine. It was appropriate for me to leave, and I did.

COLLINGS

So what was your next step after that?

DONOGHUE

Then I was at Stanford Home, which is a program that we have for dependent teenage kids in Sacramento, and I was there for three years and worked with young people that they're really kids that have been kicked out of foster care and just given up totally. My friend Sister Mary Anne Bonpane is the director of there and just does this incredible job. It was the old Stanford, Leland Stanford home where Leland Junior was born, and it was the Governor's Mansion. When Leland died and the governor had died and Mrs. Stanford moved back to San Francisco and deeded the home always to be used for the children of California, so it was taken over by the diocese in Sacramento. The Mercy sisters ran it for some years, and then they built an orphanage. Then we were asked to come and take over the mansion. It was an amazing place because all of the historical furniture, artifacts, china, and so forth, everything was still in the mansion.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

It was in storage, but it was there. So what one of our sisters that went there, Sister Vincenzia, said, "These things should be out. They should be being appreciated and seen." So she went and got them restored and put the mansion back in its original condition in the sense of how it was viewed. And the girls were there. The message was, these girls are worth it. You don't hide stuff away. You have them and they grow up there. So, anyway, we lived at the mansion. We lived on the bottom floor. There were six or seven sisters there. Then the kids lived upstairs. We had lay staff twenty-four hours, a live-in staff, and it was an amazing program. Then we had group homes. Then, of course, the girls always have brothers, so Marianne then opened group homes for the brothers, for the

boys. So we had boys and girls, and then everybody came to the mansion on Sundays for Mass from the different group homes, for a big breakfast. It was just an amazing, amazing community.

COLLINGS

Oh, it sounds wonderful.

DONOGHUE

You talk about restorative justice, just in terms of bringing health and healing back to children that just felt there was no hope.

COLLINGS

How was it funded?

DONOGHUE

It was through United Way and then agencies who placed children. Counties placed children from all over California, they paid, so it had public funding.

COLLINGS

Does it still exist today?

DONOGHUE

It does not as such. What the agency does now is supervise children in foster care, and, of course, the same thing is still happening where kids can't take the foster-care placements. So Marianne now lives down Encino, but she and Sister Stefana [phonetic], after the program was closed, started a program called Wind, which really gave shelter and hope to kids who were runaways from foster homes and who would come in off the streets. So they started by getting them to come in and do their laundry and take a shower and then feeding and then going to school and then getting in programs. So that Wind program is still working in Sacramento, which is kind of amazing.

COLLINGS

Are they still making use of the mansion?

DONOGHUE

No, the mansion then was taken over by Schwarzenegger. He used it for parties and public meetings, and now it's closed completely because it came under the state park system and those are all being closed. So that one's defunded. It's incredible. It's just really very sad.

COLLINGS

So it was used as a home for foster kids until Schwarzenegger came in?

DONOGHUE

No. Finally the state paid off the diocese of Sacramento, and then rehabbed the whole place, and then it was used and became part of the public or state park system. They kept one of the rooms like we had it with the girls there and the history of what that was, and the pictures are there and everything. Sister Marianne is recognized as one of the significant people, so that was part of the tour.

COLLINGS

Actually we didn't talk about this was now after we—

DONOGHUE

After CYO and Sacramento and after Berkeley.

COLLINGS

I also wanted to backtrack way back to after Vatican II and what Vatican II must have meant to you.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, because that was the most important just in terms of liturgy was to have the Mass in English, and so all of the celebrations became so much more understand—we always knew it, we always had missals and translations and so forth. The women became part of ministers and lectors and would proclaim the word. To go up on the altar was a big deal. To have Communion under

both species, both the bread and the wine, we just had the bread before. To have the parish councils, the whole principal of "subsidiarity", local decisions made by local people, when things affect them locally, that's a huge thing. The whole understanding of just church as the people of god, not hierarchy. When you talk about the church, you don't talk about the bishops. You talk about the people of god and what that means, so all of that and the theology and teaching behind that. The council only went for two years, '63 to so forth. Pope John the XXIII was the instigator of that, but Paul VI was the implementer in all of that. So it was a profound, profound time.

COLLINGS

Did the Vatican II have any impact on the Sisters of Social Service in terms of making it possible for you to do certain things that you had not been doing before?

DONOGHUE

We worked a lot more in parish ministries as liturgists and doing parish ministry, because the whole understanding of liturgy then and having parish ministries and having parish councils, and all of the priests really relied on our social-work backgrounds of what we did in terms of organizing and all. There was a time in L.A. when we were in twenty-three different parishes.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes. It was huge, in augmenting the work of the priests. It would be almost like co-pastors but doing that, and we were the first ones to do that.

COLLINGS

So you were sort of on the cutting-edge then in terms of those kinds of transitions.

DONOGHUE

Yes, right, because before we used to view the social service as it relates to helping people with the rent and so forth, but the internal parish organization then, we began doing that and not so much the work at the door, but rather the work of the community and fostering that.

COLLINGS

Were there particular priests that you worked with that facilitated the work of your order at that time? How much cooperation or support were you getting?

DONOGHUE

Well, first of all, because of the kind of service that we did, we were very valued, and so we got a lot of support from that. Sister Celine at CYO, she really was the brains behind CYO. Sister Rosemary was the brains behind Catholic Social Service. They were never the directors. It was still the priests' job, but those guys used to come in and very often say, "Okay, what's next?" And Rosemary and Celine really knew that in a very clear way.

So we had sisters working, numbers working at Catholic Social Service and in CYO just doing that, doing much more of the parish ministries. Then after our '68 chapter, we were given the opportunity to develop our own ministries, Chapter of the Sisters of Social Service.

COLLINGS

1968?

DONOGHUE

1968, yes, and that was very critical for us because it was the first time we had voted to not have delegates, and then after that was the '72 chapter. That was the one where we had the chapter of the whole, which meant everybody came to chapter and we didn't have elected delegates. Sixty-eight was elected delegates, and they voted to have a chapter of the whole and to make it much more

universal, and that was very much reflective of Vatican II just internally for us and for us to have choices in terms of ministry. So now sisters, many do not know the time when we just had assignments, because it's just such past history.

COLLINGS

How does one go about choosing a ministry?

DONOGHUE

Well, based on your education and what your background is and then where your interests are and talents. I was fortunate in being able to assign to CYO for the times that I was, and that my education—but I really found my forte in community organizing and really was able to express it much more in [unclear], even though that was an assignment.

I started again with Celine. That was a residence for students and working women when I started, with lots of vacancies. About half of the building was empty. So she had contacts with the area Agency on Aging that was starting the senior citizen programs in L.A. She was on the board. She said, "Let's see if we can get a Day Center senior program with meals, because we've got this great kitchen, dining room, and programs." So we started the senior-citizen day program, so we fed a hundred people a day, five days a week. We had all kinds of classes. We had trips and programs, and we did a trip. One group went to Hawaii one year.

COLLINGS

Oh, my goodness.

DONOGHUE

They had that. We did bus trips. My brother had a camping resort up in the Wannacut Valley by the Canadian border, Washington-Canadian border. We took fifty seniors on two buses.

COLLINGS

Oh, my gosh.

DONOGHUE

One bus, because it was fifty. But, anyway, up to that, and we spent a week up there.

COLLINGS

Oh, how nice.

DONOGHUE

It was amazing. I did not run the senior program. There were other sisters that ran that, but we had the senior program. Then we had what we called the Maya Way. That was a drug rehab program, residential, for women heroin abusers. They were there for six months with a two-year outpatient follow-up. That was a remarkable program. That was funded through a program in East L.A.

So we did all those things, and then I got involved with the community organizing under the Alinsky model, and so that was the Industrial Areas Foundation. They started first organizing in East L.A., and I was on the group that got that started.

COLLINGS

That was the South Central Organizing Committee, and that became One L.A.

DONOGHUE

That's right. So, anyway, I was a part of all of that and really got my community organizing skills sharpened so that I was ready when I left Stella Maris. I did a sabbatical at Berkeley again, and it was the Free South Africa Movement at that point, and so I was part of a lot of the demonstrations for that. I went to Nicaragua for the Witness for Peace and had that experience. Went to Salvador for the fifth anniversary of the killing of the sisters on Bishop Oscar Romero's fifth anniversary, and had those experiences.

COLLINGS

That was all during your sabbatical year?

DONOGHUE

Yes, that was all the sabbatical year. Then I came back and then we started. I began being the community organizer at St. Vincent's, and then we started the Esperanza.

COLLINGS

Shall we talk about those things in detail next time?

DONOGHUE

Yes, that's perfect.

COLLINGS

Does that sound fine?

DONOGHUE

Yes. That's terrific. [End of April 5, 2012 interview]

1.3. Session Three (April 25, 2012)

COLLINGS

Today is April 25, 2012. Jane Collings interviewing Sister Diane Donoghue at the Sisters of Social Service Holy Spirit Retreat Center. We were just saying that the order and the orders, more broadly speaking, of women religious in the United States are facing at this time an existential crisis.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

You were going to talk about that a little bit from your point of view.

DONOGHUE

Just understanding what we're accused of in terms of challenging our history, our mission, our ministry, what we stand for, where we began. We were founded in 1923 in Europe, and in 1926 in Los

Angeles, so we have both founding founders, so to speak. Sister Margaret, the first woman elected to the Hungarian Parliament, right to vote before the women here in the United States, she was elected in 1921. The importance of understanding we were founded to work for the good and support and concern of women and children and families. At that time, the whole position of women was basically no standing, no rights, and children were the possessions of and treated as property. So to understand the whole evolution of human rights, civil rights, each of us made in the image and likeness of god, and so god then is not male or female. It's beyond comprehension, and what we do is to understand the compassion of god, the love of god, and to the extent that we can emulate and practice and seek to acknowledge the likeness of god in one another, that's what we do. So we challenge systems that take that likeness and negate it and we say that's wrong.

So Margaret in Parliament very significantly set up a rehab program for women prisoners who were prostitutes, because women were put in cells with men as criminals. There was no distinction. There was no sense of why do women get into prostitution, how is that a means of support, and what are the alternatives to that. She set up a whole rehab program. This is the Industrial Revolution, children coming in and working in factories. She created child labor laws. This is way ahead of the U.S. It was amazing.

COLLINGS

Yes, definitely.

DONOGHUE

This is based on Catholic social justice, Rerum Novarum, Leo XIII, 1901. This is the base. This is where we're coming from. So you can't talk to us about being latecomers in advocacy and taking on glitzy nonissues that are of no concern and have had no history and/or statements of support in terms of social justice. So it's a very long history. Network was founded forty years ago. It was an intercommunity response of many communities coming together and saying, how can we work to implement the social justice

programs that we stand by and stand for? How can we stand up and be recognized? That's where that comes from.

COLLINGS

Is your Sisters of Social Service being singled out more than other orders at this time?

DONOGHUE

It's hard to tell. We've been named.

COLLINGS

The order itself?

DONOGHUE

No. But Simone is always referred to as a Sister of Social Service from Encino. That's where we are.

COLLINGS

I saw that in news reports.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Think about it. We're eighty-five years old. We're one of the youngest communities, and I think I've told you, in 2000 we were 103 members. Today we're 73. That's 25 percent difference in 2012. Seventy percent of our membership is sixty to ninety. We're seasoned, to say the least, and our concerns continue to meet the needs—and still our ministries are focused and targeted to the most marginalized work on the edges in communities that are absolutely on the edge. So it's who we are and how we are.

COLLINGS

Why would your particular order be singled out in that way?

DONOGHUE

Our community has had this standing ever since its inception. The more historic orders, you have a whole group that's monastic, which means they're enclosed. They're in habit. They have a horarium that

they follow very clearly, so you always know where they are at what time of day. So it's cloister, habit, horarium. Those are the monastics. Then you have the active orders, most of whom traditionally have been in education and nursing, and so those were the, quote, "traditional" ministries. Vatican II said, "Go back to your charism. Figure out why you were founded. What was happening historically? What were the kinds of needs? What was the energy that came out? So go back to those and then rewrite your constitutions and take twelve years to do it." So we had a whole time of exploration, looking back, looking forward, and as people looked back, they realized we've been the Job Corps for the bishops. They could send us out, we could do all the schools, we could staff the hospitals, very often dialysis in hospitals. The sisters didn't own them; they staffed them. They were the Job Corps. Now to say find your ministries and mission based on your history, that's very different. So many communities came to the United States from Europe and were on the frontier. They couldn't wear habits because they couldn't get the materials. They wore what they could. They worked where they could. They figured out how to adjust, how to work, and it was all with new people coming in. They took the prejudice against Catholics, then against Irish, against Italians, against any southern Europeans of color, so the Nordic folks didn't have as much problems as those in southern Europe, the point being that historically every community that came here started over, and that's how it was.

So after the Vatican II, people said, "We should be working with those people on the margins like we started out with, and not in established ministries," and that's exactly what they did. So because of that, many sisters went into community work, and so you had a whole group that got into retreat work, spiritual direction. We had a whole group of community organizing, Community Centers. Another group of artists, poets, writers, theologians. One of the biggest things that LCWR did—

COLLINGS

LCWR being?

DONOGHUE

Leadership Conference of Women Religious. When communities realized, number one, that their sisters were teaching as teachers and then going to summer school and taking classes and it would take twenty years to get your B.A., they said, "No. Everybody's got to have a B.A. who's a teacher, and we have to be educated in our theology." So communities made very strong commitments to higher education postdoctoral so that sisters then were teaching the best theology and coming into their own in feminist spirituality with the rest of the world. That was the sixties. So because of that, we were the best-educated group of women in the country because we put priority on that.

So you have a whole group then of highly educated. So all of a sudden, we weren't the Job Corps anymore. And then we had an incredible exodus. Bishop said, "The reason that folks are leaving is because they're not being faithful to the commitment, and so these new works are poisoning and they shouldn't be there." It had to do with women finding their own place. For instance, in our community, it was very rare that we took in young women under eighteen. That was not true in most communities. They had what they called the Juniorate, which was kids in high schools. Who knows who they are and how they are? We have said, "You have to have your education, college. You have to have and/or work experience, independent living as a young adult, and then come talk to us." That's true for every single community today. You don't have the kiddos. That's very, very healthy. So you have people that have experience, they have opinions, they have all kinds of perspectives, and they come then with commitment from many points of view.

COLLINGS

So you said that there was this idea that going out into the community was chasing people away, there were these toxic ideas out there.

DONOGHUE

Yes. They were getting polluted.

COLLINGS

When was that accusation levied?

DONOGHUE

That was 2009, 2008.

COLLINGS

Oh, that was the beginning of this process, basically.

DONOGHUE

Yes. But people were making potshots the whole time.

COLLINGS

You mean from the post-Vatican II era up until it really came to a head in 2009?

DONOGHUE

Yes. And you had a group of orders of sisters—let's see. I think, what is it? It's 150,000 sisters, and I think it's 5,700 members of LCWR.

COLLINGS

Five-thousand seven hundred members in the United States?

DONOGHUE

Yes. LCWR the leadership, it's the leadership teams. Then there is a much smaller group of—I think it's 2 percent of—I have to get the names right, and I don't have them right now. But it's the more traditional, cloistered, habited, horarium group who Mother Mary was the investigator and she was in charge of that group. She did the 2008, 2009 investigations. It's a much smaller group, but they are in favor because they are so compliant and so observant.

COLLINGS

So of the sisters in the United States, the cloistered cohort is the smaller one?

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, very small, and are not under investigation.

COLLINGS

They're not?

DONOGHUE

No, it's only the active orders, active in the sense of—and someone who is far more in tune with the details, because there are some communities that—and it's very, very few—but keep membership in both groups, but it's very, very small. The really formidable speaking up, standing for, standing up are the majority, and they're really collaborative and in concert with one another and will continue to be.

COLLINGS

What is the process that your group went through once the initial investigation started in 2009? Is it sort of announced with a letter?

DONOGHUE

You get a letter. Sister Claire was our general director at that time. She and the council had the discussions. We had some community discussions, but basically Clare said—you never got the questions ahead of time, so you didn't know. You couldn't take anybody with you.

COLLINGS

Take anybody with you where?

DONOGHUE

To the interview, and they had the interviews out at Loyola Marymount. So all of the local orders in this area, whoever was a local superior general in this area, went to Loyola Marymount, and I think it was like three days. She couldn't make notes, take notes,

but there was an observer with Mother Mary who was writing everything down, but we never could see what that was. Then we turned in our constitutions and said, "This is who we are," and then we never saw the report, the general report. It was never made public so you had no idea how you were viewed and/or in relationship to, unless Clare talked to the St. Joseph of Carondelet sisters and said, "What did you say?" "Well, what did you say?" I mean, it was really scattershot in the sense that you could take out people and you didn't know where it was coming from.

COLLINGS

So this new push, is this a second phase, or is this the result of the investigation?

DONOGHUE

See, that's the part I don't know, because this second phase came. The last cardinal that was in the office, Rode, retired, and so we thought, "Okay, I guess it's over." Then Leveda, who was the cardinal in St. Louis, then was named to this office. He grew up in Long Beach, he's from, ordained in the L.A. diocese. Then bishop, archbishop in San Francisco, archbishop in Seattle, St. Louis cardinals, and now Rome, and it's so hard to figure out.

One of the things that seems to be evident is the connection between the National Conference of Catholic Bishops going and the office of the Doctrine of the Faith and saying, "We've got to do something about these ladies." As that editorial of support speaks to, it's absolute power and control over, and LCWR will be under surveillance for five years. That's one of the things it does say, and so that's five years. The likes of me, I'm eighty-one, so I'll be eighty-six, but the quality of the leadership, the current leaders, where will they be in five years? All of them will be out of office and a newer group will be coming in. They may be more, or they may not be, but the whole issue in terms of property, all of our ministries are separately incorporated 501(c)(3). We have standing with the IRS based on the nonprofit status of each one of our ministries. That's not true for all communities. Figure some communities, the

diocese can say, "You know, that really doesn't belong to you." If you look at where you are, that property should revert back, and so many dioceses are in financial trouble because of the abuse settlements. How many have gone and had to file for bankruptcy?

COLLINGS

I have to say that when you said that it seemed that your order, though small, was being singled out, I immediately thought of this very large property that you have here.

DONOGHUE

Yes, exactly.

COLLINGS

So is that part of the picture?

DONOGHUE

We own this, and Holy Spirit Retreat Center is a separately incorporated ministry, so that has its own standing. But we own this property as a community, and we have our own IRS number, our own standing. So, to my knowledge, that's a very—which we will have and do have good legal counsel, and that will be one of the things, especially District 12. So District 12 is the western part and northwest, so we're pretty progressive. But the oversight guy, the local bishop [Sartain], is the archbishop of Seattle, and his name is out of my head right now.

COLLINGS

Sartain?

DONOGHUE

No, it begins with a P.

COLLINGS

There was someone in the paper who was going to be doing the oversight.

DONOGHUE

Yes. He's the bishop in Seattle, archbishop of Seattle. Hunthausen, who was the former archbishop of Seattle, who was very supportive of gay and lesbian rights, and this guy was basically retired.

COLLINGS

He was retired?

DONOGHUE

Yes. He was acted upon. He didn't retire. He retired. He was retired. So that means this new guy, whose name is out of my head this minute, is very anti-gay. And there are other communities and other organizations that are far more active. There's the Quixote Society in Baltimore, I think it is, that has been so outspoken for gay and lesbian rights. So it's a biggie. And Network has never been there. We get into the poverty issues and healthcare and the way poverty has impacted, so we're very specific.

COLLINGS

Perhaps for the record explain Network.

DONOGHUE

Network is the Catholic social justice lobby, in D.C., founded forty years ago, and Simone Campbell] is the current E.D. But they have a whole history, and they lobby Congress and they are very specific on legislation they target. They lobby both sides of the aisle, and they've had sister lobbyists and lay staff. They have a very excellent board that is representative, men and women, all over the country. They do an excellent evaluation of every member of Congress on their votes, of the votes of the legislation that Network supports and opposes. Every year they do the voting, and you can just go in, and they have excellent publications, both online and printed material. They've got a marvelous program right now they're running called Mind the Gap. Mind the Gap shows the difference between where the folks are and where the country is, and Occupy obviously has picked up so much. But Mind the Gap was going three years ago,

and they were very supportive of Occupy. So it's because they're on the same page.

COLLINGS

Now, I understand that in this five-year process every speaker must be cleared?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Does that mean if you want to go and give a talk somewhere that—

DONOGHUE

Well, LCWR, Simone goes all over the country, but other people do as well, but speaker programs that they sponsor bringing in other experts on whatever.

COLLINGS

So every speaker who comes to talk that is sponsored by your organization must be approved by this official, the bishop of Seattle.

DONOGHUE

Yes. And I can't imagine how that oversight is going to work and what will be, because the implementation has not been articulated well. So all we have is this is what's going to happen and this is the guy that's going to be in charge, but there's no detail in terms of how it's going to be implemented, which is why, in my opinion, this response right now in terms of lay people and people speaking out and editorial comment all over the place makes them look like they're out of medieval times, and it makes a joke. I say "joke," but it's not funny.

COLLINGS

But it's very sad, yes.

DONOGHUE

Yes. And the way in which people are simply leaving the church, period, the other part will be people withholding financial support, and that is going to be something that finally will make some kind of an impact. I mean, you think about what happens when we do—what’s my word? In Iran and embargoes.

COLLINGS

Sanctions.

DONOGHUE

I mean, those are financial embargoes. When the Catholic laity does an embargo on the Catholic Church, that’s when people are going to say, “Oh, is that what you mean? Is this what this is?” Just understanding that, because they are so used to total compliance. That’s been over for a very long time.

COLLINGS

So you mentioned that Simone Campbell and others had been named in this investigation. What does that mean?

DONOGHUE

I don’t know, and I don’t know that she knows, and I don’t know what that means in terms of our community, standing with. I would like to believe that we will stand with in support of, but there will be sisters who will say, “We’re going against the church.” And others will say, “We are the church. We’re standing for what Jesus does, said, acted on, died for.” So take your pick. That will be, and I don’t know. I couldn’t predict how—I know that our community meeting after Pentecost is going to be profound in terms of how we are as a community and where we are.

COLLINGS

You were saying a little bit about that off tape. What is leading up to that community meeting?

DONOGHUE

Every year we have a general assembly. Everybody comes home. We have three days, and we have a chapter every five years, and then we have goals that we set in terms of our big effort has been what does it mean to be in support of the common good. What is the common good and how do we interact and interface and show our allegiance and our ability to collaborate with one another in the common good? That's huge, and it's very specific. So that's going to be one of our biggest. Then financially how are we going to continue with a diminished workforce of sisters employed? Because we don't have this big influx of young people coming in, workers. I had a professional salary six years ago. I have a 401(k) and Social Security. I put that into the pot. Mine is fairly high. Many sisters did not have positions that warranted high Social Security, so we are dipping into our savings. It's called our support trust, which is the money for our senior retired sisters. We cannot keep going in that direction, so we have to look at how we are financially, where we are, how we are going augment that. So those are big questions. So it's the common good, it's the finance, and now this is a whole new third sort of topic. What does this mean? How will we be identified as standing with LCWR, Network?

COLLINGS

Off tape you were talking a little bit about the discussions that were going forward. You said that you did everything verbally. What was that about?

DONOGHUE

Well, it was the fact that there's great fear that we will be hacked in terms of the Net, anything on the Net, the Internet. Of course, as you well know, anything you write has the capacity to go viral. So you cannot say anything. I mean, you correspond, but you don't do it on the Internet, and your phones can be tapped, so you don't speak that way.

COLLINGS

So these are conversations about the context of the investigation that was launched.

DONOGHUE

Content in the investigation and what is the strategy for responding. So those have to be done in a setting that is protected and that has that. So that's the way it will be done. But it's information that we all have to have and understand, and it can't be just for the few. It's got to be for everyone.

COLLINGS

So it's a challenge how to—

DONOGHUE

How to do that, yes.

COLLINGS

—disseminate this information without having it be electronically recorded.

DONOGHUE

Yes, right, exactly.

COLLINGS

That is quite a challenge.

DONOGHUE

Think about mimeographing.

COLLINGS

Yes, bringing in those old mimeograph machines now. [laughter]

DONOGHUE

I mean, you know, Guttenberg had a pretty good idea.

COLLINGS

Now, one other thing I wanted to ask you about. You had been talking about how your sense of god was not male or female, but you had a problem with the privileging, the gender roles that were being enforced by the church.

DONOGHUE

I think, yes, in terms of we have one sister who has spent some time in Europe in our federation with Romanian Slovak Hungarian, so that that's our Eastern province. She always talks about going into churches where you see two men and a bird, so it was Jesus, God the Father, and then the Holy Spirit is this bird, and these huge frescos. And god is bigger than two men and a bird, and yet that is a traditional historic way of portraying god. It's so much bigger. I did a marvelous—now almost thirty years ago, I was on sabbatical in Berkeley at the graduate theology school. One of our sisters has taught there in the Franciscan school for the last eighteen years. I mean, that's a remarkable place, and I did feminine spirituality. I did that, and then the Immaculate Heart community that was disbanded, their whole charter was taken from them, they became a non-canonical community. I went to school to the Immaculate Heart sisters.

COLLINGS

Here in Los Angeles?

DONOGHUE

In Los Angeles, yes. They were completely disbanded.

COLLINGS

When was this?

DONOGHUE

In '73. I think that's right, '73, '74, something.

COLLINGS

So was that sort of a precursor to this?

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. This was Cardinal McIntyre saying, "Thou shalt not. You will go back to habit. You will go back to living community with horariums, and you will go to schools. And if you don't do these, you will not teach in any of the Catholic schools in Los Angeles." And they said, "Okay." And he said, "Okay, you're out of here." And the worst part was that all the other communities came in and took over the schools, and LCWR said, "Sorry," and just let them hang out to dry. There was a formal apology to the Immaculate Heart community, who has done splendid, who is now men and women, Catholic and non-Catholic, committed to social justice and women's ordination and, and, and. They are a clarion voice of the church in the future.

COLLINGS

So you said there was an apology to them.

DONOGHUE

Yes, by LCWR.

COLLINGS

When was that?

DONOGHUE

I have to get the exact date.

COLLINGS

Fairly recently though, right?

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. It's got to be in the last twelve years, I mean, you know, in 2000. A little more enlightenment and understanding.

COLLINGS

The charges, as I understand, against LCWR, the phrase "radical feminist" was prominent. I saw it in every piece.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Can you comment on that?

DONOGHUE

Yes, radical as in root, and what they see as is the support of gay and lesbian, of women's right to choose in terms of abortion, but it's much more in terms of understanding the role of women and the history of domination in the early church, knowing that history and claiming it, the number of women deacons, the number of women priests. St. Paul talks about going—there were no parish churches. They were house churches. He talks about going to the home and her presiding. The house church phenomenon and the pictures in the catacombs, the frescoes, all speak to the role of women as being so different from the temple in Rome, the temple in terms of the Jewish traditions and the Roman traditions. In the early church, there were women, consecrated virgins, living at home, not in community, but whose commitment was to the teachings of Jesus totally. That's feminist spirituality, that the women religious were before monasticism, which was 400. St. Benedict is 425. So the whole idea that you had women having a place, a role, a standing was the teaching of Jesus. The way he treated women, the acknowledgement, that's feminist spirituality. Elisabeth Shüssler Fiorenza, her writings, *She Who Is*, is remarkable. So I took a class when I was at Berkeley on sabbatical. I used to go down once a month, and I would drive down. They had Feminist Spirituality. They taught at Immaculate Heart College, and I was in the first class. We had the top. Elisabeth Florenza, Dorothy Sole, Rosemary Radford Ruther [phonetic]. I mean, I'd just go down the line, the women who taught that, and I took that class. I'd drive down and then I'd drive back, and it was Thursday night, all day Friday, all day Saturday. Then I'd get back on the freeway and go back up. It was phenomenal. That's radical feminist spirituality, the root history, and that's why it was so important that the women orders

said, "We've got to get our own scholars and scholarship." So we have this whole group of women Ph.D.'s and now in such profound standing.

COLLINGS

Is it that context that set off this investigation, or is it something more close to home? We talked a little bit about the way that the sisters supported the Affordable Care Act when the Council of Bishops had not supported it.

DONOGHUE

Yes, exactly.

COLLINGS

Is that what set this off?

DONOGHUE

Yes, that was the tipping point. Elizabeth Johnson, she was president of Catholic Theological Association. Her book was written seven years ago. It's been the standard textbook in every Catholic university under graduate theology, and now she's named and they said, "You've got to take that book out of every Catholic university."

COLLINGS

Oh, really? Wow.

DONOGHUE

I can imagine what the Catholic universities—Notre Dame; I don't think so. She teaches at Fordham, a Jesuit university; I don't think so. The support that she has gotten has been remarkable, but she was called into question by the bishop seven years later, and all of a sudden she's saying, "How come you're asking me now? Where's this coming from?" She wrote a defense which is amazing. But it's just one more when you see abuse of power and effort for control and domination.

COLLINGS

But the tipping point was the—

DONOGHUE

Was the ACA, yes.

COLLINGS

—the Affordable Care Act, the support for it.

DONOGHUE

Yes. And what's happening in terms of Supreme Court and then the election is going to affirm much of—it's going to be a piece of that.

COLLINGS

So when you say that, you believe that if Romney is elected, what will happen going forward with this investigation?

DONOGHUE

I mean, first of all, I don't think he will be, but here you're talking future space. So if Romney were elected, I can't imagine what the scale of fear will be.

COLLINGS

For women religious of the United States?

DONOGHUE

Yes. I say that. Our sisters participated in an amazing film called *Interrupted Lives* which is the story—it's a documentary—of women religious in Eastern Europe under communism, and our sisters went underground. Most communities were disbanded totally. Sisters were sent to work literally as slaves on collectives to harvest, and they were sent as communities. They were locked in prisons, they were locked in monasteries, and worked on the land, basically. So this documentary interviews people in their eighties and nineties now, who lived through that and who have been restored. One of our sisters, Ann Lehner [phonetic], Sister Margaret, escaped. She was under the gun and she escaped into Austria and then eventually to the United States, and she set up a government-in-exile for the

Sisters of Social Service in Buffalo. She wanted to ransom three of the youngest sisters, younger, who she felt had the potential for ongoing leadership. So she got money, and three of them were designated to come. This is in the film. It's a reenactment. Two other sisters, one is shot. They're going from the border, the Hungarian border, into Austria. You see the wire fences and so forth. She finds a place in the fence, this little place, and she's able to get through. One is shot, and the other sister stays with the one who was shot, and she goes to jail and dies in prison. This one dies there, and Ann gets into Vienna. Then she comes to the United States, she learns English, and she becomes the head of the government-in-exile, and she did that.

I was at the meeting in Budapest where we all went back after the Wall came down, and they lived in cells, in the sense they knew the folks that they were in community with, but they didn't know who the next group over was. So they came together, and we came from the U.S., from Canada, from Mexico, from Taiwan, and we all walked in the church, and people said, "We didn't know you were here." It was absolutely incredible. One of our sisters, Elizabeth, always wore the habit, and she was there, and I was with her. We were at the Mathias Church in Budapest, and this family came up to us, a man and a woman. They said, "Your sisters saved us all during the occupation, Nazi occupation." We created safe houses for Jews. I think I told you about Sarah.

COLLINGS

Yes.

DONOGHUE

And they recognized Elizabeth because of her uniform. [laughs] They said, "You saved us." Then when we had the ceremony for Sarah and the beatification, it was the biggest news in the country, and this man came and they showed pictures of Sarah holding this little boy, a little Jewish guy. The next day, a knock on the door the Mother House in Budapest, "I'm that young boy, and I'm a medical doctor now, and Sarah saved me."

COLLINGS

Oh, my gosh.

DONOGHUE

It was just amazing. And so to have those kinds of experiences and just to know that that's how we are, who we are, why we are.

COLLINGS

But going back just a little bit, why do you feel like there would be a climate of fear if Romney were elected?

DONOGHUE

The climate now because I'm seeing that the immigration laws' enforcement will be more profound, even though immigration from Mexico is down to nothing.

COLLINGS

Yes, I heard that in terms of who's coming in and who's going out, it's net zero.

DONOGHUE

It's net zero, exactly. Exactly. The population, childbirth in 1990 averaged seven children per woman. Now two, since. So there's a whole class of—just comparing birth rates here and in Mexico. The guys that do the demographics, they were interviewed. It was an extensive interview on NPR yesterday on the radio, and I just was listening again and grateful for that kind of in-depth. But that fear, and what I started to say, was that Ann—

COLLINGS

Ann Romney?

DONOGHUE

No, Ann Lehner. She's in this Interrupted Lives, talks about the fear factor and what she said was, "The climate of fear is so tangible, was, in Hungary during this time, you never knew who was going to

report you, who your enemy was, who was your friend.” It’s that climate of fear, and she talks about what that is, what that is to live in. And I can see where that climate of fear has the potential for taking over.

COLLINGS

Because, if I might suggest, the people who are supporting you are Obama supporters.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

So if their candidate is not in power, their influence is diminished and your support is diminished.

DONOGHUE

Yes. The support is tremendously diminished, and then look at Congress. Then you will see what is the inability— [End of April 25, 2012 interview]

1.4. Session Four (May 2, 2012)

COLLINGS

Today is May 2, 2012, Jane Collings interviewing Sister Diane Donoghue at the Westmoreland site, at the convent on Westmoreland.

We thought, before getting back to our chronology, that you were going to provide a little bit of an update about the status of the state of mind following the announcement of the continued investigation.

DONOGHUE

Yes. I think that we have a sense of being not covert, but careful, and full of care to the point that we don’t say or make statements

that will come back and bite us, literally, or that have not had the benefit of serious collaboration. So we can't speak for Simone, but we're in contact with her daily. She can't speak for the community. She speaks for Network. But we're a member of Network. We're a member of the LCWR. Our leadership is going to be meeting. LCWR will be meeting in June. That's the regular meeting, a board meeting, I think with the bishops, the three bishops that are in oversight from Seattle, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. So it's a process and a kind of consultation that has huge consequences. So we just want to make sure that each step we take has been thoughtfully prepared, and we don't have the luxury of doing exploratory kind of thing. Every step has a consequence. So we just have to understand that. We will be having a community assembly right after Pentecost, which is the twenty-seventh of May. That's our big day, and then we meet during the holiday time, 28, 29, 30. So the community comes together, and we will have the benefit of this next month to see how things are going, and we will also know that our leadership will be going to the LCWR meetings in D.C. That's how it is, where it is.

COLLINGS

Would you say that this development as it has unfolded over the last few weeks has been wearing or galvanizing? Where does it fall?

DONOGHUE

Both. I've mentioned this to you, you know, the majority of our membership of seventy-three, 70 percent of the membership, is in the sixty-to-ninety age range. That is exactly where the LCWR. There's 57,000 sisters in the country, and the median age is seventy. So we fall right in with the rest of women religious. So that's very significant when you think about oversight being for the next five years. So how many more are going to die off? How much less will we be as a significant body, articulate, energized? Where's our leadership coming from? We do not have younger members coming in to the extent we had at one point in time. So all of those things you have to think about.

COLLINGS

Right. So it really is an existential crisis.

DONOGHUE

It is. It is very, very much so. What the oversight will mean in terms of control, power, and domination and/or the route that the Immaculate Heart sisters took in the seventies with regard to non-canonical status, and so are we going in that direction? Are all 57,000 going in that? No. So then the fracturing, the splintering, the picking out, and picking off, all of that. Did you ever see the play *Doubt* with Meryl Streep, or the movie?

COLLINGS

I haven't seen it. I keep meaning to see it, yes.

DONOGHUE

Well, it would be a marvelous contrast today. I saw both the play and then I saw the movie. It just is so—I mean, you can absolutely see a lot of these dynamics.

COLLINGS

So how does the play represent that?

DONOGHUE

In the sense of that you see the force of the clerical oversight and domination, and then the specifics, of course, have to do with the Mother Superior having real questions about the relationship of this priest to this young boy who has come out in terms of being gay and what happens in terms of the relationship with his father and the mother and all the—you know. But it gives a marvelous presentation of that clerical power oversight and where sisters were. This was the forties, forties, fifties, and where we are today. And where those guys are still. Still. Magisterium. Tradition.

COLLINGS

So how is it that the women religious have made such great strides, then?

DONOGHUE

First of all, we were told to go back to our charism, and for twelve years to experience and experiment and rewrite our constitutions, so we did.

COLLINGS

This is different than what the men were doing then.

DONOGHUE

They weren't asked to do that; the women were. That was part of Vatican II, women religious and especially the active orders, not the monastic cloistered, which changed very little. They still have habits, they still have horariums, they still live in convents. So it's habit and habitat and horarium. So they all do the same thing at the same time, and if they have, quote, "an outside ministry," education, hospital, it still is very controlled.

COLLINGS

So the women's orders have just moved light-years ahead.

DONOGHUE

Yes. And taken seriously signs of the times. What are the signs of the times? Certainly the poverty was the absolutely first thing, and to look, what did Jesus say? Matthew 25.

COLLINGS

Will the debate as the investigation goes forward be in these terms of scripture?

DONOGHUE

See, I don't know. I honestly don't know, because I read the eight-page pronouncement from the congregation, and it's heavy language. It isn't talking about the Magisterium of the Church, teaching faith and morals. It doesn't quote scripture as such, I mean, in that sense of when we look at who we are and what we

do. We say we're basing this on the teachings of Jesus. This is how we are living our lives. This is what we're trying to do and be.

COLLINGS

Okay. We'll pick up later when we learn more.

DONOGHUE

And you're getting my version. [laughs]

COLLINGS

Of course. Yes.

DONOGHUE

So this is kind of my take on it and what I see. I certainly don't speak for anyone except myself.

COLLINGS

Right. But you certainly have a lot of deep knowledge of the situation.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Now, I was thinking, we got an email the other day, yesterday, from Paulita, and she was celebrating her sixty-seven years in the community. She said, "You know, today is April—." It was written on April 30th. She said, "This is the anniversary of my entrance. I celebrate this day more than any other day of my life. It was the most important day in my life, and because I am a sister of Social Service from the bone marrow, my deepest bone marrow, and I celebrate that. I've had ups and downs and ins and outs, but I am so grateful to be able to have this day to celebrate." Oh, you know, what a statement. So I started to reply, and I thought, "Dumb. Call her." So I did. [laughter] I just said, "Tell her. Don't write back."

COLLINGS

Oh, congratulations.

DONOGHUE

Yes. "Paulita, thank you, that was so well said, so well spoken." I mean, we can do that so easily with one another. We know one another well. Pick up the phone and you can do that.

COLLINGS

It sounds like precisely that kind of communication had been missing, had not been there, between the women's orders and the larger church.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Probably that's why this came as such a shock.

DONOGHUE

Well, we had been chastised. I mean, they go back and they said, "We told you in 2006. We said something to you," and da, da, da. It's like you weren't listening, you didn't do, and so now this is it. I mean, that's what it sounds like. But that whole idea of sort of hovering over, you're going to always have the shadow in back of you, kind of thing. That's what it sounds like, looks like, feels like to me.

COLLINGS

How distressing.

DONOGHUE

Yes. I was on sabbatical in Berkeley, and that was in '85, '86, and I was thinking what are the next steps. The pastor from St. Vincent's who I'd worked with, I mean, I'd been at Stella Maris for eleven years. I mean, that's down the street. I went to Mass at St. Vincent's. I knew the pastor very well. I was involved in community organizing even when I was at Stella Maris. I was one of the original organizer people in the South Central Organizing Committee which was the IAF, Industrial Areas Foundation. That, obviously, has continued, and our Sister Mary Beth now is the lead organizer for

One L.A., which is all of the different counties and regions in the area. So we've had a very long tradition in community organizing.

COLLINGS

Maybe we should backtrack a little bit. How did you get involved in community organizing at Stella Maris then?

DONOGHUE

Well, UNO was the United Neighborhood Organization in East L.A., and that was the first organizing effort, and the organizing issue was auto insurance. Auto insurance was so high because there were so many freeways in East L.A., so many accidents, and people were just paying such high insurance, because that's where all the accidents were, right there. I mean, that's pretty simplifying it, but that's one of the—

COLLINGS

It was high density.

DONOGHUE

High density and freeways. Those were where all the freeways came together. So the auto insurance was the highest in East L.A., and it was people coming through, but the residents there paid the price, big time. So that was the first organizing kind of principle. So Mary Beth was in a parish, Dolores Mission, right in East L.A., and that was one of the parishes that was in one of the original parishes. Joan Keltis was at the neighboring parish. There were a number of us were in there, and so we were asked to think about being a part of UNO, the parishes were. So they wanted some information. They wanted some sisters involved in that. So I was one of the original people that organized UNO in terms of the funding. We had to raise \$10,000. So I was interested in that, because I was at Stella Maris and I needed some outside activity, because it was a 24/7 hands-on right there, and I really was interested. So I was on the organizing committee for UNO. Then from there they got started. I went to a training, organizing training with Ed Chambers.

COLLINGS

So how did you approach the auto insurance question then from a community organizing standpoint?

DONOGHUE

Oh, well, they just did an amazing job of doing—it's out of my head right this minute. I'm trying to remember the insurance company [Mercury] that we got to bring down the rates, and then everybody did. That was the way that we did that. So it was very, very good pressure and good organizing, and because it was the seventies, that's like thirty-five years ago that this was happening. I don't have all the particulars right now, but I know that. Mary Beth would be the one that would really know that, you know, chapter and verse.

COLLINGS

This was your first experience with a campaign that had a goal and succeeded.

DONOGHUE

Yes. And I had done a sabbatical up in Berkeley and had seen so much there.

COLLINGS

What did you see there?

DONOGHUE

Well, when I was in graduate school, it was the Free Speech Movement. When I went back on sabbatical, it was Free South Africa. So all of the religious schools, that was all the Jesuit school, the Franciscan school, the Lutheran, Presbyterians, all the religious GTU, Graduate theology Union, were in support of the Free South Africa Movement. So we all organized, marched, did all kinds of activities, which was just a terrific opportunity.

COLLINGS

These were very successful movements, as I recall.

DONOGHUE

Yes, they really were. Desmond Tutu came. I mean, it was very amazing, just exposure. So that just helped me understand that—

COLLINGS

That these things were possible.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So I just wanted to be a part of that. So, anyway, but what I'm getting to at this point is that I had a call from the pastor at St. Vincent who said, "Would you come back and be the community organizer for the parish?"

COLLINGS

Had they had a community organizer before?

DONOGHUE

No. I would be on staff and had a little office outback. So, anyway, I did that. The first call that I got was from a family whose mother—

COLLINGS

The very first call?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

My gosh.

DONOGHUE

It was the very first call. The daughter said, "Our mother is dying. She's dying at home. We have a rented house. She's lived here for twenty-five years. She wants to die at home. The owners of these seven houses want to sell and build a factory. So can you get a stay so that my mother could die at home?" So I did. So I went over and

talked to the owner, and I got a sixty-day stay, and she died. Then we said, "Hey, this guy is going to build a factory in the middle of a residential neighborhood. I don't think so." So that was the first organizing I did as a community organizer.

COLLINGS

So what were the steps?

DONOGHUE

Nine years later, we had Villa Esperanza, but first we had to go, and this was Gil Lindsey, Ninth District. He'd been there forever, and the way he did business was a suitcase full of money. So anybody that wanted to come in, just talk to Gil. We had more crummy little variances in terms of building codes and everything else in the Ninth District.

COLLINGS

I was just wondering how you could build a factory in a residential area.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. Well, you do it by paying for it, and that's exactly—there was no tenure in terms of numbers of years, so he had been the, as he called it, the Great Ninth for fifteen years and was ready to keep on. So that was, first of all, figuring out what was the problem. So one of the first things I did was get a map showing—there used to be an organization in Burbank that used to do flyovers, and so I got a map of the district and the specific area and showed all the residential area and then this one spot in terms of where factories were and what this was. I used to take my map with me, and I would talk. So we went to all the council offices, and then we got support from all the other council offices. Normally, when you're getting redistricting—not redistricting—

COLLINGS

Rezoning?

DONOGHUE

Rezoning. You always go with whatever the local council district says. To get the City Council to vote against Lindsey was absolutely incredible, but we did. So that was the very first thing, was to get the rezoning.

COLLINGS

So how do you think that you were able? When you say "we," you mean you and—

DONOGHUE

Well, I went to the neighbors and I got all of these people, and we formed a group. We were part of SCOC at St. Vincent's. So I used it as an organizing—

COLLINGS

SCOC?

DONOGHUE

South Central Organizing Committee. The first IAF organization was UNO, East L.A., then SCOC, then San Fernando Valley, then San Gabriel Valley. So then there were four separate organizations. Then they became One L.A. So that's kind of the history. So at that point it was an SCOC effort, and so because I'd been an organizer for SCOC after UNO, then I was the organizer. I was the treasurer, actually, for SCOC and did a lot of work while I was at Stella Maris for the eleven years. So I was kind of the builder of that.

COLLINGS

So what was the South Central Organizing Committee working on apart from that?

DONOGHUE

Liquor stores. So the number of liquor stores in South Central was absolutely profound, and so we absolutely closed down an incredible number.

COLLINGS

How did you do that?

DONOGHUE

By challenging, again, zoning and liquor permits, and going in and picketing and just talking about the numbers and what that meant. So that was the big issue were liquor stores, and we did an amazing job. And with churches, and we had Protestant and Catholic churches and no mosques at that time in the Crenshaw area or in our area, and we did not have temples. The Valley had mosques and temples, but we didn't have, because the Jewish population had moved to the Valley.

COLLINGS

So was the liquor store issue something that had come forward from the community as a concern?

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, big time, because of the number of liquor stores on every corner, and no markets, no fresh food, and no big stores coming in. We finally got Albertson's in and a Ralph's in, but it took a long time to get those big markets to come back. But that was the organizing.

COLLINGS

When you say "come back," what do you mean?

DONOGHUE

Well, after the first riots in '65, they left. So then to get them to come back was a big one, and so we worked on that.

COLLINGS

So when you came from Berkeley, after you left, when you first came to Stella Maris, you got involved in the community organizing.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Was that sort of on your own time?

DONOGHUE

Well, I made it my own time, because it was a 24/7 job, and I just really knew that I—we had a very low residence. We could accommodate fifty—five-oh—and we had like about eighteen residents. It was horrible. So I started the Maya Way Program, which was the drug residential treatment for women heroin abusers, and worked with the East L.A. Drug Coalition. So we had a residential program. They took over one whole floor, and then I was able to get at that point students from Trade Tech and from the Fashion Institute and 'SC. They were on the other floor. But I got a couple of sisters to come and work with me. I really wasn't too interested in all those little problems. I was much more interested—and we started a Senior Citizen Day Center, so I had the seniors on the first floor, the Maya on the second floor, and the third floor were the residents. So that was a 24/7 just to keep—but I got other sisters to come in and do that, so that I was much more interested in working out in the community. So because I had that face, so to speak, I had that reputation, so they asked me, when I finished my sabbatical, "Would you come back and be the community organizer for the parish?" And I was very pleased to do that.

COLLINGS

Why was it that the parish wanted a community organizer for the first time?

DONOGHUE

Because they could see what the pastor could see, what was the value, and he really did understand that and wanted to be a part of it. Then he left, he was reassigned, and the new pastor came in and was just incredibly supportive. He's in Kenya now, and I just heard from him the other day. He said, " I just remember, Diane, when I came, you really showed me the ropes in terms of what community organizing was, and you really embodied what Vincent de Paul

talked about in terms of service to the poor. So I always was very proud of the work that St. Vincent Parish stood for because of the kind of work and involvement that you represented us in."

COLLINGS

That's wonderful.

DONOGHUE

So that was part of that.

COLLINGS

So he told you this just recently?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Yes, from Kenya.

COLLINGS

Oh, good timing.

DONOGHUE

Yes. He's doing formation work with Kenyan seminarians now, so I said, "Bernie, I hope you have a sense of the relationship of the church and clerics to the sisters and the kinds of programs that we stand for and so forth," because he's very much removed, I mean. So I sent him a whole bunch of stuff. I sent him stuff on the riots, because we were in the riots together in—

COLLINGS

You sent him stuff on the twentieth anniversary.

DONOGHUE

The twentieth anniversary, yes.

COLLINGS

That must have been very interesting.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So, anyway, those are all kind of sidebars. So, anyway, just back to the first phone call. So then I got my little aerial map, and then I got local residents from the Ninth District, and so we were a marvelous little team. We would visit all the council offices. "This is the map, and we're residents, and you have to understand." And everybody knew Gil was on the take. So it was a way of kind of cleaning up. So when the vote finally came, then they voted that it would be rezoned for residential, not commercial, and this was a huge lot. So then we had to figure out, okay, then what? So we had one site that we were able to get, just three blocks away, and we built ten units there, and that was new construction. So then the next job was trying to get funding for, and it was thirty-three units of three- and four-bedroom family apartments with an onsite Head Start, onsite Community Center, and underground parking for eighty cars.

CONOLLY

Gosh.

DONOGHUE

It was a whole square block. From when we started to when we dedicated, it was nine years. The day we had the dedication was the shootout—no. I'll get this right. It was the O.J. trial.

COLLINGS

The verdict or the first day?

DONOGHUE

Yes, the first day. Everybody, all the media, was downtown at that. And we said, "But this—." So we got very little coverage on that. Then one of our next big opening was the shootout in North Hollywood. That was with the LAPD and bank robbers in flak jackets and machine guns.

COLLINGS

I wouldn't know about this.

DONOGHUE

It was always referred to as the North Hollywood shootout. So every time you'd want to go and have some kind of a recognition for what you're doing, you have this dramatic—but, anyway, it was the beginning of the O.J. trial. But we did it, and Villa Esperanza, that's funded with housing tax credits.

COLLINGS

LIHTC.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Then housing money locally, state, federal, and so it's an amazing putting together. Takes eighteen months minimum just to get the funding pieces together, but we were able to do that. Now Esperanza has 168 units of permanently affordable very low-income residents. It's very expensive to do, but it works.

COLLINGS

Where was the location of the first construction?

DONOGHUE

The first construction, Casa Esperanza, is on 23rd and Maple, and Villa is on 28th. It's five blocks apart. They really are something to see. It's a real legacy that has continued. I mean, the tax credits have expired, and so most of the time when the tax credits expire, the units become market rate, and we have always kept them at the affordable. I'm not sure. I know there's a possibility of renegotiating and getting more tax credits on them, where investors come in and get the tax credits.

COLLINGS

So there are tax advantages for them putting money into low-income construction?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Exactly, yes, yes. There's an effort now in Congress to have a permanent affordable housing tax credit. It comes up every four years, just about. They extend it out, trying to get permanent funding. But at this point, it is such a challenge in our city because we have at least 50 percent of the working population in the city of Los Angeles is below the poverty level, making minimum wage. Even though our minimum wage is high, it's not a living wage. So then our housing costs are so high. So you figure 1,200 for a one-bedroom apartment, and 1,200 gets you three- and four-bedrooms with Esperanza.

COLLINGS

That's a huge difference.

DONOGHUE

It's huge. So it's amazing, and I am really grateful that they—then, of course, we had the Mercado La Paloma and that, so that that's just celebrating ten years.

COLLINGS

That's the economic development part of what Esperanza does.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So at this point we have the health promoters' training.

COLLINGS

That's the Promotoras de Salud?

DONOGHUE

Yes, Promotoras de Salud . So they really are concentrating on the housing, the economic development, the health Promotoras, and then into the Land Trust. So they're very much into that. So it's an amazing organization, and Nancy Ibrahim, who took my place, is now on a Durfee Award for six months, which is—

COLLINGS

Wonderful.

DONOGHUE

It is. Just to know that it's in good hands, and so I'm just very pleased.

COLLINGS

So let's just go back a little bit to the sort of early times, early days. You have your map and you were going around to the neighborhood trying to precisely organize the community. What kinds of conversations did you have with people? How were people responding to what you were saying?

DONOGHUE

Well, I got really some of our original board members were those neighborhood people, so we always tried to have at least half of our board would be neighborhood and supporters that really were there. So that was very important. Then just the training, so to speak, and exposure and helping people find their message and their voice to speak.

COLLINGS

So sort of speaker training?

DONOGHUE

Yes, and then testifying at council, because I always did, but I wasn't the only one, and that was really important for people to understand that and just to know what—and that was part of the organizing through SCOC. I was just thinking one time when we were organizing on the liquor stores was with the Conditional Use Permit, CUP, so we all went to council with cups. We held cups in our hands, you know, and every time that somebody would be testifying, we'd hold our cups up, just silently, I mean. But it was very good. We got a lot of publicity on that, just because that was very good. Lots of times you wore t-shirts or you made signs or whatever, but just teaching people how to—and, of course, that was much of the good training that came out of the SCOC, so I used that and just kept on with it.

But the map was very, very helpful, and they've continued to keep that map. It's in the Esperanza office, and it has a special merit because it basically really shows—and it was before the Staples Center was up and before the Figueroa Corridor and Alameda and all of that. So, historically it has quite a little message.

COLLINGS

Now, when you say before Figueroa Corridor, are you referring to the group that organized to clean up and restore Figueroa Corridor? This would be before the Land Trust.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. But the Figueroa Corridor was the efforts on part of Staples to come in and L.A. Live and do that whole part and all of the beautification and all of that sort of thing was. So the area from Staples to USC, I mean, that was a very desolate part, and in the riots, I mean, a lot of the burning was on Figueroa. So it was scary.

COLLINGS

What about language issues when you were working with this particular community?

DONOGHUE

I always had bilingual neighbors, and I made an effort to go to Cuernavaca to language school, but I never was really good at it. But I always had bilingual people, so from day one in terms of our staff, everybody spoke Spanish. And that's true today, everybody speaks Spanish, and it's very important. And Nancy's very good. I understand a lot. Mass is in Spanish, the homily sermons are in Spanish, and so forth, and I understand a great deal. Just these last six years, you lose it if you don't use it, and that's exactly. But I always know the verbs, and I can understand, and I just always made sure I had somebody with me who was totally bilingual and just in talking with families, that was really important.

COLLINGS

Were people when you went out and talked with them about particularly the initial project, was there any suspicion, or how did people regard what you had to say?

DONOGHUE

Well, when you see what happens in terms of—I think of Cecelia Nunez had lived and grown up in that area and had gone to St. Vincent's School and her kids were at the school, and she worked in an attorney's office and was just so skilled, and she really could speak, totally bilingual. She had just seen what had happened to her neighborhood and the factories coming in and what that meant and anything. She would speak that way. I mean, she said, "I grew up here. I used to remember when these factories weren't here." See, there so many of them were sweatshops, a lot of sweatshops. Of course, they went when all of a sudden we were getting clothes from Vietnam and from Indonesia and China, and so the sweatshops went. But just to see now what is in that area. Of course, 'SC has moved so much, and just even what the Mercado has done in the area east of Figueroa.

COLLINGS

So Cecelia was somebody that you met through the outreach to the community?

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. And she was on our board and was just a valued member and used to go to City Hall with me all the time. She'd get off work or she'd be downtown and she'd meet me at City Hall on her lunch hour. I mean, it was amazing.

COLLINGS

Were there other community people that were important in this effort?

DONOGHUE

I'm just trying to think of Maria's—there's a guy by the name of Hector. I always can remember their first names. Hector, he was so

good because he'd been in the Navy, and he used to come over when we were trying to get Villa Esperanza started and we got the lot. He helped. We did a huge cleanup, and we got the Conservation Corps to come, and we just did an amazing job of—it took us two days, but we cleaned this lot up so it really looked good, and Hector was one of the ones that did that. We put up a big sign that said "Esperanza's going to be building on this lot. Watch us grow," something like that.

COLLINGS

Oh, nice.

DONOGHUE

Then there's another woman who lived right across the street from the Esperanza. Her name was Maria. Her husband was African American. She was Mexican American. They had this lovely little bungalow, and they really watched Esperanza come up. She was on the board, Maria, and actually she's on the mural at the Mercado.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes. You know, I just think about people like that. So there were, there were just many, many people that you could just count on, and they were very loyal and continue to be. Pastor Brian Eckland was the pastor at St. Mark's Lutheran right by 'SC, and he's still president of the board. This is like twenty years later.

COLLINGS

Yes, that's wonderful.

DONOGHUE

He and I are very good friends, and he is just amazing. He's pastor emeritus now, and he's since retired, but he's on the board. The board, I mean, there's more attorneys on the board now and there's a lot more sort of financial expertise and so forth, and it's grown.

When you think about the value of our buildings, Nancy had a call the other day of a twenty-unit building is appraised at \$5 million.

COLLINGS

One of your buildings?

DONOGHUE

No. One next to us.

COLLINGS

So you've brought up the property values.

DONOGHUE

Yes, tremendously, tremendously. So we know what the value of our property is. So this one company had said, "We'd be interested in appraising your buildings, with the idea of sale." We said, "We'd be interested in having them appraised, but we're not selling." So I don't know where that's going to go, but we know what the value is in neighboring buildings. And especially people want to live downtown. We're on the Figueroa Corridor as it relates to transportation, and with the new Expo Line going in, that's huge.

COLLINGS

That's going to increase the value of your property.

DONOGHUE

Yes. But right now the biggest efforts that Esperanza is making has to do with the building. The hospital building came down and—oh, shoot, I have to think of his name. It'll come to me in a minute. But, anyway, he's building this tower. But he's also putting in a clinic. And the 'SC growing, and so that's the biggest one and what's happening there. So are the biggest challenges for the Land Trust and for Esperanza.

COLLINGS

I had a question about the early days, and I'm afraid it's just sort of gone out of my mind.

DONOGHUE

Oh, woe. [laughter]

COLLINGS

Oh, I remember what I was going to say. It was going back, talking about the eighties, how was what you were doing impacted, if at all, by the influx of immigrants from Central America at that time?

DONOGHUE

Oh, because I was in demonstrations in support of them, I got arrested three different times.

COLLINGS

Oh, let's hear about that. [laughter]

DONOGHUE

We were in support, and this was before amnesty, which was '96.

COLLINGS

What do you mean amnesty, the immigration—

DONOGHUE

IRCA, Immigration Reform.

COLLINGS

Yes, right. There was one in '86.

DONOGHUE

Eighty-six, that's the one I'm talking about. Yes. That's the one I mean. I was arrested during that time because those were the early days. We used to meet down at the Placita, and Ed Asner was a part of that group, and—oh, shoot, what's his name? West Wing guy.

COLLINGS

Martin.

DONOGHUE

Martin Sheen, and he was a part of that, and Blase Bonpane. So, anyway, actually I got Father Phil and the school principal and one of the teachers and myself and the associate, and we all went down and were part of the demonstration. Then there were like twelve of us from the parish, and then six of us got arrested.

COLLINGS

You were demonstrating American involvement in Central America?

DONOGHUE

Protesting. That was when the Americans were subsidizing Colombian and Salvadoran death squads. So we were protesting that. So we went flat on the ground, and then they did chalk marks around us, and it was in the papers. I've got pictures being led off with the handcuffs. Of course, we did community service instead of going to jail. And where did we do community service? At the Catholic Worker. The Catholic Worker part of these, they went to prison because they did community service every day. So we got to do community service, and I used to work at the Catholic Worker in the kitchen.

COLLINGS

So what you were doing prior to that was not considered community service by the legal system?

DONOGHUE

No, no, no. So I had to community service, twenty hours, and then they went to jail, which was incredible. I mean, just the contrast of that. You look about where is commitment? I was not prepared to go to jail. Some of our sisters have gone to jail. Catherine Connell did in Sacramento and others have done, but I did not. I mean, we were such a skinny little group in terms of Esperanza, I was not prepared to be away from the office.

COLLINGS

So this was all around the time of the Central American issues.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes, yes. Then the whole issue of citizenship in order to be eligible for affordable housing. I mean, L.A. was officially a sanctuary city, and I took that and said, "We will not ask for citizenship and we will not ask for any kind of papers. We need to verify employment." Our criteria for being eligible for our units has to do with no guns, no domestic violence, no gangs, and able to verify your employment. Those were the criteria. If there was violations on any of those, then you were out. But citizenship was not expected.

COLLINGS

But for people to have any kind of government assistance, they would need to either be citizens or permanent residents, so some people, presumably some of your tenants, would be receiving assistance and others would not be, but on your end it was all the same.

DONOGHUE

As long as they could pay the rent. So we did not have people that were on general assistance, because that's like \$96 a month or some such thing.

COLLINGS

But in terms of like Section 8 vouchers and such.

DONOGHUE

We didn't use Section 8. We never used the voucher system in that sense. Section 8 is really for market-rate housing, and so then that's a subsidy. Our rents were so low we wanted to make sure that people could pay those, and so you still had people working two jobs and trying to figure out. That's why our childcare was so important in terms of Head Start, because it offered that.

COLLINGS

Right. Let both parents go to work.

DONOGHUE

Yes. People that worked in sweatshops, that was incredible. Housekeepers, cleaning houses.

COLLINGS

Have you seen changes in the particular—or let's sketch out what neighborhood we're actually talking about here.

DONOGHUE

Okay. So you're going in our areas, we go up to Washington Boulevard, down to Exposition, and over to Normandie to Grand—I mean Mas Hermanos. So we've got Casa Esperanza, Villa Esperanza, and then we have four buildings right on the 23rd Street access. Then we have Budlong [phonetic]. Then we have two other buildings over by Normandie, so it's nice. The thing that's important about it is that those census tracts are all covered by the health promoters, and so we have health promoters in all of those neighborhoods, visiting, talking about lead poisoning and asthma and childhood diseases as it relates to connecting them with health services. So that's really important. Those are very old neighborhoods with high lead poisoning. So to make apartments not lead-free but lead-safe, and teaching people how, that was the health promoters. That was, and is, just an incredible job, what they are able to do. They go in with the information, but they run into domestic violence and drug abuse and all kinds of—and they're prepared to continue to monitor those and to make interventions. So the health issue is the access through the door, but you make take care of what you find.

COLLINGS

How do you recruit, select, and train this cadre of people?

DONOGHUE

Let's see. I've lost track, but I know it's over two hundred, mostly women, but there are men in there as well doing the health promoter training. It's a six-month training. They take twenty at a

time, because they have found that they want the range of ages, backgrounds, African American and Hispanic, and indigenous language. So they've worked that, and they know that the training is for six months four days a week, that's five days a week, and then an internship for six months, that by the time people have completed that internship, they're hired. We get internships all over, clinics, hospitals, programs. The California Hospital is a big one. Orthopedic is a big one. Other places. By the time they are finished with that, those Promotoras are hired. That's a living wage job, with insurance, and we will not let them go into any kind of a job that does not pay living wage and insured.

COLLINGS

So you actually set up these internships with these health service providers.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes, yes, yes.

COLLINGS

With the expectation that they'll be hired at that same place?

DONOGHUE

It just simply works out they are so valued, and so when an agency knows that they have an intern, they make sure that they keep that intern. So their training is so valuable, so it has turned into a job training program that we have incredible success with, because we absolutely place everybody. That was the genius of Nancy. The way she set that up was just absolutely remarkable, and that's been going now. It is. It's quite amazing.

COLLINGS

Yes, that's tremendous.

DONOGHUE

And it's still going. We use the basement of one of our buildings, is where the training takes place.

COLLINGS

And the training is not paid.

DONOGHUE

No. I was trying to remember that. At one point of time it seemed to me they were, but now they are not. But they know it is such valuable training. I know there was a point at which they were, and I know the funding for that is a little tough now.

COLLINGS

That sounds like a wonderful program.

DONOGHUE

It is. It really, really is.

COLLINGS

Are they mandated reporters if they go into a situation?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

They are?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Yes, and they do it, and they do it with great profession. There's one group that works with the Housing Department in building and safety and reporting. When building and safety goes in and does inspections, they use the health promoters to go with them. They train the building and safety inspectors what to look for in terms of the lead, the plumbing, and then they become mandated in terms of abuse.

COLLINGS

So they really have close contact with the community.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Right. And that's the point. So when we talk about the community, we really know what the flavors are and can speak with real authority. Because they're paid attention to, when they're doing especially now with the Environmental Impact Studies that 'SC has to go through in order to get their zoning and so forth, when the health promoters come in and can document, and they absolutely can. The kind of reporting in terms of statistical is just remarkable, and they have to have a certain amount of statistics to justify how many homes, what have been the findings, what are the percentages, and they have all of that.

Monique is the head one on that, and she's on staff now and she heads that. She's taken statistics at Trade Tech, and she's an absolutely whiz. She just loves math, and so the reporting is very heavy-duty and very precise and exceptional.

COLLINGS

Do they look at air pollution or other environmental?

DONOGHUE

Yes, and they know how to do that, because we're in what we call the armpit of the freeway between the 10, the 110, and the Santa Monica and the Harbor Freeway is right there and the turns. So the pollution is just incredible, and so they know how to do that as well.

COLLINGS

Have they found a lot of asthma in the area?

DONOGHUE

Yes, huge. We work with St. John's clinics, well child, and so that they refer families now to St. John's, and that's another miracle in terms of what families can get that are not documented. So they are served and served well.

COLLINGS

Do you have a sense of how the demographics of the neighborhood has changed? I'm thinking from 1986, particularly with the Central American influx and to now.

DONOGHUE

I came to Stella Maris in 1973, and there was not a Spanish Mass at St. Vincent's Church. It was mostly African American and white, and the Masses were sprinkled.

COLLINGS

Sprinkled?

DONOGHUE

Just very, very few.

COLLINGS

Oh, I see.

DONOGHUE

It's standing-room-only now in all of the Masses, and there's one English Mass and the rest are Spanish. So just then watching the school. The school was African American when I got there in '73. It's totally Hispanic. There's a couple of African American kids whose parents work at the Automobile Club, and they drop them down. But it's just amazing now in terms of just looking. And you can look at the school population, you can look at Norwood School, and we were very close to Norwood, and just seeing the school, the kids there. So it's really amazing. I was there from '73 to '84 at Stella Maris, and then I was on sabbatical for a year and a half. Then I moved to Sutro, which was just on Crenshaw and actually Arlington and King, and was there for twenty-five years, but I was always in the neighborhood in terms of Esperanza, so I've been in that neighborhood since '73, was until I moved in September of 2011.

COLLINGS

How did the changing demographics of the area drive the work that you were doing there?

DONOGHUE

Probably watching the exodus of the African American community and seeing the area immediately around Adams and Figueroa be Hispanic, and then going down to Exposition and south of Exposition, then you get more African American, and then watching it now. Of course, it's gentrifying so, which is just amazing. 'SC, in terms of student population, and a student residence is going up on Figueroa and what all of that means, it's huge. So then the Land Trust, and I haven't been as much, and that's why I want you to talk to Nancy. She's going to be gone on her—but at a point in time, and Gilda. We are now the focus of the Trust in terms of L.A. Trust South is going to be African American and Hispanic. So it will be both.

COLLINGS

So do you feel that the work that the Casa Esperanza and the Villa, the Esperanza work, has been mainly focused toward the Hispanic community?

DONOGHUE

Yes, I think so, just by virtue of that's the neighborhood that's come in. But the Mercado, I mean, when you see the staff there, that's Hispanic, Anglo, and black, so it's all—then the vendors. We have Thai and Peruvian, and so it's very multicultural. I think that's our strength, and that's what our city is, and that's what we want to be able to really celebrate.

COLLINGS

What kinds of changes has 'SC brought to the area? Just very recently we heard about this tragic case of the Chinese students.

DONOGHUE

They have such a large foreign student population. It's huge, and it's especially Middle Eastern as it relates to chemical engineering

and oil, and so that's huge. They have one of the largest foreign student populations.

COLLINGS

Certainly you must have run into a struggle over rising land prices as they continue to build out. Has there been any upside to being a neighbor to 'SC?

DONOGHUE

It's been a hard one. It really, really—I was on an advisory board that met four times a year with Steven Sample [USC president], and I kept that position. We, Esperanza and Mount St. Mary's, have become a very strong voice in asking for accountability for 'SC, and we've tried to organize the churches to do that. One L.A. has a citywide focus, and SCOC was South Central, so it was easier to get the churches around 'SC to be focused on them. Their membership in One L.A., they take on bigger issues, so we don't have the specific focus. Brian is gone from St. Mark's. The pastor at St. Vincent's is not involved that much. St. John's pastor, a little more. Holy Name pastor, not so much. The AME churches, First AME and CME, they don't get into it.

So Esperanza and the Land Trust have been the best voice, and those are the people that are immediately impacted by 'SC. So that's been a very good instrument. Having said that, the whole approval hearing process has been modified incredibly. I mentioned to you they only had one hearing for the Environmental Impact Study, and it was only for like—

COLLINGS

Regarding the Coliseum?

DONOGHUE

No, not just the Coliseum. It has to do with 'SC and the thirty-acre expansion site that they want to do in the neighborhoods for student housing and that. I have not gone to those hearings, so I'm not up on that as much. But I know that it's huge. 'SC has a huge

endowment. They will take over the Coliseum. The whole oversight on that has just been a scandal, and it's going to be very important. Having the Expo Line coming in at this point in time, it's a tipping point.

COLLINGS

So while you have many properties that have been developed, and that's good, you're concerned that it will not be possible to—

DONOGHUE

I don't know, because the land prices have gone up, not down, and acquisition is just practically impossible.

COLLINGS

You actually own the land that your buildings are on?

DONOGHUE

Yes, we own the land, the buildings, everything, and I wouldn't begin to be able to say how much everything is worth at this point, but we do own it.

COLLINGS

Esperanza as a 501(c)(3).

DONOGHUE

Yes, and we've paid off our debt. We have one more payment on the Mercado, so that's clear. That's an amazing twenty-two-year history, twenty-three, '89 to '12.

COLLINGS

You were able to get low-interest building money, primarily through the tax credit.

DONOGHUE

Tax credits, LISC. See, LISC doesn't do that as such anymore. The Housing Department, state funding, national trust funds, and bank

loans, but all of that today, the financing of that is it's a whole new kind of financing.

COLLINGS

Yes, the financing is a different terrain.

DONOGHUE

Absolutely, just to see how that's going to move. Our biggest abilities will be through, I think—and that's just my perspective, I mean, because I'm not on the day-to-day, but it would seem to me that our biggest hope is going to be in what we're able to do with the Land Trust, and that's going to be further south, so the immediate area, and Esperanza is going to move out of the building.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

In August of 2013.

COLLINGS

Why is that?

DONOGHUE

Well, because we had a fifteen-year lease rent-free, and the pastor now wants the building for—

COLLINGS

The building is associated with the church?

DONOGHUE

It's built on church land, and so they want the building, and they will use it for the church and for the school. So that's where it is. Esperanza will move in 2013 over to the Mercado, and that's where they're going to move.

COLLINGS

To the upstairs.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

That's probably a good location.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So it's right in the middle. We will miss the proximity to the four buildings on 23rd Street, which that's really a heartbeat, but it's going to work.

COLLINGS

So you were able to pay off all of these construction loans with the rents or how?

DONOGHUE

We didn't. The biggest loan that we had was on the Mercado. The way the financing goes with the tax credits and with all the funding, we did not have mortgage payments on any of the buildings, the apartments. Our only huge was the Mercado, and we were able to pay that. So now we get the money from the rents, and they pay for the upkeep and the maintenance, and it's very little money that actually comes in for general operating, but there's some from all of the buildings. But we don't do deferred maintenance, so you keep those buildings. You can do a 5 percent increase on the rents every year you have. You are able to do that. Some years we do and some years we don't, depending.

COLLINGS

I'm presuming that you never have problems with high vacancy rates.

DONOGHUE

No. There are huge waiting lists, yes. So that's just the way that it works. In each one of the buildings, there is some kind of a program

that's run out of the building. So the health promoters' training, the Promotoras de Salud has another office, another one has an arts and crafts program for the kids in the neighborhood. The Esperanza has a Community Center which is amazing, and a Head Start. I'm trying to think. Casa doesn't have, but it's affiliated with Villa because they're so close together, but all of the buildings have some kind of community service outreach from that building that when you go by the buildings, you don't see graffiti. Those buildings, they're outreach centers. They're respected. They are not bastions of gated community.

COLLINGS

So you're saying it's not that people are cleaning up the graffiti, that graffiti is not occurring in the first place.

DONOGHUE

No, that's correct, and when it does, it gets taken care of immediately.

COLLINGS

Is there criteria for people to come off the waiting list into the community, aside from income, and their position in line, of course?

DONOGHUE

Just that as vacancies—when people move out, it's usually to move up in terms of housing and purchasing home ownership, and that's so that when people's income improves—and they do an income statement every year—their income, as it improves, their rent goes up. So there's that.

COLLINGS

So rent is on a sliding scale then.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So you have to have 30 percent of your total income, and that's the criteria. So it goes up. But we don't have a lot of turnover, to say the least. But when people do move, it's because

they've been able to save and get money in order to make a down payment in order to get their own place, and that's been the story. So in many ways it's never been with the idea that you could only live there for five years and then you had to move on. As a result, you create community in very, very clear ways that home ownership often—I mean, people know their neighbors well, and that creates community. So when we are able to have community actions, we go to those units and we expect the folks to come when they come, because you know them.

COLLINGS

So what kind of community actions would be an example of that?

DONOGHUE

I was trying to think of some of the ones that we had. I know that they've started a what we called planning school, and they have it with SAJE and do it at the Mercado in the Community Room there. But they have representatives from all of the buildings come, learning about building and safety and community plans and this whole process, I mean teaching people the politics of land use. So that's a community action. So then when you need a demonstration, then people come because when they go to the EIR hearings they know what that means. They go to the City Council, and will it be in support of? So that's the kinds of things. So when they're identified, they're not just sticks in a filler. Those are people who have an active understanding of exactly what the issues are.

COLLINGS

That's a very educational role.

DONOGHUE

It is.

COLLINGS

Because that understanding goes beyond just the neighborhood as well.

DONOGHUE

Teaching community education and getting people to think about taking classes to get their GED, taking classes at Trade Tech. Trade Tech is an amazing resource, and it's right there. So it makes a difference.

COLLINGS

Now, the Promotoras de Salud are different than the health workers then?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

So, yes, we haven't talked very much about the Promotoras de Salud then.

DONOGHUE

That's the group that goes through the training and then works in clinics. That's what they do. But then there is a core of health promoters that are funded through Esperanza to work in five zip codes right in the immediate area. So that's a whole team. There's twenty of them, I think. It's about twenty, and they go in ones and twos.

COLLINGS

So that's kind of like a permanent staff then?

DONOGHUE

Yes. That's a permanent group, and they are in one of the buildings. They have a marvelous office and they're just really terrific, and so that's a different group.

COLLINGS

So we've talked about how the funding came about and, of course, we know that there are big changes afoot in procuring those monies

going forward. What are Esperanza's vulnerabilities in the current climate in terms of funding issues?

DONOGHUE

I know that they had to cut back on the one housing. The Promotoras de Salud, which is the [unclear], I know that funding was cut. I know they had to lay off twenty. Twenty, I think was their top number, and I think they had to go down to maybe fourteen. So they had, I think six that actually they had to—and they had to figure out ways in which they could cut some salaries and have people work part-time, so you could save jobs. Then some people they had to cut, period. So I know that was a problem.

There's two big vacancies right now at the Rocoto Bakery, and right now it's very, very hard to get a loan, a business loan. The bakery has to have a tremendous amount of equipment, and it's expensive. I know that that place has not been—we have two vacancies that are very obvious, and they're being very careful about taking in new people in this economic climate. That's kind of sad, but you want the people to be able to succeed. So the folks that are there now are making it, so they have a high bar. But when you go there at lunchtime and the place is jammed, and breakfast early in the morning, and then two evenings a week, two or three, but just making sure that that place is going to continue, and it is. I don't know in terms of a staff where the next opportunities are going to be. Moving is going to be a big job. But the very fact that Nancy is able to take the six months is such a statement of health and promise, and for that I am very grateful.

COLLINGS

In terms of the buildings and the maintenance, since we're talking about money types of issues, were you able to build energy-efficient buildings, or were you not able to take on those costs at the time?

DONOGHUE

They didn't have the concept then twenty years ago. We only have two new constructions, and it was the first two we did. Then we started taking over slum buildings.

COLLINGS

Oh, the rest were renovations, yes, of course.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So they were gutted. So it was taking old buildings and making larger units and reducing the density and making three and four bedrooms, is what we do basically, and that's what we have.

So because of that, the best part of those is that they're lead-free. So they were totally gutted and started over. But you think about the kinds of plumbing, all of—so those pieces and parts wear out, so you're talking replacements, all of that.

COLLINGS

Yes, so that's something to be concerned about.

DONOGHUE

It is, and now, I mean, I'm trying to think of it. I think it's called LEED, L-E-E-D. That came up after the new construction. So we have good construction, but it doesn't begin to reflect that in that same way. So if and when we were ever to build again, with the Land Trust, those buildings will be new construction, so then who's going to be able to do that? And who will go in? So we'll see.

COLLINGS

It sounds like Esperanza came along at just the right moment in terms of funding streams for affordable housing.

DONOGHUE

Exactly, it absolutely did. And you'll get the stories from East L.A. and from Concerned Citizens, and you've got Little Tokyo, so you'll see the contrasts between each of those, and it is amazing. Each one, I mean, we were all collaborators together, which those were

all for the most part—Bill was just an incredible exception, Watanabe, and his staff. And Dean, who's taking over, I know very well. There is such a respect and relational bond that came out of all of us that was not competitive and backstabbing. I think that speaks to the kind of spirit of each one of the organizations. There's a real mutual respect and regard that continues to this day, and I think that's important.

COLLINGS

So of those original—we should say sort of original to Los Angeles—CDCs that you mentioned, was any one of them kind of a leader for the rest in some ways in terms of—

DONOGHUE

Well, we worked with the community, it's called Abode now, and Robin Hughes, Robin and Ann Sewell. Ann was the first director and then Robin. We had such a good relationship with them all the way through, and I think Robin, she's countywide now, so I mean, they go all the way to Long Beach. I mean, they're all over L.A. County. We have been very geographic specific, as has Concerned Citizens and East L.A. Housing and Little Tokyo.

COLLINGS

Right, and West Hollywood as well.

DONOGHUE

Exactly, yes.

COLLINGS

Yes, and Santa Monica.

DONOGHUE

Yes. We all know one another very well and over the years have come together in groups through our kind of business associations and so forth.

COLLINGS

SCANPH being one of them?

DONOGHUE

SCANPH, yes, Center for Nonprofit Housing. So we do that, and it's really, really important that there is that collaboration and respect. Those are very, very key words.

COLLINGS

Were there things that you learned from the others, just in terms of grants, how to go about submitting an application or dealing with the tax code?

DONOGHUE

I don't think, because LISC used to do trainings for all of us, and we'd all go for those. LISC was a very good kind of coordinator for information that everybody took advantage of. So you just did the drill. We would submit our applications every year, and we'd get funded every year. I mean, we did a good job.

COLLINGS

You were submitting it to—

DONOGHUE

Well, you do it to LISC, and they had so much money that they had so many investors. Investors used to make 12 to 14 percent a year on their investments for fifteen years.

COLLINGS

In low-income housing.

DONOGHUE

In low-income housing. You sort of hold them up as these good stewards, but 14 percent? I mean, that was pretty good.

COLLINGS

You have a whole sort of a wall of these folks memorialized at the Mercado, that's Washington Mutual and Bank of America.

DONOGHUE

Oh, absolutely. Oh, yes. I mean, you saw them.

COLLINGS

All of these good citizens.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Well, you saw that, so that's really important.

COLLINGS

So really the low-income tax credit was the key to all of this.

DONOGHUE

Was a godsend, absolutely, and to try and make that be permanent. But, I mean, you think about tax reform now.

COLLINGS

Right. There's a question, oh, well, maybe that, quote, unquote, "loophole" will be eliminated.

DONOGHUE

Yes, exactly. And how are we going to pay for affordable housing? When you think about how high the rents are now and where we are, it's incredible.

COLLINGS

Yes. It seems to be a very significant moment right now. So we'll have to find out what happens in the years ahead.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Would this be a good time to—

DONOGHUE

Yes. [End of May 2, 2012 interview]

1.5. Session Five (June 5, 2012)

COLLINGS

Today is June 5, 2012, Jane Collings interviewing Sister Diane Donoghue at the Sisters of Social Service Retreat Center in Encino.

We were going to catch up with the status of the existential crisis, I suppose we could call it.

DONOGHUE

Yes. The Vatican Congregation Defense of the Faith, CDF, in citing Leadership Conference of Women Religious, LCWR, also mentioned Network as an example of radical feminism.

COLLINGS

Did they mention Network or single Network out?

DONOGHUE

Singling it out as an example of an organization that was affiliated with LCWR, and they are not affiliated. They have shared membership boards. They're completely independent. LCWR has canonical status and affiliation. Network does not. Network has never had any known issues with CDF, they've never heard from them, and all of a sudden to be named without having had any prior notice was a bit uncomfortable. Simone Campbell is the executive director, a member of our community. Network has celebrated this year forty years, and Simone has been the director for the last eight. She is an attorney by profession and extremely skillful in her work. So as a response and after careful consideration with her board, she is developing a program that starts on the fifteenth of June to the second of July called "Nuns on the Bus" through nine swing states, and I'm going to be one of the nuns on the bus.

COLLINGS

Oh, how fabulous. What is this going to be?

DONOGHUE

It is a directed, targeted conversation and statement on the GOP Ryan budget, and the theme is Faith, Family, and Fairness, and it's those three concerns that are going to be expressed. Her first idea was to have like a Greyhound bus, and it's gotten much more developed. It's like a campaign with press secretaries and input strategists and all kinds of contributed services support. So there will be between seven and nine sisters to make three to four stops every day in key congressional districts in each of these swing states. We start with Ames, Iowa, and then Indiana. I'm going down these not in any particular order, and I can be off a few, because I've heard her say the names, and she can do them like that, and I have to register every single one. So Iowa, Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware.

COLLINGS

North Carolina?

DONOGHUE

I don't know if we're getting down that far or not. And then D.C. So we end up in D.C. on the second of July, which is going to be pretty incredible.

COLLINGS

Yes, it will.

DONOGHUE

So that's the strategy. When she talked about it, I said, "Simone, I really want to support you on this, and if there's any chance that I could be on the bus, I'd be most grateful." I had two big UCLA meetings this last weekend, one with my Project India friends and another with Gold Shield that I'm a member of. I told people on one-to-one that I was interested in this, and I got \$1,000 from one couple and 100 from another. Simone has raised 180,000 for this in an incredibly short amount of time. So it's pretty remarkable what she did. I have more money coming in as people—everybody who I talked with and told on one-to-one, "What can I do?"

I said, "Well, if you want to write a check in support of Network Lobby, that's the way you can do it," and that's what happened. So today I hope to write a "Dear Family and Friends" letter email and just let people know where I'm going, what I'll be a part of. My biggest concerns, and what she is very specific about, is to be mindful of the media and how you answer questions. The topics and what you choose to speak about, reflecting your own experience and background, not take on the bishops, not bring attention in terms of the tension between LCWR and bishops. That's not what we're talking about. This is the Ryan budget and swing votes in swing districts. So my concern is that I will be able to stay on message, that I will make a contribution, that we are going to have to be very skillful in the way that we trade off and support and back up one another and figure out. All of that is going to be a job training onsite. I mean, it's not anything that you prepare for in the sense of having a text, you know, so forth. You have to really be able to take the temperatures and figure out how the wind is blowing.

COLLINGS

Who else is going?

DONOGHUE

I don't know. I shouldn't say it that way. She has approximately seven spots and possibly nine, but of that there are three to four sisters that work on the Network staff that would be absolutely critical. Simone, myself, another former member of our community was very interested in going and had done an incredible amount of immigration advocacy and working specifically with women whose children were born here and they were not then subject to deportation. So she said, "I want to go. I want to see if I can clear my calendar." In the meantime, Simone's holding a spot for her. So that's what it looks like. In addition, there has to be two drivers on the bus.

This is a bus that looks more like a campaign bus. It's got two kind of sitting areas, a refrigerator, wifi. It's really totally equipped for

this kind of—so when you see pictures of candidates on the bus, it's that kind of a bus and that kind of support services, which is really going to be interesting. So in order to meet the kind of spotlight that we're going to be in, you absolutely have to have a level of competency and confidence that is very, very critical.

COLLINGS

When you talk about staying on message, will you be talking about immigration issues?

DONOGHUE

Yes. She asked Jamie and Ayumi for pictures of our community members in these kinds of situations, and we have to be sure that we don't have people, namely children, who are in pictures without their permission. So what she's been doing is Ayumi and Jamie have been calling sisters and saying, "Is it okay to have—?" There's a picture of me speaking on immigration issues. This has to do with about three years ago, three, four years, when the LAPD was parked outside the off-ramps of the Harbor Freeway by St. John's Episcopal, because St. John's had the Child Wellness Center and families could come there with not asking for immigration I.D., so to speak. So the police knew that families would be coming, and they stopped all these cars with—I mean, you talk about racial segregation I.D.

COLLINGS

Did the LAPD have this mandate?

DONOGHUE

Now they do, yes.

COLLINGS

Article 40, or I forget what it's called.

DONOGHUE

Yes. This was prior to.

COLLINGS

This was prior to that?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

I see. I thought this was a longstanding directive.

DONOGHUE

No. Prior to. We were speaking out against it and really blew their cover. So I was speaking at St. John's, and so it's just me talking with signs in back of me. So that's the kind of pictures that they want.

COLLINGS

How is this going to be organized in terms of the stops? You come into town and then what happens?

DONOGHUE

See, this is an act of faith on my part. I haven't a clue right now. I'm waiting to see what's going to come in the next couple of days in terms of time slots and schedule and so forth. I know it's going to be grueling, and I am eighty-one, and so I will be the oldest one on the bus, I am sure. So what I want to make sure is that there are no exceptions for me and that the pace—I have to just be tuned and groomed to keep the pace.

COLLINGS

Will you be sort of touching base with parishes in the area?

DONOGHUE

No idea.

COLLINGS

You don't know how they feel about Network.

DONOGHUE

No, because there's a huge—America magazine last issue had this incredible study of every state in terms of gain and loss in Catholic population based on the last ten years and baptism certificates. So they did this study with all the Catholic parishes and dioceses. So understood California would be on huge increase. It's color-coded, so you look at the map of the United States, every single state that we mentioned has lost Catholic population. So that means that you don't necessarily have—you may or may not know about the program that's happening here in the archdiocese called Fortnight for Freedom, and it's teaching against the Affordable Healthcare Act and preaching about the HHS mandate with regard to contraceptive and insurance for all people, etc. That's going on practically at the same time in this diocese, but it's going to be all over the country because that's the bishops.

COLLINGS

And they call it Fortnight of Freedom.

DONOGHUE

Yes. For Freedom.

COLLINGS

Fortnight for Freedom.

DONOGHUE

If you want to stop for a minute, I'll show you what's—

COLLINGS

Sure. [interruption]

COLLINGS

We're back on, and we're looking at this parish bulletin, and it's advertising June 21st to July 4th, Fortnight for Freedom. "On April 12, 2012, the U.S. bishops issued a strong call to action to defend religious liberty and urged laity to work to protect the first freedom

of the Bill of Rights.” So that sounds wonderful, but what does it really mean?

DONOGHUE

Well, and you see what is really really taken on.

COLLINGS

Yes. “Our most cherished freedom is under threat, the HHS mandate for contraception, sterilization, and abortion-inducing drugs, Catholic foster care and adoption services.” What is the issue there?

DONOGHUE

San Francisco is the one that’s most immediate for us. Catholic Charities. They were told that because they did not offer adoption to same-sex couples, they would not receive any federal funds, and they chose not to. So their adoption services are incredibly curtailed, and that is happening in several archdiocese. So that’s one example.

COLLINGS

Then state immigration laws. “Several states have recently passed laws that forbid what they deem as harboring of undocumented immigrants.” That would be sanctuary.

DONOGHUE

That’s right.

COLLINGS

That seems like an area where you and they have common ground.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

That you are opposed to these anti-sanctuary—

DONOGHUE

That's correct. I mean, I was responsible and worked with when the Los Angeles City Council declared L.A. to be a sanctuary city, and I worked on that, and I was arrested three different times in support of immigrant rights before the '96 IRCA legislation.

COLLINGS

So at that time were you trying to stop some of the parts of the IRCA legislation? Because it's a very harsh grouping of—there is an amnesty there—

DONOGHUE

There is an amnesty there.

COLLINGS

—but at the same time there's a very harsh set of laws that were put in place.

DONOGHUE

We were trying to just make sure that the legislation went through, because it was going to protect people. So what we did, though, was demonstrate against the arresting of undocumented. So that was the particular stance that we took, and then we supported the legislation because it did grant amnesty. So we started over, and if we'd been able to really follow through well at that on that legislation, we would not be in the particular situation we're in right now.

COLLINGS

So we're talking about the '86 with the amnesty.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

When people talk about immigration, they always go back and forth between '86 and '96.

DONOGHUE

Right.

COLLINGS

So did the sisters have any particular views on the '96 immigration reform laws?

DONOGHUE

Well, those were so harsh, so those were the ones we were against.

COLLINGS

Right. Exactly. But was there like a mobilization and a protest around that?

DONOGHUE

Not as much, no.

COLLINGS

Because those were sort of just tacked onto, as I recall, an omnibus spending bill.

DONOGHUE

Right. That's right. That's right. That's exactly right.

COLLINGS

And it wasn't a huge social issue.

DONOGHUE

No. And you think about the spirit of the eighties as it related to the Vietnam War and the mobilization, and so much of the conscience of the country was really aroused by virtue of Vietnam. Not just me, but I support the thinking that says because we have a draft, everybody was affected. Now with a volunteer army, it's black and brown in there defending the white-os.

COLLINGS

Do you feel that the values of the Sisters of Social Service has sort of drifted apart from mainstream American values since that time? Do you perceive a sense of separation that maybe you didn't feel coming out of the Vietnam era?

DONOGHUE

Well, you know, we were active in the Vietnam protests. I was in San Francisco at the time, and I think I was in every single march they ever had, and I was not unusual. The opportunity for organized strategic kind of protest now just doesn't happen in that same kind of way. So that's why I'm a part of Network. I'm a part of a group called Call to Action. And I tried because I had been so involved with affordable housing issues, which is a big one with Esperanza, and just in terms of time constraints, I can do what I can do and I'd rather not spread myself so thin, but I'd rather go deep on specific issues and time commitment.

COLLINGS

So getting back to the Fortnight for Freedom, does this initiative specifically address the Ryan budget in support?

DONOGHUE

It doesn't. What it's much more involved in is the HHS mandate, and that's what Bishop Blair is saying. We have to talk about this more. We can't just come out and do this kind of pick-and-choose in terms of specific issues and then ask and try and mobilize. Of course, so many people are saying, if you read blogs in terms of these kinds of things, this is such an effort on the part of bishops to—I mean, right now in Philadelphia they are having the pedophile trial of Monsignor Lynn. That still hasn't gone to the jury yet, but it's pretty bad. So the whole issue in terms of pedophilia and abuse is so—I mean, nobody is getting excommunicated on that issue, and yet you're going after sisters and threatening them, which is sort of incredible. What we're saying is everybody else is working on these issues. We're working on the ones that nobody's really taking focus

and care about. That's what Network is doing and has done for forty years. So that's where we are.

COLLINGS

What form is the—

DONOGHUE

This is the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Archbishop Gomez has come out, and so if you see it in the tidings, every single parish is mandated to have this kind of information in their parish bulletins. Now, whether or not they do that, a local pastor will decide how much and what. When you have patriarchal, hierarchical expression of power and control, it's always top-down, and so it is very brave when laity and pastors in individual parishes take a stand to the contrary, and they pay for it. Bishop Blair in Fresno will not go any further. He's going to be in Fresno for the rest of his life. He won't get promoted. He took a stand, and that's what's happening. I mean, I'm saying that like I know, but that's an understood consequence.

COLLINGS

So just expand a little bit on who is Bishop Blair.

DONOGHUE

He's from Los Angeles. I worked with him when SEIU was trying to organize in the Catholic hospitals, and I met with the Sisters Council and representatives of communities. Mercy, Franciscans, St. Joseph, all had big hospitals. Their nurses were unionized, but none of the support staff, the cleaners, all of the people in the cafeterias, all of the support staff in the hospital were not organized, and fought the unions and said literally, "Mother knows best." SEIU was able to work with CHW, the California Catholic Hospital Workers, and all of the hospitals except St. Joseph of Orange and St. Joseph Hospital in Orange joined in Los Angeles area. Then eventually in the Bay Area everybody, again except in Santa Rosa, and that was another St. Joseph of Orange, basically everybody has joined, and the workers are organized and it has been very successful. I worked with him,

and the two of us talked with the Sisters Council and so forth. So I've known him for that, because he's just a very fair and open person. So he's gone to Fresno, he's worked with the farm workers, he's very supportive there, he's worked with the NLRB with regard to workers' rights and so forth, and he's not a radical by any means. He just isn't. All he's saying in his statement is, "You always hear about the bishops who refuse to go along, and they're usually extremely conservative, but the moderates never speak out. They always go along." What he's saying is, "I want to hear some alternative voices with regard to this mandate, because Archbishop and Cardinal Dolan has gone ahead and spoken for all of us, and I don't think we've had enough discussion. I want us to have more discussion at our June meeting," and that's coming up. So that's what he's done.

COLLINGS

When we say "the mandate," of course we're talking about the mandate to provide contraception as part of a women's health plan.

DONOGHUE

Right.

COLLINGS

But the mandate was rolled back quite a bit, and there are some exemptions.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, tremendous. And they're basically saying it's not enough. This is a part of religious freedom. Bishop Blair is saying somewhere in there that, "Look, we tried to do this in California and we got knocked out of court." So for us to try and organize some kind of a resistance, we are going down a road that's already been run on, and there's no point in it. Your argument just doesn't stand up legally. So he's saying that, and because of that, it's true, California bishops had a lawsuit in California Supreme Court. It just did not fly.

COLLINGS

What was their lawsuit?

DONOGHUE

I haven't got the exact, but it had to do with, I think, trying to stop abortions in all hospitals.

COLLINGS

All hospitals?

DONOGHUE

Yes, something like that. I mean, it was kind of one of those umbrella kind of things where you're putting your—

COLLINGS

All Catholic hospitals?

DONOGHUE

Catholic hospitals. But let me say this another way. It is not recognizing the reality of a society that is pluralistic, and that we cannot say this is a Christian country and only Christian moral principles apply, that everybody else is not to be considered. We are multicultural, and we have interfaith and a very wide spectrum of belief systems that we all have to live with and be not subject to, but give respect for. And that's the difference. He's saying what the California bishops chose to do was to impose a Christian Catholic moral standard, and it's just not going to happen.

COLLINGS

So he's saying something quite radical really, that the Catholic Church itself should stand for interfaith religious pluralism.

DONOGHUE

Yes, that's exactly right. Yes.

COLLINGS

I mean, it's almost a contradiction in terms.

DONOGHUE

Yes, that's right. That's right. It's evolutionary. It's not revolutionary. We have come to understand and appreciate this. I'm not sure, but I think there's a very large Sikh population in the Fresno area, and I know that there is a large Muslim. So that's pretty new. I mean, we used to talk about Catholic, Protestant, Jew, over and out. That was our community. Now to understand and appreciate Eastern religions and understand that this is America, and this is what this is about.

COLLINGS

So in the sense that America has a more multicultural approach, at least we hope so, and we try to think so, it stands to reason that there would be more of these, as you put it, evolutionary stands coming out of the American situation. So it's almost like being on the forefront.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So you get the [unclear] when you're in the forefront. So that's how it is.

COLLINGS

Going back to the example that you put forward of this particular priest, of all of his social justice efforts, was he penalized in any way for those, or is it he's specifically getting flak for the reproductive-rights positions?

DONOGHUE

He was on the other end of the discussion and the fight, so to speak, and he learned his lesson. I'm trying to remember, because I know he's head of one of the subcommittees with the national conference, and I should know it and I don't. But in any event, today on my little list of to-dos is to write him a personal letter and just let him know that I'm going to be on this bus and thank him for his statement and stand.

COLLINGS

Is there becoming a groundswell of support from the priesthood as these events roll forward?

DONOGHUE

See, there's no national priests. You have national bishops, but you don't have national priests. Priests are organized by diocese and then they're organized in orders. So the orders go across state lines and sometimes country lines, and very often if they are international, then they have their headquarters in Rome most of the time. So what's been interesting is the American bishops compared to Canadian bishops, as a for instance. The American bishops sign off on the new translations in the missal, and the Canadian bishops said this is in English and really made some very constructive kinds of comments, so their translations vary considerably from American bishops.

COLLINGS

So the Canadians, it's more vernacular?

DONOGHUE

Yes. I mean, that's just an example. Then the Asian bishops are so progressive.

COLLINGS

Really?

DONOGHUE

Very much so, because they are much more—they have to function as minorities in Asian culture, so their stand is very different. They don't begin to have the bishops' residences and the palaces that you would see in Europe, and they're very leaner and meaner, so to speak, and much more simple living. So they have a whole 'nother attitude, and their statements are so much stronger coming together. The National Catholic Reporter has done a really good job of covering the Asian bishops, and one of our sisters is from Nigeria,

and so Asian and African together. They had a meeting in Trent, which is Tarantino. Trent. I have to get it right. It's in Italy. The Council of Trent. You know what that is. The Italians, they had another meeting in that very place, and with African bishops, and it was a much different kind—Asian African. One of our sisters who just finished her Ph.D. at Chicago Theological was one of the presenters. So there's a whole 'nother dimension that's coming through, and this is an issue of really position and place of women in society in general. That's specifically in third-world countries, that's such a big issue. But politically even here in the United States, Romney and Obama courting the women's vote because all of a sudden it's understood, or equal pay for equal work kind of legislation, all of that. This particular action that's happened with Network and with LCWR is really a women's issue.

COLLINGS

Yes, very much so.

DONOGHUE

And women's power. So ordination's in there, there's all kinds of place savers in there, but basically the overarching issue is women entitlement.

COLLINGS

Yes. So maybe we could just talk just a little bit more about this proposed trip, if you have time this morning.

DONOGHUE

Sure.

COLLINGS

I know you were very, very pressed for time with everything that's going on.

DONOGHUE

It's just I don't have a lot of the kind of details, you know. It's a faith journey for me, practically, because I'm going. [laughs] Well,

truly. I'm making plane reservations. I made them yesterday, and I made them two days early. So I have to go back and call the American and up my time.

COLLINGS

So where will you arrive first then?

DONOGHUE

In Des Moines.

COLLINGS

It starts in Des Moines.

DONOGHUE

Well, no, it starts in Ames. I have to get to Ames, and I think that's about 90 miles. I have to figure that out.

COLLINGS

Where does this bus come from?

DONOGHUE

I have no idea. But it's got to be someplace in D.C.

COLLINGS

But, I mean, is it donated by someone?

DONOGHUE

Oh, no, no, no. Simone raised the money for this, and so you're paying for what you get. So two drivers, a really upscale bus with facilities. I thought it was going to be a Greyhound with a bathroom in the back, and it's far bigger than that. So it's like the kind of campaign buses that candidates use, and that's what it will be. So it's going to be interesting.

I'm presuming she contracted it in Iowa. I'm hoping they don't drive from D.C., but it's got to be an interstate kind of bus just to meet all

the different—and they took all those buses off, the Chinatown buses, from Chinatown and in New York, down south.

COLLINGS

To Atlantic City and what have you, yes.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Highway 95. But those weren't meeting the requirements, and so this one has to be very tough requirements.

COLLINGS

I'm just thinking that you might be interested in speaking to women in particular. Do you know anything about how the audiences will be generated or anything?

DONOGHUE

No idea. We have Network membership. We have Network members. There's organizations that are extremely supportive. LCWR, that group, they're meeting in July, but we have all of the support for people that you would expect, and they're sprinkled all through the country. So I'm presuming, but I have no idea what the outreach has been in saying, "Can we stay at your convent or are we going to stay in a hotel?" That's a question.

COLLINGS

"Can we speak to your group?" Yes, exactly. Will you contact local media and what have you?

DONOGHUE

Contact of local media. These are swing districts, so it seems to me there's got to be a whole presentation that is a political forum, because these are not going to be whiny "Ain't it awful" kind of presentations. This is factual, this is specific, and it's targeted.

COLLINGS

How are you going to be preparing the message? Because, as you say, you'll be peppered with questions and it will be easy to get off message. What preparation are you—

DONOGHUE

I think we're going to be practicing the whole time we're on the bus, getting information. "You're going into this district. These are the issues here. These are the concerns. These are some of the questions. Can I say how you're going to answer, and what do you have to say?" I see us being like in a classroom twenty-four hours, practically, doing this. It's going to be very tough.

COLLINGS

Yes, it is.

DONOGHUE

And stamina.

COLLINGS

Do you know anything about how Simone came to this idea?

DONOGHUE

Not a clue. Here she is in D.C., living in an apartment. She gets home two or three times a year. People do visit anytime in D.C. But it's pretty lonely in so many ways. She's an incredible extrovert. She has a lot of friends. She's got a lot of support there. She's going to be on the Jon Stewart show.

COLLINGS

Oh, is she?

DONOGHUE

This week.

COLLINGS

I've seen her on Lawrence O'Donnell and a few other programs quite a bit lately. Jon Stewart, though, that will be interesting. I'll have to catch that.

DONOGHUE

They interviewed her for four hours.

COLLINGS

On Jon Stewart?

DONOGHUE

Yes. And they're going to do four minutes.

COLLINGS

And the rest will be on the Internet?

DONOGHUE

I don't know how they do that.

COLLINGS

Or a lot of it. That's how they do it. A lot of it will be, yes.

DONOGHUE

Yes. But she's given up her car in D.C. She rides a bike. So she has to go to the market, I think she probably take a taxi or gets someone to go shopping with her or whatever. She said, "I take my bike to the [unclear]." She's on a number of advisory committees that meet at the White House. She takes her bike to the White House.

COLLINGS

Oh, that's wonderful. [laughs]

DONOGHUE

So she said, "I had an old clunker, and when I was talking about my bike on the Stewart show," they produced a bike for her and sent

her. She said, "It's like riding on the wind. It is such an incredible bike.

COLLINGS

Oh, that's wonderful.

DONOGHUE

She's really very pleased. But, you know, she's a good strategist. She thinks well. She's very well spoken. She has a good staff. So it's going to be how that all works. I mean, I keep thinking I'm going to be the outlier coming in in many ways, West Coast.

COLLINGS

Why is that?

DONOGHUE

Well, West Coast and you have New York and you have California, and then you think about everything in between. We're going to everything in between. That's very different. I haven't been in half of those states. I'm excited about going to Des Moines. I spent a year, eight months, in Des Moines, and went to school for that amount of time when my dad was alive. I remember going to Ames, so that's why I say 90 miles. How do I know? I don't. I remember when we had a long drive, so I thought it must have been about 90 miles.

COLLINGS

Okay. So we'll leave it there, and next time we'll come back and find out what happened.

DONOGHUE

Yes, come back and I will. I have to think about one of my big challenges is I have a laptop. It's going to be too heavy to carry, so I'm going to have to get something like a tablet, which means that's a whole skill set in terms of level of competency in technology that I don't have. I'm going to have to think about that. The bus has wifi on it, so there's a presumption that you're going to be

communicating. So I have to think about what kind of a tablet I could get. There's no way I can do an iPhone, iPad. That's too expensive. It's way over the top in my learning curve. I've got two weeks to get something new in my head.

COLLINGS

So there is an expectation that everybody will be blogging or sending emails to supporters?

DONOGHUE

See, I don't know that, but I think so. You know, first of all, it's in my DNA that I would want to do that. So it's not even a question of expectation. I think what's really important is that you make sure about who you're writing to and their capacity. I mean, nothing on Facebook or LinkedIn that people can hack into.

COLLINGS

Because I was actually going to say that was there going to be a Facebook site for this event.

DONOGHUE

Probably, because they're already on Facebook.

COLLINGS

But then you said you didn't want anything that people could hack into and change content.

DONOGHUE

Well, see, I'm not going to write the Facebook page. I will write my Dear Friends page, which will be individual, and I will be very careful about what I share and how I share it.

COLLINGS

Careful in what sense?

DONOGHUE

In being too critical of the audiences, the kinds of questions.

COLLINGS

Oh, yes, that would be disastrous.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So I will be careful not to make comments about other people's contributions, and I'll stick to my own footprints and where I made mistakes.

COLLINGS

Earlier when we were talking about this, you had said that there was an effort to stay away from electronic communication because you were concerned that you would essentially be spied on by the church structure.

DONOGHUE

Yes, that's right.

COLLINGS

Is that still a concern?

DONOGHUE

I think at this point that the concern was on response and strategy. Now this is a response. It's public. So it's out in the open.

COLLINGS

So it can just be all out there.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Well, to be continued.

DONOGHUE

To be continued.

1.6. Session Six (July 12, 2012)

COLLINGS

Today is July 12, 2012. Jane Collings interviewing Sister Diane Donoghue at the Sisters of Social Service Retreat in Encino. You've just returned from the Nuns on the Bus tour.

DONOGHUE

Nuns on the Bus, yes.

COLLINGS

Just before we started, you were saying that you were thinking about how this tour fit into the original mission of the order.

DONOGHUE

Yes. It became very evident and something that I referred to almost every day. We had sort of a standard presentation that focused on the Ryan budget, and Simone always gave that piece, which was very important. Then we had any—let me see. I guess the fewest number were three sisters and the most were five, I think. We had to rotate in, and I was the only one that was there for the whole time.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Simone had to take a day off to do a workshop in Newark, and so she was off one day, but I started from the beginning and went all the way through. So it was very clear that we had this sort of standard—we had a district office stop, different Congresspeople. We had a local ministry that sisters ran that was going to be impacted by cuts if the Ryan budget went through. We often had separate interviews and/or meetings with editorial boards, and then we had what we called the friend-raiser at night. So those were kind of the standard four, and there was always a little variation on that.

What, for me, I always talked about the fact that as a Sister of Social Service, we had this incredible charism history, legacy of political involvement that was based on the social economic justice teachings of the church going back to Rerum Novarum, which is New Things, 1891. That teaching explained why workers had the right to organize, and that was just a whole new concept in terms of workers coming together for their rights. So that was very important, and especially as we were in Wisconsin, and when you saw what was happening there. Then we took on Paul Ryan, and we only took him on mainly because, as a Catholic, he kept saying he was basing his budget on Catholic social justice, and we said, "There's no way." So it had that kind of emphasis.

Then the fact that Network had been named by the Vatican as an example of radical feminist involvement, and so we just said, you know, Network came out of Vatican II, a sign of the times. It was celebrated at its fortieth anniversary this last year, I mean, just before the Vatican announcements came out. They had just had the fortieth. So historically you could say here we are, 1921, Margaret elected first woman in Hungarian Parliament, Network forty years, and Republican budget introduced by a representative who claimed Catholic social justice. So those were kind of the framers of why we got on the bus, and it came in terms of an initiative because Simone went to what she refers to as the big table gathering, and that is progressive people organizations, including the White House staff, so members of, who meet every Tuesday night and talk about what are the challenges, what can we do. And here's Network, with a staff of nine full-time workers and a distinguished history, but a very small fish in a very large pond. She said, "I need help on this. I just don't have the imagination that it takes to deal with this. I need help." So many of the people, quote, "at the big table" threw in their cards. They had a strategy meeting the next week. So, let's see, this is like April 16, and by May 14 they had a bus, they had the beginnings of a nine-state tour, what that's going to look like, and raised \$180,000 separate from any resources Network had, because she said, "I cannot go to Network. We're tapped out. It has to be new resources."

These folks all came with that, so it was remarkable. And she says the amazing thing is nobody can remember exactly who came up with the idea of Nuns on the Bus as a tagline, but once it got set it just exploded, and everybody got their ideas in, and it became a real collective collaborative.

COLLINGS

So who were the particular people at the big table that pitched in on this idea?

DONOGHUE

See, I don't know all the names of the folks. I know that she always used to say the names, and they would just run out of my head. But they are big progressive people who—let's see. There's one that runs something called USFamilies.org that is very interested in budget as it affects, well, first of all, people that have any kind of supportive services for those on the margins, so people that are interested in food stamps, in Head Start programs, in the Medicare and Medi-cal, Medicaid, all the cuts that would happen there. So it was a combination of organizations and progressive people and an interfaith group as well. They had organized a prayer service every day at the United Methodist Building, which is directly across from the Capitol and the Supreme Court, and this was a prayer service every day at twelve-thirty, and people would come over. It was just a small group, a minion. So that was where we ended up July 2nd with six hundred people, which was incredible, and the people who had been participating in that prayer service, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, came and spoke, and then we spoke.

COLLINGS

Oh, what a wonderful finale.

DONOGHUE

It was. It was absolutely incredible. So those are, as I think about kind of the legacy of what this action meant and its import for us historically, because it was more than just kind of a flash in the pan, and it had great historic roots, but it also put us in a whole 'nother

plane and action for the future. Network will not be the same, and because our community was so involved with the two of us. Simone was the quarterback on that team, but it was a team, which means that the only way that we ever had a touchdown or made any points was because we all worked together. But she called the shots as the leader and did an excellent job. We could have approximately, I think, all told, we had twelve sisters that rotated in and out. And that was all the room there was on the bus because this was a bus that was used by rock bands, and so it had all the appointments, including twelve berths. The berths were only about this deep. You just kind of slid in. So we used them for office space and storage and so forth. But we had a wraparound kind of lounge area in the back, and that would accommodate six. Then up in front there was room for another six. But we had the driver. We had the advance person. We had our media person. We had two documentarians, plus Moyers' team was with us the whole time. So, I mean, it was very tight space. So when we would pull up to a stop, our advance person, Scott, he had driven the whole 2,700 miles prior to it, so he knew exactly where the stops should be, the best angles for media. I mean, that's his job, and he's worked on both Clinton campaigns, as well as on Obama, so he's very good and he really knows his stuff. So he would tell us and we'd say, "Yes, sir," and he'd get out of the bus, go in, take a look, talk to the crowds, get people positioned, set up a podium, and then we'd make our entrance.

Then Casey [phonetic], who was a media person, she would look out at the crowd and figure out who was there that wanted interviews, and then she would prioritize who was most important to talk to. Then she'd get each one of us, and she'd say, "You do this one, you do this one, you do this one." So we would spread out after we did our presentation with the follow-up. So that was one reason why we had so many spokespersons, so to speak, and a variety, which was very good, so it didn't look like—and Simone didn't have to carry it all. She had a very special message, and she was always interviewed each time, but others as well. So that was excellent.

COLLINGS

How did Scott and Casey get involved, these professional people?

DONOGHUE

Well, Casey— Markham, Arkansas is the bus people. So Scott is an employee of them, so he gets assigned.

COLLINGS

I see.

DONOGHUE

So when a rock bus goes out, so to speak, then he is assigned, and so he had that assignment. Casey had been an associate intern last year with Network, so she knew the lobbyists, both Simone and Sister Marge Clark, who's the lobbyist especially on the budget. She's just a whiz on the budget. She was with us. Next to me, then she had the longest tenure. And she just really did a very good job.

So Casey then had worked with Marge last year on the budget. Now she is a full-time employee with a very progressive media company called Faith in Public Places, and so she was—and I don't know who, quote, "hired" her. I think the bus company did, because you have to have somebody. Those two people are key to any kind of a tour. Then the bus driver, he was so good. He just enjoyed it. I mean, we were so different than the rock stars that he usually—and he talked about that. He said, "I've learned so much on this." If you could imagine, he is raising four grandchildren, and his daughter just went off the deep end. They're all teenagers, and their stories—I think they all even have different fathers. I mean, it's, like, incredible. So he's very concerned about them and how they're doing. He has one more tour to go and then he's going to retire. He's creating a festival program that he's going to run, and he has so many contacts with all these rock stars, and they always ask for him. So he has this really nice—but he'll be home-based and can keep track of the kids better, because when he's out, he's out for—

COLLINGS

Like a couple weeks.

DONOGHUE

Well, a couple weeks with us, but he's got this next tour. I put down the name of the person he was going with, somebody that is very famous. Mary J. Blige?

COLLINGS

Blige.

DONOGHUE

Blige, yes. He's going with her for the next four months, so he's going to be out, and then he's going to retire. So that's kind of his story. So it was all of these levels of involvement and interest.

COLLINGS

Yes. Well, it's interesting because you paint a picture of something happening on the ground and something that's happening in the mediascape at the same time.

DONOGHUE

Yes, exactly.

COLLINGS

And these two people that you point to as are the ones who are running the mediascape—

DONOGHUE

They're the hinge, yes.

COLLINGS

—level of existence.

DONOGHUE

But they had such interest and regard for us and wanted to understand more, and so it was just really amazing.

COLLINGS

So who were the other participants along with you and Simone?

DONOGHUE

Let's see. Sister Mary Wyndhom [phonetic], Precious Blood sister, and she had been very active in Network and had done a lot of local organizing in Ohio. Then Marge Clark was the lobbyist. Then Mary Ellen Lacy [phonetic] is a nurse and a lawyer, and she's a Daughter of Charity, so she worked at Network as a lobbyist lawyer last year. She was really a crackerjack, and she was probably the youngest one. She was in her fifties. She had her fiftieth birthday on the bus.

COLLINGS

Oh, that's great.

DONOGHUE

It was just amazing. Then we had another sister, Diane McCarron [phonetic], and she is the one that got sick, that had kidney stones.

COLLINGS

Oh, on the trip?

DONOGHUE

On the trip, and ended up being hospitalized and next week is going to have surgery. Anyway, that was just huge. But she was from Pittsburgh, came up to Philadelphia for this huge evening. It was one of the biggest ones we had. She was front and center with Simone that night, and then that night had this terrible attack and ended up being hospitalized. It was a little—

COLLINGS

Scary, yes.

DONOGHUE

Yes, it really was. It was just amazing. So, now, let me think about everybody else. They're out of my head. Anyway, I'd have to go back and look at my notes and just because every day was so full, and you just had to do a day at a time. Scott used to print out our

schedule every morning, and then we'd know what was up. I never tried to keep track of more than one day, because any time I had any downtime, then I was on the computer, because we had wi-fi, but we didn't always have it connected. So you used to have to write offline and then hope that it got through. There were three different days I lost my entire blog, and then I would sort of just summarize, and I missed the detail then, because I'd write in the morning and up to about two o'clock, and that would have been a ministry meeting and a congressional district meeting, and then the afternoon would be another press conference and then think about the evening. So to put forward big events in one day was almost impossible, because it was so late by the time we got finished at night.

Then at the friend-raisers, people would give us money and/or checks, and I was the treasurer. So after we'd finally got finished, before I went to bed, I counted it and tracked it because I wanted to keep track each day. We ended up with collecting \$30,000 in fifteen days, which is incredible.

COLLINGS

Oh, wow.

DONOGHUE

So we always had between two and three thousand at each stop, which was amazing. But that was the kind of support we were getting. Most of the checks were hundreds and most of the cash was twenties. Then we made a stop at a Wells Fargo and got a cashier's check for all of the cash, because it was scary to be—I had this little moneybox, and then I would go in the kitchen and ask the cook if I could have some little plastic bags, you know, Ziplocs, and that's what I put it in. So I had all these Ziplocs with the accounting, but I was able to keep track of it, which was really important, and so I did that. Then doing my blog every day was really important.

COLLINGS

When you speak of the blog, did you have a sense of what kind of ripple effect the trip was having in terms of not the broad-scale Moyers-level of media—

DONOGHUE

No.

COLLINGS

—but the stuff that you were putting out?

DONOGHUE

Well, you and Tom Honore responded to me the most, and so that was like every other day. You'd say, "Oh, good job," or, "That's great." But my brother, which it was amazing, I wasn't hearing anything from him. I thought, "What?" He's a very conservative Republican, and so this was very hard for him to take, but I sent him—there was a priest, a pastor in Pittsburgh that wrote this incredible—"From the Pastor's Desk," that was published in their bulletin, and he—I don't know if I—

COLLINGS

I think this is it. You sent it out. Yes.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Yes. Yes, in Cleveland. And my brother said, "Where does this man get his authority?" That's all he'd respond. So I said, "John, that's a pastor, and he's writing from his point of view, but I'm interested in—you've been getting my note every day. What do you think about the other things I've sent you?" So he said, "Well, I didn't know I could write back." Okay. So then he started commenting, and I could sort of—then I started sending some pictures, and when I sent the pictures, that really—he could sort of get the dimension of it.

COLLINGS

Yes.

DONOGHUE

It wasn't this fly-by-night operation. It really had quite a bit of sustainability. So I haven't heard any more from him. But I sent it to him and then two of my nieces, just to be sure it got out into the family. [laughs] My brother has always been my biggest supporter, but he rarely agrees with me in terms of the politics. You keep wondering how did we come from the same set of parents and family and take such different—but we did, and that's the way it is.

COLLINGS

And the bus tour was happening at the same time as the Fortnight for Freedom.

DONOGHUE

Yes. And that, apparently, had very little in the way of response or traction.

COLLINGS

Aha.

DONOGHUE

And ours did. I talked to Simone yesterday, and she had gone to see Paul Ryan.

COLLINGS

Oh, she had?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Because when you went to his office, you didn't get to see him. So talk about sort of day by day.

DONOGHUE

Well, see, we never saw any, because they were all in D.C. So the district offices, for the most part, take care of local constituent concerns, so when we would go to an office and we'd have fifty people with signs, all of a sudden the office is thinking, "These are local people. These people all vote." So the first place we went was Steve King, and he said in Ames—and he got written up so poorly and rather broadly, so nobody took the chance then, and so we were always greeted.

COLLINGS

Oh, that's interesting.

DONOGHUE

In some places they let all the supporters in. At other places, they said, "No press allowed. This is a private meeting." So they'd be outside chanting, which was just incredible. So the variety of responses was very interesting. So because of that, the traction was tremendous locally. In Pittsburgh, as a for instance, we had very little sort of, quote, "church response," except the Priests Association in Pittsburgh. There were about twenty-five priests with this huge sign, "Pittsburgh Priests Association in Support," and when we went to Pittsburgh, that was very, very strong. The pastor of the parish that we had in Des Moines that was not on the schedule, but they said, "You're leaving from Des Moines, so we ought to send you off." So they did this marvelous prayer service, it was just beautiful, and we collected \$3,000 that night from three hundred people, which was amazing.

And it was interfaith, and people would come up to us who were no faith and just say, "We really want to support you." So that was one of the few places. Let's see. We had the Jesuit parish in Detroit, but most of the time we had motherhouses of sisters and/or UCC Church, Methodist Church. Oh, shoot, what's the other one besides UCC? It's out of my head again. We had a Montessori School one time. So there was a variety, and that was terrific. If I looked at the schedule, then I'd zero in immediately, but, anyway. But overview, that was pretty much what it was.

COLLINGS

So people at these various towns were obviously told that you were coming and invited to come and hear what you had to say? How did that work?

DONOGHUE

Yes. We would do a press conference outside after we came out of the district office, so we would say this is what we talked about, this is what we said, they do not agree with us, this is why we are concerned, these are the cuts, and we'd almost repeat what we had told inside we would do then with the supporters. The advance on that was so good. Part of it had to do with the fact that we had ministry meetings, and people that were supporters of the local ministry were also at the district office. Very often, the distances were not big. I mean, you could walk or drive very quickly.

Then, I was trying to think, in Iowa, Grand Rapids, the police said, "You're blocking traffic. Why don't you take your whole demonstration over here into the park, and you won't be blocking traffic, and everybody can still come." So we did. I mean, they could have ticketed us because we were truly blocking traffic, but we were still very evident, and the local people, all the media and so forth, just moved over. But we were very pleased that the police were so cooperative.

COLLINGS

You were saying that you would go in and have the meetings in the district offices.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

So these were scheduled appointments at each of these district offices, not with the actual congressional, but with the staff.

DONOGHUE

No, because they were all in D.C., and that was one of the things we wanted to do was take—we had not planned this to be in competition with Fortnight. We scheduled it because we wanted to do it before the Fourth of July break, and, of course, that was the same rationale that Fortnight had. But we had planned this because of the fact that they were going to take a break, and we felt the timeliness right now, that's what it was. So that's how it happened. And we ended up pretty much—well, we were in competition with Romney. We were in Ohio. I mean, he was on his bus. He'd fly in, get on the bus, and then fly out, and then do his little trip on the bus and look folksy, and people actually contrasted—

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes, in the sense that we stayed on the bus, and he wanted—I'm trying to remember if Obama was doing any of his bus trips then. Anyway, there was a lot of activity and people—

COLLINGS

In Ohio, in particular.

DONOGHUE

Yes. We were there for three days, because that is such a key swing state, and so that was the reason for it.

COLLINGS

Did you have any sense that you might have gotten more publicity for the trip because the Supreme Court healthcare decision was expected?

DONOGHUE

It was, and, of course, we were in Harrisburg at the Capitol, and we had a huge press conference, and we stopped the bus and pulled over to the side of the road so we could really hear it. So we got Roberts, Romney, Obama, Boehner, and we listened to all of those

and the commentary. Then we drove into Harrisburg, and we were the big sensation there, and it was right on the steps of the Capitol.

COLLINGS

Yes. Oh, great.

DONOGHUE

When we pulled in, then the police just went crazy, and it was 94, I think. It was so hot. They cut the number of speeches of everybody else making comments and put us on and then cut it short because everybody was melting. But it was really exciting, just, again, the timeliness just to be there and to be able to comment was amazing.

COLLINGS

Well, let's just kind of like take you back to you're in Los Angeles and you're about to board a flight to your first stop, which was in Ames.

DONOGHUE

Ames. Oh, yes, we flew to Des Moines, and then Ames is, I don't know, ninety miles, I think. But the Fort Des Moines Hotel, when the owner found out that we were going to be leaving from Des Moines, he called the manager and said, "I want the sisters to be guests of the hotel."

COLLINGS

Oh, wow.

DONOGHUE

And the Fort Des Moines is really nice.

COLLINGS

Really?

DONOGHUE

Yes. The Unsinkable Molly Brown, do you ever remember that film, or the story?

COLLINGS

I know the story, yes, definitely the story.

DONOGHUE

That the Fort Des Moines.

COLLINGS

Oh, my goodness.

DONOGHUE

That's the hotel. So, anyway, that's where we stayed, and that was very historic.

COLLINGS

Yes.

DONOGHUE

So then I got there at seven—is that right?

COLLINGS

Seven in the evening?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Simone got there in the afternoon, so she got to meet the bishop of Des Moines, and he was honoring a sister who had worked in the immigrant community for thirty years, and so the work she had done was just amazing. So she was being honored, and so Simone was there for that and then got to take part in that.

Then it's called Congregation of Humility of Mary, the funniest names. I mean, when I think about all the names of orders that—and I'm so used to them, they just kind of roll off. But for anybody that—you know. And I kept thinking of all the people that were getting—you know, all my UCLA friends, and I was talking about Divine Providence, Incarnate Word, Humility of Mary, I mean, they're really strange-sounding titles. [laughs] But, anyway, these two sisters, blood sisters, they are the ones that organized this

incredible prayer service. They got everybody together, and it was just amazing, and so we had this great sendoff, and then they got people to come at eight-thirty on Monday morning and send us off with balloons and media.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, it was just amazing. So we have that, and then we go to Ames, and, of course, the guy doesn't show. The picture in the paper shows Simone trying to get the Faithful Budget under the door.

COLLINGS

Oh, that's a great picture.

DONOGHUE

It is. It was just terrific.

COLLINGS

Oh, my gosh.

DONOGHUE

I'm trying to think of where that is. I mean, I know I've got it someplace, but it was in the newspaper, and so that that—

COLLINGS

Oh, that's terrific.

DONOGHUE

Yes, it was. And, of course, that poor guy. When he said, "Out in the field," and everybody said, "Out to lunch." [laughs]

COLLINGS

Aha. He's out in the field, and he's out to lunch. Yes.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So, anyway, that was—and then we went on. From Ames then we went to Cedar Rapids, I think. Is that right?

COLLINGS

Let's see. Day two, Janesville, Wisconsin.

DONOGHUE

Yes. This is the, yes, drive to Cedar Rapids and Dubuque. Yes. Cedar Rapids we met with the editorial board, so that was terrific.

COLLINGS

The editorial board of the—

DONOGHUE

Of the Cedar Rapids Gazette, and that was in Iowa, and at four o'clock—

COLLINGS

What kind of meeting was that?

DONOGHUE

That was really interesting, because the editorial board asked really good questions and then wrote a great editorial in support, which was terrific. So that was excellent.

COLLINGS

Going in, did you have the sense that you were going to be always met with support like this, or were you—

DONOGHUE

No, we knew we had a message, but we didn't know how it was going to be received. And you get a cross-section, which you should, on an editorial board, but they asked very good questions, and we were all able to answer and all had points to talk about. One of the things they would try and do is get us to talk about the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Vatican. We'd say, "That's not our business. We're here to talk about the Ryan

budget. That's our message." And we just would not comment and just do that very, very deliberately and intentionally.

COLLINGS

Right. Well, that also, I guess, raises the question of whether you got more coverage because that there had already been—

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes.

COLLINGS

Because whenever the media can tie in multi layers—

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, and they do. We had so many—I mean, people were saying, "We support the nuns." There was a huge ad in the National Catholic Reporter that had over 2,000 names, and people paid \$25 and it cost 1,500 to do that, and they had it in three different times. So the support was terrific. Then there was another group, I think it's United Catholics. Anyway, there were several efforts, public show of support.

COLLINGS

So in a way, all of that coverage prior to the tour was wonderful advance publicity.

DONOGHUE

Exactly. Exactly, it was. It was amazing. It was a very good friend of mine who organized the National Catholic Reporter, and she just did an amazing—she's an organizer for SEIU, and I've worked with her for a long time, and so she did that.

COLLINGS

And what is her name?

DONOGHUE

Eileen Purcell [phonetic]. So she was on. She got my blog every day. I was trying to remember. I had first said I was just going to do five names, and then I thought, this is crazy. I've got to do more than five. So, finally, I don't know how to make a contact group, so Scott sat down with me. He would rescue me when I couldn't get on and so forth. I mean, I had so many people helping me just get through this because they all were so—I mean, Simone has an iPhone, so she gets all her emails, all her Twitter, all her tweeting, everything, and so she's always doing this. And I'm [demonstrates]. So the contrast is rather dramatic. But with a little help from my friends, I get through. So Scott finally made a contact group for me, and that was very helpful. Then I could remember, oops, I forgot her, oops, I forgot, so I could just add a couple, and so I did that pretty regularly.

So the other one that was huge was Tom Honore. He's the local or Southern California chair of Call to Action, which is a very progressive group nationwide, and so there's chapters all over the country. So he sent my letter to every chapter, which was amazing. So the upshot of that is the Call to Action is going to have their annual conference in Louisville, Kentucky, the week after the election. They've asked Simone to come and give the homily at the closing liturgy. Tom and his wife gave me \$1,000 to go. I mean, the conference is more, but airfare, registration, hotel, so I've got a good chunk, so I'm going to the conference. And now he's trying to get us on as a sidebar update of Nuns on the Bus. So that's the week after, and we'll know then what the political landscape is for that, because the budget will not be negotiated until lame duck, and so we'll have a much better sense. Then did I tell you that Simone met with Ryan yesterday?

COLLINGS

Yes. Let's hear about that.

DONOGHUE

I had called her or I sent her an email, and I just told her, "We are all praying for you. I just want you to know, we're right there with

you." So she said, "I felt so good going in." It was basically, she said, an exchange of sound bites. I mean, she said, "I was doing it and he was doing it." There was no real dialogue, because he's absolutely convinced that he's right, and he just doesn't—but he was very courteous in welcoming her and introducing her to all his staff. She'd never been able to get an appointment with him before, so this was a big deal, and he really recognized her standing, and that was important.

Then she said, "I'm going back after the election, and I think we will sit down and we both will be speaking from a much more realistic point of view, because we'll know who's president and what that means." Then she said she has this big table group, so she went to the big table this last Tuesday night, and she called me when she got home at nine o'clock, so that was midnight for her. And she said, "I just found out that the White House staffers that come to the big table reported every day to Biden and Obama," and they were so taken and their spirits were so lifted by what was happening—

COLLINGS

That's wonderful.

DONOGHUE

—and the kind of response we got. So she said, "I just couldn't believe that." But they said, "No, we talk to them every single day and gave them the update." So she just is really—

COLLINGS

I asked you about the ripple effect, and that's a big ripple.

DONOGHUE

Yes. That's a big ripple. So cross-country Call to Action, Washington big time, and then just in terms of our own community, I am most grateful that there's a new conscious awareness of where we are, what we stand for, what our history is, and how it is being exercised today.

COLLINGS

Yes, because there is such a clarion call to action now that may have been more diffuse in the past.

DONOGHUE

Exactly. Exactly. And now it's big time.

COLLINGS

Just about Paul Ryan, he does talk about how his budget comes from his Catholic convictions, which seems—I don't understand why he does that, and I wondered if he has felt that he has needed to say that, because I know that he went to Georgetown—

DONOGHUE

To Georgetown, yes.

COLLINGS

And I know he talked about the budget, and he was attacked.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Yes.

COLLINGS

Did he start saying that the budget came out of his Catholic convictions at that time, or was he saying that from the start? Do you have any idea?

DONOGHUE

I don't know that. I thought that he really—when he went to Georgetown and did that, because he was challenged tremendously at Georgetown.

COLLINGS

Right, exactly.

DONOGHUE

But he was so selective about what—Simone was on Chris Matthews with him, and they couldn't talk directly. They talked through Chris. Chris would say, "Well, what do you think?" But Simone was very well schooled and knows that stuff so well and could really say, "This is what it said." So there was a statement by the World Council of Bishops, all the bishops, on justice as being constitutively connected to the gospel, and that's World Bishops. That was forty years ago, and the name of that document is out of my head right this minute, but that has to do, and Simone talked about that as well.

Then all of the teachings of the Vatican Council, Church in the World, and Doctrine of the Faith. Those are just so important, constitution of the church, and then Church in the World. [Latin phrases], those are the Latin words for the opening sentences of each one of those teachings, and that's what we kind of know about or refer to.

COLLINGS

So is there a sort of a struggle for the hearts and minds of the Catholic community, the pall over this question of the budget and the attendant issues?

DONOGHUE

We didn't get any pushback on that. I mean, we didn't have anybody come, you know.

COLLINGS

Nobody who came to see you raised any of these questions?

DONOGHUE

No. I'm sure they did, but we were a hard group to take on because of the amount of celebrity we ended up coming with, in the sense of, first of all, historically the work of sisters is so well appreciated and experienced and documented. We do not have the abuse scandal that priests do and their credibility. Number two, our

lifestyle is so different than the lifestyle many times of hierarchy, bishops, bishops in palaces. I mean, think about it.

COLLINGS

In what sense is the lifestyle different concretely?

DONOGHUE

First of all, most bishops have a maximum of five years in pastoral ministry. They get into administration very quickly. Their training is not pastoral; it's theological and it's much more in running diocese and administration and interpreting the law, rather than even as a pastor knowing people's concerns. And for sisters, we don't get into the administration; we get into pastoral and ministering and being very present to pain and people on the margins. So our experiences are very, very different, and we can speak from them, and people know and have the experience of our intervention, our advocacy, our acting on behalf of, our empowering, and that's very different.

COLLINGS

So it's very dramatic when this group of sisters steps forward and says, "Look."

DONOGHUE

Yes, "This is the message. Look. Come on. Shape up." And we had a faithful budget.

COLLINGS

Yes.

DONOGHUE

And that was very important. It wasn't just a question of criticism, but here's the alternative, and the Faithful Budget was developed by Christians, Jews, and Muslim organizations, sixty-five organizations, churches, congregations, etc., in Washington, D.C., and it's reasonable revenue for responsible programs. Reasonable revenue means taxes, taxes that have to go on the rich, anybody over 250 taxed. Responsible programs are all of the programs that would be

cut significantly and profoundly. I'm trying to think if I sent it to you. Yesterday Network did a one-pager on the budget and Nuns on the Bus and said, "This is what we're standing for through the election, and this is what we're talking about." So it's very clear that we've got something to offer.

COLLINGS

So you said that this budget was devised by this interfaith group.

DONOGHUE

Yes. It's fifty-five pages, and it details specifically. And I have not read the whole thing. What we did was we'd say, "We have this budget. This a copy." We left it in every single district office that we went to, we left the preamble, and then we said, "It's fifty-five pages, but we're going to teach it to you in five words. Responsible programs, reasonable revenue. That's what we're teaching." So then we do a call out, and they would call back. So we said, "Okay. Three times and you got it. Four times and you'll really get it." So we would do this back and forth.

COLLINGS

At the—

DONOGHUE

At the press conference.

COLLINGS

At the press conference. Oh, boy.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So it was this call out back and forth, and everybody just enjoyed that.

COLLINGS

That's terrific.

DONOGHUE

Then we did it at the friend-raisers at night, so every place we went. So then that became the tagline for the story the next day.

COLLINGS

Responsible revenue, reasonable—what was it?

DONOGHUE

It's reasonable revenue, responsible programs. Reasonable revenue for responsible programs. And that's what it was. So that's five words, and down from fifty-five pages. And it was just fun to do.

COLLINGS

Now, is this budget something that has sort of gone up to Obama and Biden and other legislators?

DONOGHUE

Yes. It has to go to the House. They know what it is, but it will be the lobbying that happens because of that. Then, of course, what Obama's doing right now is in terms of tax policy, and what he's saying, and so that's a piece of it right there.

COLLINGS

Right. Exactly, because those are the exact brackets that he's talking about.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Exactly. Then the cut in what is happening with Medicare and Medicaid. I mean, you hear Romney speak, and he talks about the cuts that ObamaCare does, and he takes one set, and then Obama comes in and says this is what affordable care is, these are the cuts, but these are the savings. And Romney doesn't talk about the savings, so, you know, you're at cross purposes all the time, so it's very selective in terms of what factual information you choose to express and get a message out.

COLLINGS

And in this day and age, I think it's harder than at any time in the past to get a balanced picture.

DONOGHUE

Yes, because it is so—I mean, I was reading George Skelton in the Times talking about where cuts are, and I think he was talking about the California budget and the bullet train, but he gave a very balanced, both sides, and it was well spoken as an example of what can be done.

COLLINGS

Yes. I think the newspapers are probably the last place where you find that kind of balanced reporting these days, unfortunately. And speaking of media, you mentioned that Bill Moyers was covering the trip, and I know that there was a lot of coverage by MSNBC, for example.

DONOGHUE

Yes, and Al Jazeera.

COLLINGS

Yes.

DONOGHUE

They did the best. In our opinion, Al Jazeera did the best job. And they interviewed me July 2nd, and I don't know where it went, because the interviewer is the British guy, and he talked to me about it. They covered the event and then afterwards specifically asked me, and so I have no idea where that went, because they have blogs and stuff that I don't even keep track of.

COLLINGS

Yes, they have a satellite channel and they've got print media. Al Jazeera English, of course.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

But what about outlets like Fox News, for example?

DONOGHUE

See, they came and they were there on July 2nd, we saw Fox, and they were in Harrisburg for the first time, and that was the Supreme Court decision. So those were the two times that we can remember, because we always look for Fox. But whether they choose to cover us or not, and then if they do cover, whether it gets on.

COLLINGS

So there were no interviews with Fox.

DONOGHUE

No. No.

COLLINGS

Because I didn't see any coverage on Fox.

DONOGHUE

No. Al Sharpton was supposed to interview me, and then that got cancelled, and, of course, I was just as glad. I was so tired. [laughs] Then he ended up in the hospital, I think.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Oh, gosh.

DONOGHUE

So, anyway, that's why he cancelled. Casey said she was going to try, when he cancelled, to reschedule, but whether or not that happens, you know.

COLLINGS

Yes. [interruption]

COLLINGS

Okay, so we're back on. So I wanted to just kind of take you back to something that you had said before you went on the trip, which was that you sort of felt that you were on the eve of a journey such as the one you took with Project India.

DONOGHUE

Yes, I did. I kept thinking about that, because people would say, "This is really a new experience, this celebrity business of people wanting to touch you."

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes, and grabs your hands and so forth.

COLLINGS

Really? They did that?

DONOGHUE

Yes. [laughs] I have a picture of me, somebody's grabbing my hand, and I'm just bending down to say hello. We would get out of the bus and we just—and I don't have any with me. No, I don't think I have any with me. We had these stickers that said "Nuns on the Bus." So I used to get off the bus, and they were five hundred in a roll, and I'd just stick them on here, and I'd roll them out, and I'd give them, like, ten, and I'd say to people, "Pass these out and wear them to church. It'll start a conversation." So there's all kinds of pictures of me passing these things out, and it's just a kick.

But I mentioned, I think, in one of my blogs that I remember what it was like in India to have that. And my friend Skip Byrne was on my list, and I saw him. We went to a birthday party the day after I

got home with a mutual friend who'd also been on the India trip, and it was his eightieth birthday. So we went to the Nakamotos' to celebrate, and I said to Skip and to Bob, I said, "You know, it was like being back in India," because anytime we walked into a school, it just—many people had never had the opportunity to speak to Americans. So that was the big celebrity. Then college students their same age was the other thing, you know, and that we took the time to do this and came this way to have conversation, not to convert, not to proselytize, but to have exchange. So that very much was the same sort of message and attitude that we had on this bus trip. So it was very reminiscent for me.

COLLINGS

Why were people coming up to you and wanting to touch you?

DONOGHUE

It was support. It was support. It was not celebrity. It wasn't, "I shook the hand that shook the hand." It was, "I want you to know what you say is making so much sense, and I really support that." We had so many people who said, "Look, I've been out of the church for a long time, but what you're doing is so much what I feel and want to support." I had this one woman come up to me, and all she did, she hugged me and she started crying. She's a young woman. I have not a clue what the specific was except I know that somehow we were saying and giving a message that she could respond to and appreciate, and it somehow was of comfort, and that's what it was. We had a family come up from the memorial service for their sister, mother, daughter. Her name was Margaret, and she did not qualify for healthcare and she died.

COLLINGS

Oh, my god.

DONOGHUE

So they had a picture of her in the hospital bed, and it was her daughter, her sister, and her mother that came, and they said, "This is Margaret, and she died, and we just came from the

ceremony. But we know what you are saying. She wouldn't have died if she had been able to have full medical coverage."

COLLINGS

Oh, my god.

DONOGHUE

It was incredible. So we had the picture of Margaret. So Simone used to take that picture and just put it up and say, "I want you to meet Margaret." It was really beautiful.

COLLINGS

Yes. What other kinds of situations did you run into, people that sort of stand out?

DONOGHUE

Well, I mean, each day Simone would say, "Hang on to the story that touches you the most today and share it." So we had this one young woman who was in a program with Mercy Sisters in Dubuque. She had two children, and she was like twenty-two. She had an eight-year-old and, like, a one-month-old, two months, I think. Anyway, she was in this program where she got her GED. She had a part-time job. She was in transitional housing with supportive services, and she was going back to school and learning, and she was doing a CNA, certified nursing assistant, hopefully wanted to eventually get a nursing degree. So she talked about all the services, but what she was able to do with them, and it was just remarkable.

Then there was another young woman, who was in ESL classes and a full-head scarf, and she was a refugee. She was in Dubuque, and why they had such a large refugee population there, I don't know, but they did.

COLLINGS

Were they from Somalia?

DONOGHUE

No, she was Iranian. I think she was Iranian, but Muslim and learning English. And she talked about what those services meant to her, and in her own country she would not have been able to have that kind of education. She was very well spoken. So we talked about what this Mercy Center did and what supportive services can mean and what a safety net means. People are not permanently in those services or take advantage. It's a leg up, and they move out. So it's really important to say that we are the wealthiest nation in the world, and why we would have such disparity in terms of very rich and very poor and what that means, and this whole bootstrap mentality. Then when you think of when people say that so often, they're Anglo. Not people of color. They've had educational opportunities, very often in private schools, where the public schools are sufficient and really capable of good education. When you think now of what happens in terms of public education, the cost of college, da, da, da, da, da, I mean, all of those things. So we talked a lot about that.

COLLINGS

So you would stop in every single day at a ministry.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Were these places that shared the same kinds of progressive?

DONOGHUE

Yes. That's what was really interesting. But they'd have to. This medical clinic, Sister Mara's [phonetic]—and I have to think about where that was. I thought it was in Ohio. Anyway, they were celebrating forty years. She started out as a nurse taking blood pressure of people that were going into food kitchen, I mean, you know, for free meals, and forty years ago.

COLLINGS

So she was just screening for high blood pressure.

DONOGHUE

She was high blood pressure, and then she saw all of the complications. And the medical clinic has volunteer doctors and dentists and mental health professionals, and, and, and. And it's state of the art. Because she had a student that she taught who said, "When I make it big, I'm coming back here and helping you," and he did. He put in a million dollars for this clinic.

COLLINGS

Oh, my gosh.

DONOGHUE

So she gets all kinds of funding, but it's public/private, and that was one of our big things. You have to have private, you have to have public, and it's coming together, and that's what works. So Sister Mara, and she was there in a walker, and she has her office there. She comes in every day, and she's almost ninety, she's ninety-two, and here she is. I mean, that's just amazing. So people know those stories. She has a pharmacy. So we talked with the pharmacist. Free medicine. They don't pay for the medicine. First of all, anybody that came to that clinic is not eligible for any other kind of healthcare, nothing, and so these are the people that absolutely are ineligible, and because of that, it's just amazing what she's able to do.

COLLINGS

What kinds of crowds were you attracting? How would you describe the crowds?

DONOGHUE

We had more older people during the day, because they weren't working, but we had some young people. But at night we had a much bigger cross-section. I was trying to think in Fountain Square. I think that was Cincinnati, Fountain Square? We had two families with five kids, and they were in strollers, and these kids all had these marvelous signs that they were holding, and it was so dear.

But this family, I mean, these two women, brought all these kids, and they wanted them to see us. So they had the kids in the strollers, and then they had some that were four and five, and they were holding the signs, and they were so good. The friend-raisers at night would be quite a range of ages, and, of course, I mean, I was the oldest one on the bus, so I was always introduced as a senior member of the firm. [laughter] So I'd say, "I'm eighty-one, and this is what I'd like you to know." Then I would go through a few things. So the youngest was Mary Ellen, she was fifty, so we all had white hair, again, a credential in terms of who we were, gray to white. Mary Ellen had kind of burnished—she had dark brown with red highlights. You know, the Irish just had that. But otherwise, everybody else was a senior person, and that was very credible.

COLLINGS

So you would say, "I'm eighty-one, and here's what I'd like you to know." What would you want them to know?

DONOGHUE

Well, I said that I came from a community founded by Sister Margaret, first woman elected to the Hungarian Parliament. I'm a community organizer. People didn't know that much about what a community organizer was, but I think they do now, and that I developed affordable housing in Figueroa Corridor, and that was my credential in terms of understanding the importance of affordable housing and private/public partnerships.

And, of course, we went to Mercy Housing in Chicago, and Mercy Housing is all over the country, and it's phenomenal, and what that meant. Then the experience of seeing affordable housing with supportive services, and that's what Esperanza does, that's what Mercy does. So many places have these incredible programs. So all of that, that meant that we need more of this and it works. So that was always pretty much my message. Because I took the sort of—I refer to it at the inside track, and Simone took the outside track, but for our community, so she'd been at Network for eight years. She had her own poverty law center in Oakland for eighteen years,

and so those were her experiences, and so she talked about that. I talked a lot more about our community, our history, what we did, why we do it, and so forth. So it was a very nice balance.

COLLINGS

And did you get the sense that people were hearing this kind of thing for the first time?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Really? How was that communicated?

DONOGHUE

By the looks on the faces when I said, "Sister Margaret was in Parliament before the American women had the right to vote." "Are you kidding?" "Yes, that's what that means," to say that.

Then Sister Ann Lehner [phonetic], who's our sister in Buffalo, is affiliated with Hungarian province, and she said, "I can't tell you how important it is that you have lifted up our history and our ministry and for people to understand that." So I'd hear from her every once in a while, which I just was very pleased about. And I'd spent time with her before. I was in Buffalo for five days in April, I spent time with her, and just then to know how much it meant to her.

COLLINGS

So really there were kind of two messages going along.

DONOGHUE

Always.

COLLINGS

There was the message about what Sisters of Social Service and other Network-affiliated orders were about, even though you didn't want to explicitly address the controversy, as well as the—

DONOGHUE

But that is our history, and that's what we should know about, and then, of course, people, after they saw the Time magazine article, that was a big deal.

COLLINGS

Yes, definitely.

DONOGHUE

So that was a whole 'nother kind of credential in sort of the standard press. I mean, there was nothing—Time wasn't The Nation.

COLLINGS

Yes, exactly. So you did sort of feel that you were hitting a cross-section of the population.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes.

COLLINGS

And maybe changing some minds along the way.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Then, of course, the most supportive folks will be the Call to Action people in Louisville. I mean, they're way over the top. They're having a sister who's a former Dominican, was ordained, she's South African, and she was a member of the Dominican community for forty-two years. She has her doctorate in theology, and she trained the priests in South African, and then they went on to be ordained. She said, "Here I am, right at the step, and I can go forward. I feel called to ordination." So they had this ordination in international waters on the Danube.

COLLINGS

Oh, how interesting.

DONOGHUE

And there were, I think, eight sisters that were—or eight women, because there were laywomen as well, who had all this background, who were ordained. Then Sister Patricia was ordained as a bishop, so it was by three other bishops, legally, but illicit. They were bishops in good standing who felt that the future of the church had to include women being ordained, and so they ordained her in order that she could continue ordaining. As a bishop, you have to be ordained by a bishop, and so now there's a woman bishop. There's three of them.

COLLINGS

Ordained in international waters, as you say?

DONOGHUE

Yes. And that's the idea of this, so that you're not subject to any local diocese. So the ordinations are legal and illicit, without permission.

COLLINGS

So what would the future path be for such a person?

DONOGHUE

Well, there's women now being ordained all over the country, and they start their own small communities, and people come and support them. There's one in Santa Barbara, there's one in San Diego here, and they're all over the country. More and more, this Sister Patricia is going to be speaking at Call to Action. She's giving one of the main addresses.

This Father Roy Bourgeois, who is a Maryknoll priest, and he participated in an ordination as a witness, so he's under censure now. He's one who started the action against the School of the Americas, the training of Latin American service people to go back

into their countries, and he's the one who did that. And there's a woman who worked with him for these many years and decided she wanted to be ordained, and she was. He witnessed that ordination and then was censured by the Vatican.

COLLINGS

What was the action against the School of the Americas?

DONOGHUE

Well, he organizes that. People get arrested every year. It's been going for, like, ten years, and people get arrested for—they want to close the School of the Americas down, because what they do is train military to go after political insurgents in countries. I mean, that was the Contra. I mean, that's what that is about.

COLLINGS

That's what that was, yes.

DONOGHUE

So in Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, they're very, very active, and especially the death squads. They've all been trained there. So they're trying to shut it down, and that's what that's about. So, in any event, there's a film, it's called Pink Smoke Over the Vatican, and it's the story of women's ordination. Father Bourgeois came to that, and we had the meeting at the Islamic Center in Culver City in April. So he came and that was a marvelous studio. There's about two hundred people there, and there were six women in training to be ordained. So it's happening.

COLLINGS

How do these kinds of issues like the gender issues and the political issues, such as we saw with regard to the Contras and so forth, how do those kind of intersect with the more closer-to-home social justice issues that have to do with income inequality in America? It seems like there's a kind of moment where—well, just that that phrase has become sort of mainstream is something quite new. I

mean, is there an effort to sort of separate those other perhaps more radical and alienating ideas from this other?

DONOGHUE

I mean, I'm going to the conference, and I don't speak out as in a—let me say this. I think women's ordination is inevitable. It's not my highest priority, but I would always support and never step back. The issues with regard to gender inequality, gay marriage, I would always support. It's not my highest priority. My biggest priorities have to do with the economic justice issues around food, clothing, shelter. That's basic, and that's where I am. So I'm not in the forefront, but I would never deny my approval, my support of, and my standing with. At eighty-one, I've got so much energy, and I'm protective of how I use it. But as a community organizer these many years, I pick my issues, and I do it prayerfully, carefully.

COLLINGS

Because it certainly seems like it would be the preference of the right wing of the Republican Party to sort of shift the message of something like the Nuns on the Bus Tour into something about that had to do with women's ordination.

DONOGHUE

Yes, exactly. Exactly.

COLLINGS

So there's a great danger there.

DONOGHUE

Yes. I mean, we're going to that conference. Patricia will be there as giving the keynote. I hope to meet her. I'm looking forward to—it's very progressive Catholics. But I'm going not as a representative or spokesperson of anything more than my own belief, my own conscience, and I'm not the head of anything. I am a member in good standing of the Sisters of Social Service. Simone is going as the head of Network and will be talking about the Ryan budget. That's what we think the importance is. This is after the election, so

we'll know exactly what the possibilities are, and we'll either be celebrating remarkably, or we'll be rolling up our sleeves. It'll be that stark in terms of what it would be.

COLLINGS

It's really a bit chilling, isn't it?

DONOGHUE

Yes, truly.

COLLINGS

Did you get a sense of the urgency of that from the crowds that you were seeing along the way, that there was a kind of a revitalized—

DONOGHUE

We had the sense that, first of all, people did not know about the Ryan budget.

COLLINGS

Aha. Oh, that's what you were getting.

DONOGHUE

Did not understand that, did not realize what it meant, the fact that it passed in the House, the fact that yesterday for the thirty-first time they tried to revoke the Affordable Care Act. I mean, that number probably is more well known than the Ryan budget, and yet the consequences of that passing the House means that that's the opening—

COLLINGS

Volley.

DONOGHUE

Yes. And what we feel that we did, we had seventy-five people. Did you see that YouTube with all the Congresspeople?

COLLINGS

No, I don't think I did.

DONOGHUE

Okay. Seventy-five Congresspeople, mostly Democrats, but Republicans were in there, commending us for our trip, and each one said something different. Each one came in and said, "I am—and this is what I want to say, and I commend." So to see all of our Congresspeople, the ones that we have a lot of trust in and work with, seventy-five, it was really something. So we know that we absolutely have started a new conversation. We took the inevitability of the Ryan budget off the page.

COLLINGS

Off the page?

DONOGHUE

It is no longer the standard. They have to go back to square one, and it will be in the lame duck session, no matter. So what we did was we got people to think about, and what we're doing in terms of all of the swing states was saying, "Think about who you're voting for. Think about who you're supporting. Do you understand this?" So in Ohio, specifically, I mean, that is an incredible—Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, all of those are key.

COLLINGS

Yes. Were you getting questions from people?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

What kinds of questions were they asking you?

DONOGHUE

More on some of the details, and we would say, "Look, we don't want to nitpick this." What we want to be able to say is, "If you believe that we are the wealthiest nation in the world and that we

should be able to have the kinds of services that we have now and support them, this is what we're talking about. This is big picture. So do you understand what this is about—," in terms. And we would take questions, more questions at the friend-raisers at night. That's when we'd get the questions. And we would maybe take ten, because we tried to make it an hour program, and then we would sort of mix in with the crowds, and each one of us, we all would split up. People would crowd around us and want to talk to different ones, so then that's when we would talk more. But it was basically more support of saying I didn't realize that the Vatican Council, the hopes that we had forty years ago, fifty years ago, because Vatican II is fifty now—you figure, we had Mass in English. We had parish councils. We had the whole idea of "subsidiarity", which means local decisions at the local level. All of these kinds of things were all the kind of thing that anybody who's fifty and younger grew up with. So then the older generation, in my age that went through the Latin and so forth and very hierarchical, so it's that mid age, and saying, do you realize how important that was and what a revolution that was and that we have to keep the revolution going because this pope is taking back in so many ways. Without turning to create division in terms of the bishops, that's the other thing we would say. We stand with the bishops, and they are saying this budget is immoral. They made a statement, and that statement came out before we started. So we stand with the bishops on immigration and with this budget, and we will not get into the discussion of Affordable Care Act and their concerns, Vatican concerns with LCWR. That's not our mission.

COLLINGS

So you didn't talk about the Affordable Care Act at all then.

DONOGHUE

No, except to say what it meant in terms of coverage now and will continue to mean, and why that was important, and especially with the Supreme Court decision. I was trying to think, that came—

COLLINGS

It was June 28th.

DONOGHUE

June 28, and we had four days to go in to July 2nd, or five days.

COLLINGS

Right. Oh, June 28th, here's your email from that day.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes. But I don't have anything in here about the Supreme Court.

COLLINGS

Maybe you sent it before the—what time was it sent?

DONOGHUE

It was in the afternoon, yes. This was sent on Thursday.

COLLINGS

Here's day twelve, which was June 30th, and I think that you had sent out something saying that day eleven, which is the next day, was lost.

DONOGHUE

Yes, I missed. Yes. I missed it. Yes.

COLLINGS

The first reporting on the Supreme Court decision that—

DONOGHUE

Oh, that it didn't pass. That was crazy. CNN really blew it.

COLLINGS

Yes. Yes, they did.

DONOGHUE

But I would have to go back and read where I talked about Supreme Court, because it's not in there either.

COLLINGS

Oh, this is June 30th. Okay. Oh, yes, this is June 28th, 5:22. This is 5:22 a.m. It was before.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Before the ruling.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Then day eleven is lost in the ether somewhere, and that would have been the one where you had talked about it.

DONOGHUE

Yes. That was crazy.

COLLINGS

Yes, right. But you were saying that you were not touching on that particular political button with this.

DONOGHUE

No.

COLLINGS

I mean, in terms of the message that was going out to the various parishes, you were passing out the stickers and hoping to start conversations. Did you get a sense of those conversations, whether they had taken place, how things were going in the parishes along the route?

DONOGHUE

Because we didn't stop, we had one—let's see, two parishes actually that we stayed. St. Augustine's was one, and this Jesuit parish in Detroit, and that was in the beginning. That was the first big one. Then we went to Mass, think of that, Saint—what was that? Sunday Mass. We were at two different parishes for Sunday Mass and were very well received in both places. In fact, we walked in with the priests at the beginning of Mass.

Then on July 1st, we were in Virginia, and we went to five-thirty Mass. We couldn't work in Mass until five-thirty in the afternoon, so we did, and then the next day we were going into Washington. So the priest, when he recognized that we were in the audience, he asked us to come up to receive a blessing, and it was a Spanish-speaking Mass. Simone speaks Spanish, but we didn't have a lot of time, but we told them how much we had been working on the immigration bill and how we stand with them, and we got this huge ovation. Anytime, I mean, when you talk about immigration reform, and that's something that we stand very strongly, and, of course, we would claim that to stand with the bishops on that so that it, as far as we were concerned, improved their credibility.

COLLINGS

You were improving their credibility even if they weren't improving yours.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Exactly. Exactly. I'm sure that they, you know, were not always pleased at the way we told them how much we were in support of them.

COLLINGS

[laughs] That's so funny.

DONOGHUE

Well, because they were doing Fortnight the whole time, and we were never on that page, in the sense.

COLLINGS

Yes. So some of the stickers might have gone back to places where Fortnight was going on.

DONOGHUE

Yes, possibly. I said, you know, to people, "Wear this to church. It's going to start a conversation, and you can tell them where you got it, what you learned about," and that's exactly what happened. Of course, we ran out of the stickers, and we had to order them, and they never came.

COLLINGS

Oh, what a shame.

DONOGHUE

Yes. We had them in Harrisburg, and we wanted them for that, and then we were out. So we didn't have them in Washington, and I wish we had, because that would have been marvelous to have been able to, but we just didn't have them. That was it. But the t-shirts were going at that point, and people were doing that, so it worked.

COLLINGS

What was the sort of the socioeconomic and the ethnic—you talked about the ages of the crowds, but what about ethnicity and income levels, from what you could tell?

DONOGHUE

It was more in Illinois, in Chicago, we had a marvelous cross-section of people in both—we went to—I was trying to remember what council. We went to a congressperson, and then we were at Mercy, and there it's African American, Latino, and so those are the big ones. It's interesting in the district offices. It's pretty white. Even though there may be population-wise, but Republicans are more white than—I mean, you know, Latinos and African Americans usually vote more Democratic, and we didn't go to any Democratic offices. I mean, there was no reason to.

COLLINGS

Right. You were taking your message to the ones who were the most hard-line supporters of the Ryan budget.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Do you have any particular memories, takeaways from the visit to John Boehner's office and the visit to Eric Cantor's office?

DONOGHUE

Cantor, we did it on a Sunday, and they knew we were coming, and we said we wanted to come. So we had this more than—gosh, we had seventy-five people there, all with signs on Sunday morning. And this family, the Campbell family, had a daughter who had cerebral palsy and was in one of these power—and she'd been adopted here in L.A. at Holy Family Adoption. Sister Susan Kam, one of our sisters, who is now down in assisted living with Alzheimer's, but she was one who adopted—was the worker who did this. So this family came up to me and said, "Do you know Susan?"

I said, "Yes. I have lunch with her every Monday. She's got Alzheimer's now." She's Chinese American, born in Hawaii, and with her Chinese face was one of the first sisters to go to Taiwan when we established our—and she learned Chinese, and she's just amazing. Then she worked with Sister Bertille in Holy Family Adoption for many years. The Campbell family had two boys, and so they said they'd like to adopt a little girl, and they said, "Because you have two boys and this will be your third adoption, you're going to have to have a child who's difficult to place." So Ciara, C-i-a-r-a, Campbell, and she's thirty-two now, and she has cerebral palsy. She does her little—she was at Cantor's office, so I spent a lot of time with them, which was just amazing. Then Boehner's office, he did not want any press in. He was very careful, wanted to make sure that we understood why Boehner took the position he did. Cantor is always trying to confront Boehner. He wants to be speaker, so he

always takes a very hard position and makes it harder for Boehner to have any kind. It's awful to see, and everybody is aware of it. And Cantor is a Tea Party, and it's going to be very interesting to see whether or not he makes it through this next election. In any event, that is of concern. So we knew about that. And then Boehner's office was very protective and didn't want to have anybody in, so the folks all stayed outside and, again, were chanting.

COLLINGS

All of the people who had come to support you.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Yes. Every time they would recognize, and we would say, "We know you do constituent services, but you understand that these people know about the Ryan budget and are pretty up on it, and you should be paying attention to the fact that they vote." So that was always a big part of our message, and then we always left the Faithful Budget and did that very well.

COLLINGS

You said that one way that the message changed as you went forward was that you'd incorporate some of the stories of the people you met along the way.

DONOGHUE

Well, yes, because we wanted to be able to relate to locally, and especially in Ohio. We just said, "This is—," so I talked about the fact that how much it meant to me to meet the Campbell family and who they were and what that meant and the kinds of services that they received. I mean, Ciara is living in supportive housing that's underwritten, but she lives independently, and she does volunteer work with families that have autistic kids, and teaching patience and talking about the need for patience with families in working with their kids. She talks to them, I mean, as somebody with a disability. So she was just amazing. I have a niece who has cerebral palsy and is adopted. My brother has seven children, and two are adopted.

They had four, and then my sister-in-law had a miscarriage, and a number, and so they decided just to adopt a baby, just to help her in terms of the losses. Then they had Jeannie for a year, and they said, "There's no way we're not going to adopt Jeannie." So they did, and then they said, "We can't just have one adopted," so then they got Marna, and then they had Patty at the end. So, I mean, it was just amazing.

They have Marna, and Marna gets all kinds of supportive services. So my brother, who's very Republican, is witness to what Marna's care has meant. So I wrote in one of my letters about how much Ciara reminded me of Marna, because Marna has one of these power chairs, and she has the use only of this right hand, and her hand is beginning to—arthritis. She's fifty. So she has to have some possible surgery on her hand, which is very scary.

COLLINGS

Yes, definitely.

DONOGHUE

But we'll see what happens there.

COLLINGS

Do you remember what were you thinking on the last day when you were there at Washington? What did that feel like?

DONOGHUE

Well, first of all, we'd never had six hundred people show up for—and it was 94, it was so hot, and they'd had these huge storms. All these trees were down. People had been without power, without water, without anything, and some areas without food. I mean, they couldn't get out. They couldn't get—it was horrible. So to have six hundred people show up was—and I don't know how they did it exactly, but there were all kinds of people that were alerted to the fact that we were coming and were there with their signs, I mean, and all kinds of signs, lots of kids. That was a cross-section in terms of ages and colors. There was a lot of Muslims, because one, Sayyid

Syeed, was one of the speakers, and he was so good. He really was terrific. So we had Jewish and Christian, Muslim speaker, and then Simone, and the four of us got on, and Mary Ellen and I spoke, and Simone.

So it was really amazing, and we were very conscious of the fact of how people had been waiting for us. When we came in and the street was closed off and the bus came in and we got out, and this uproar. We had to put our hands on one another's shoulders and go single-file in.

COLLINGS

Really?

DONOGHUE

Yes. It just was rather dramatic.

COLLINGS

That's quite an experience.

DONOGHUE

It was. It was quite an experience. And then afterwards, we went back to the Network office and kind of debriefed, and then Simone and I—she was going to have an interview with—Lawrence O'Brien?

COLLINGS

Lawrence O'Donnell?

DONOGHUE

O'Donnell, yes. And I was supposed to have Sharpton. And they both cancelled. We were so—

COLLINGS

Relieved.

DONOGHUE

—grateful. Yes. So we both were in bed at nine o'clock, and that was the first time. I mean, I never got to bed before eleven-thirty or twelve, and then up at five. And she does meditation every morning for an hour, so she'd be up at four. So it was just miraculous to be able. Then the next day I went back to the office and wrote my last kind of blog, and then Mary Ellen took me to the airport, and I got home at midnight, and then I got up the next morning, went to the party. [laughter] Then when I got home, I was really home, and I slept in the next morning. I took a couple days off, and then I've been here. I was here Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and—no, not yesterday, today. So Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and so just kind of getting back in the saddle.

COLLINGS

Right. You had never been to the Midwest before.

DONOGHUE

No.

COLLINGS

What were your impressions?

DONOGHUE

Well, you'd fly over it, but that was—first of all, just looking and seeing how flat and farm country. I mean, we'd go through miles where we could not get wi-fi because there was no Internet. To understand, you're so used to Internet here and on both coasts, but think about that in terms of the lack of communication, high-level instant kind of communication that we just take for granted, that it just isn't there, so what that means. Then to see small towns. I mean, that's not our experience here in large urban areas too. I would go up in the front of the bus. We couldn't see out too well, so you'd go in the front of the bus and you could ride shotgun with the driver, and that would be fun, you know, and have a little conversation with him, which was fun. But the documentarians were there the whole time, so anytime you went up in the front of the bus, you had a camera in your face, and they just wanted

everything. So finally we would say, "The back of the bus is cloistered, so no cameras." But they would come back anyway. But they were very considerate and respectful in the sense. At one point, I said, "I've got my mouth full of food. Now, how come you're taking my picture now?" They say, "Okay, okay, okay." And then they'd turn the camera off.

But lots of time we would have to eat on the bus because we were short on time, but when we would pull into a gas station, it was 150 gallons of gas to fill up. You can imagine what that was.

COLLINGS

Oh, my gosh.

DONOGHUE

But we had this one donor who gave Simone a check for 10,000 to pay for the gas, which was amazing.

COLLINGS

Wow, yes.

DONOGHUE

But when we would pull in, then all these people would come over and talk to us, because they knew about it.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Or we'd be going down the highway and people would honk.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes. So that was fun. It was just a kick. So we had a very clear sense that the bus was an incredible message. One day in

Pittsburgh we wanted to go to this restaurant, and it was home cooking. But it was on a side street, and we knew the bus couldn't go. So we parked the bus on the main drag, and we walked two blocks. We had our stickers on that said "Nuns on the Bus," walked into this restaurant, totally anonymous. It was marvelous. We took a seat. Nobody came up to us. We had this nice little—and then the owner came in, and she saw our sticker. She said, "Oh, I know who you are. I want you to sign my guestbook."

But it was a pleasure to know that without the bus, we were just regular folks. So the bus was an incredible—I mean, when you say the medium is the message, then that bus was the medium, and it was so well done. It said "Nuns on the Bus" and then "For Faith, Family, and Fairness." It said "Drive for Faith, Family, and Fairness." So that was our message, and it was people just responded.

COLLINGS

It's extraordinary.

DONOGHUE

So now just to settle back now and figure out, and Simone's working on that in terms of Network, what will be the next steps.
[interruption]

COLLINGS

We'll wrap up for today. [End of July 12, 2012 interview]

1.7. Session Seven (August 2, 2012)

COLLINGS

Jane Collings interviewing Sister Diane Donoghue, August 1st, 2012, in Encino. This is our final session, and so we're going to revisit a few of the themes that we touched on earlier, in particular the efforts on the part of the Project India group to produce a book on the seventeen years of Project India.

DONOGHUE

We'll be meeting in October, and Judy Graven, who was, I think, on year five or six, is the one that has been the author, and she's just been terrific. And her daughter is an excellent editor, professionally, and so her daughter's been helping her, and then many of us have read different parts, and three of us have read all of it. She has some eighteen chapters, and we're trying to decide if that's too much, but at least pare it down and to talk about the highlights of each year and not do the repetitive stuff in terms of what we did every time, but to try and give a particular perspective. So, anyway, it's been a good effort, and so we will be meeting to do that and then figure out the publishing. So that's our next effort. I think probably for all us who have been involved in it, it's been just a great opportunity to continue the connections and the friendship and the relationship, and it's been really, really nice. I told them, my little planning group that I work with, about this Nuns on the Bus, and I collected \$3,000 from them, which was just amazing. I mean, people just wrote the checks and said, "This is great and we support this." Anyway, I had that, and now I wrote a final kind of reflection, and I think you saw that, so they're going to put that—we have what we call India Inc, that is a newsletter that comes out a couple times a year, so they put some pictures and the final reflection in this next issue. So the beat goes on, because I mentioned that kind of the sort of celebrity experience that we had was one that was very reminiscent of our experience in India, and that all of us had that, and everybody knows what that feels like to be, first of all, the first Americans that many people had seen, and it just was quite amazing. Then Bill Moyers was on the bus trip, his team, so they asked me if I had pictures from India.

COLLINGS

Oh, did they really?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

That's interesting.

DONOGHUE

Well, because they asked me about what is it like to be a celebrity. And I said, "Well, I had this experience before when I was twenty-two years old, and I can just pull that up very quickly, because I know what it feels like and how temporary it is." So, anyway, they said, "Well, do you have any pictures?" So I said, "Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I do." So I sent them. I have no idea what they're going to do with them, but they're going to do a special in August, and they asked both Simone and I for pictures, for her in law school, and she had a poverty law clinic in Oakland for eighteen years before she went to Network. So they wanted that background as well, so we'll see where it goes. But I have all of these sort of balls in the air.

COLLINGS

Yes, you really do. [laughter]

DONOGHUE

I don't know when they're going to finally land. I just try and keep a sense of balance and kind of pace. I've been out of Esperanza for six years, and when I got back, immediately they said, "Is there any way that you could come and help us strategize for what's happening with USC and the takeover of the neighborhood, literally?"

'SC is landlocked in terms of building, and the extra properties that they do have outside that they would have an opportunity to develop housing for their students, they would rather do academic buildings. So they're saying, "Let's just let the students live in the neighborhoods." And what has happened is they have a twenty-year-extension expansion plan, and it's \$2 billion for twenty years, and they're saying, "We're going to put 2 million into housing for residents."

COLLINGS

For neighborhood residents currently?

DONOGHUE

Yes. Two million dollars will buy and build housing for twenty families.

COLLINGS

That's it.

DONOGHUE

That's it.

COLLINGS

They always say two million, and we say twenty families, because it's now 100,000 to build a unit. I mean, that's what it costs. So we know that because we develop, and we know how much units cost, so it's not cheap. We talk about affordable housing and what that means is very expensive to build and develop, but remains affordable for the residents for fifty years, and that's what Esperanza stands for. Anyway, so we have a meeting coming up with PLUM. That's Planning Land Use and Management, and that's a City Council committee that makes a recommendation that then designates whether or not they're going to approve 'SC's plan.

COLLINGS

I see.

DONOGHUE

We have one opportunity to appear before PLUM and make our case, and it's really David and Goliath. So I'm going to a meeting today to plan what that strategy will be and line up people who can be the most effective spokespersons. One of the people we want to get is Father Bill Delaney from St. Agnes. That's on the corner of Adams and Vermont. St. Agnes Parish has lost 1,000 families in the last ten years.

COLLINGS

Because of displacement.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So what happens is in the apartments where people live, the owners kick the residents out on bogus charges, and then they raise the rents considerably and then charge each student by the person. So if you have four people in an apartment, you're charging them individually usually \$1,200 a student. I mean, that's what it is.

COLLINGS

Yes, I know.

DONOGHUE

It's just crummy. So, anyway, that's what's happening. So we had very effective testimony last week. We did a press conference in front of City Hall. It was the same day they were doing the legalized pot, so we didn't get a lot of the press, but we got some. One of the most effective was a woman who said, "I have been in this neighborhood for twenty-eight years and I've worked as a janitor at USC for twenty-eight years, and I walk to work, and I can manage. We pay \$500 a month for the apartment. I can't pay more than that." So then you think what kind of wage is she getting as 'SC and how many people is she supporting, etc., etc. Anyway, her testimony was very clear about the impact and what happens. So we have to get residents and what we call faith leaders, people that are in charge of parishes and churches and so forth in the area to talk about what happens locally, and so that's a big move. That PLUM meeting will be in September. So right now we're kind of getting people lined up to make sure during vacation, during all this, and we usually get seventy-two hours' notice for the PLUM meeting.

COLLINGS

Are they held at inconvenient hours?

DONOGHUE

From three until six on a Tuesday. So everybody's been asked to block off the next significant number of Tuesdays just in case, but, you know, that's a huge commitment.

COLLINGS

Right. Right.

DONOGHUE

So, anyway, that's the other thing that's happening right now with 'SC. There was a fifteen-year development that had small businesses, the 32nd Street Market. It was a large development that 'SC bought back now, and so now they can build housing there and small businesses and make it available. So that's the thing that the group is asking for, is what we call a business development plan that is considerate of neighbors and small businesses and good jobs and fair wages. So that's what we're about.

COLLINGS

With residents of Esperanza, you've been fairly successful, you had said, getting people out to speak on issues.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

How is the organizing effort to get residents to come and speak going with this project?

DONOGHUE

Well, we've got these signs that say—there's a blank space and it says so many years in the neighborhood, so people are writing down the number of years, and they put them in their windows. So you go down the streets, and you see all of the neighbors. And not just Esperanza. We've gone out and got other people to put those signs in. They bring those signs to a press conference, and everybody holds a sign. Then there's some huge banner that says "Against Displacement," in Spanish and English. We never can take

the signs in to City Council, so then we wear t-shirts or we have stickers. So whatever works.

COLLINGS

It seems like you've done a lot of those kinds of visual displays when you have been organizing.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes.

COLLINGS

I mean, sort of thinking like way back, you had the example of cups you brought.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, we brought cups.

COLLINGS

What was that?

DONOGHUE

Conditional-use permit. The conditional-use permit is an alternative to what zoning is. So, for instance, that was when we built Villa Esperanza, and it was zoned for commercial use, and we wanted to get it back into residential. So we asked for a conditional-use permit to make that whole area residential, so we had our cups.

COLLINGS

Right.

DONOGHUE

And it was very effective.

COLLINGS

You mean effective in terms of getting media attention?

DONOGHUE

Media attention and then the Council all of a sudden saw all these folks and thought, “These people really know what they’re talking about.” That specifically had to do with—that was District 9 and that was Gil Lindsay. That was huge when we went against him and won, because he was sure that the next thing was going to happen is that I was going to run against him.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Oh, you hadn’t mentioned that before.

DONOGHUE

Well, you know, because I never had that in mind, but that was a fear that he expressed. Then Rita Walters took over, and then Jan, and now we’ll see who else is going to run.

COLLINGS

How have Rita Walters and Jan Perry been in terms of the kinds of things that Esperanza is concerned with?

DONOGHUE

Again, it’s a personal relationship kind of thing, and both Jan and Rita, I had very good—doesn’t mean they always did everything and we always agreed, but I felt they were approachable, and not only approachable but they respected what Esperanza stood for and that we really had integrity as it relates to our commitment to very low-income, on-the-margin people. Certainly their experience in terms of civil rights and growing up, and particularly Rita, was very different. So because of that, they recognized our commitment. There had been other groups in the community that said one thing and stood for another, and what we said and what we stand for is

what, in fact, the positions that we took and that it was reflected that way.

COLLINGS

So you had a reputation.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

What were the other groups that would say one thing and really be standing for another thing?

DONOGHUE

I'd rather not mention them. I really wouldn't, you know.

COLLINGS

Okay.

DONOGHUE

But just, you know, they were there and could be very ruthless.

COLLINGS

Were there ever instances where you or a member of Esperanza had specific dealings with Rita Walters or Jan Perry and were able to get them on to your side?

DONOGHUE

They understood what we were trying to do. I have to go back. I mean, I can't come up at this point with specific instances. I do know that there was a time where there was a whole—they had Gilbert Lindsay Square in front of Staples Center with big pictures and just totally inappropriate, and we really complained about that, and that no longer exists. I'm trying to remember if that came down in Rita's or Jan's, but I know that we were very—there was a Gilbert Lindsay Apartments that was a tax credit deal, and that was affordable only for fifteen years. That's on the corner of Figueroa

and Exposition. And now that is sold to a for-profit, and all of the rents are up and all of the people that lived there are out. That happens when people do that. The commitment to affordable housing lasts as long as the tax credit, and then when the tax credit expires, then it goes into for-profit. What Esperanza does is after we recommit to affordability, even when we don't always have the advantage of another tax credit income, then we do that. So we have been recognized for that.

COLLINGS

So it sounds like the Gilbert Lindsay Apartments, it was the affordable housing element, the fifteen-year window, it almost sounds as if the affordable housing aspect was used as a sort of a wedge to get the project approved.

DONOGHUE

Yes, exactly. That's exactly right, and with his name on it. I just don't have much patience for that.

COLLINGS

Right.

DONOGHUE

You just think about your whole understanding of what does it mean to have a legacy and how you are, quote, "remembered."

COLLINGS

Does Esperanza have anybody in particular that you deal with who represents USC, or do you only encounter them in these proceedings?

DONOGHUE

No, we have in the past, but they've had a tremendous turnover of people. We have some professors who are on the side and who give us counsel.

COLLINGS

Oh, really?

DONOGHUE

Yes. But it's a pretty tight ship, and they're literally very hierarchical in terms of their administration and their decision making. Carolyn Macias was the vice president in charge of development, and her husband was at UCLA, head of the Latin American department, Reynaldo Macias, and she went to UCLA. So it was very interesting. She used to be Mark Ridley Thomas' chief of staff, and then she went to 'SC for, like, maybe six, seven years, something like that, and then retired. But she was the most approachable, and it didn't mean that she always would be able to expedite, but she, number one, was approachable. You could present. And I had a sense of at least fairness and a pretty level—that's all gone. Then Steven Sample left and the new president is in. It's a whole new ballgame.

COLLINGS

The new president brought in a new culture? What is his name?
Nik—I forget what.

DONOGHUE

Yes, it's out of my head, because I haven't had to deal with him, so I just—you know, what I keep track of.

COLLINGS

Nikias, I think.

DONOGHUE

Yes. And I had been out of—so I'm coming in now and just trying to figure out what is important to do. So one of the things I did is that I had a very longstanding relationship with Ed Reyes and his planning deputy, Guadalupe, and so I called Guadalupe and said, "We really have to know what we're up against in terms of a date with regard to PLUM and how much time we have to prepare and how willing you are to give us more than seventy-two hours' notice." So I called her, and she called me back, and then in the meantime, David Robinson, who's the political director at SAJE, and

he had been down to see her. So we made good approaches based on relationships, and it isn't a question of inside track or trying to make an end run, but it has to do with we have no money, we have people power, and understand the importance of that. That's a basic organizing principle. You can either do it with money or you can do it with people power, and that's what we do.

COLLINGS

Well, in the twenty-plus years that you've been doing that, have there been sort of fluctuations, changes in how effective the organizing and the people power has been?

DONOGHUE

I think now the lobbying is so profound in terms of the money, and that's true in state as well as national politics, so that organizing is very different now in terms of, first of all, communication, Internet, Facebook, LinkedIn, all those kinds of things. Instant communication has made a huge difference, and what you can get on the media immediately, even if it isn't true, it's there. Then you have to refute it. It's a whole 'nother game. I used to be able to call Bill Boyarsky, and he was the editor of the Metro Section of the L.A. Times. I would take him on a tour and show him stuff, and he'd write about it. And that's impossible now.

COLLINGS

Why?

DONOGHUE

Because first of all, there isn't somebody that is as principled as Boyarsky was. Steve Lopez picks and chooses his battles very interestingly, and he's the one that would be most comparable to Boyarsky in terms of having a following. Now, this morning he's talking about the Grand Avenue Park and getting his feet wet. He can pick good fights. He did a good job on the parking meters for all the handicapped parking around City Hall, and certainly he did a remarkable job with getting the cellist and—

COLLINGS

Yes, I saw that series.

DONOGHUE

And that whole series and what he was able to do, the film, the follow-up, and that man is in transitional permanent housing for mentally ill people with very good supportive services. But it's a whole different ballgame.

COLLINGS

Is there any kind of generational shift in terms of the values of the people that you're working with, in the city, in the newspaper, in the developers?

DONOGHUE

See, I've been out of that piece for a long time, deliberately, because I wanted to, first of all, not be a shadow and not be a kind of presence that is inappropriate. So I really pulled back and out, and I only came in when I have been asked. So when I literally got off the bus, I had an email saying, "Please come to this meeting. We absolutely need some sort of strategic thinking, and based on history."

COLLINGS

Exactly.

DONOGHUE

That's what I do. So I have to be updated on who's on first literally, in terms of what the issues are.

COLLINGS

So what are you going to bring to the meeting in terms that you're bringing from your history?

DONOGHUE

I will ask them who are the insiders that I don't know at 'SC and how can they be utilized, and not abused, but strategically get information that would be helpful. The other thing I think that's really important is always not to be against stuff, but to have an alternative plan and to build on that. So if you don't want this, what is it you do want and how can you work to get that, giving consideration? So that's what I'll be doing pretty much. I don't have a lot of ongoing time. What I said I would do is once we know when the PLUM meeting is, I'm not prepared to testify, but I will go, and you always have a opportunity to talk to people informally before the meeting gets started. So, anyway, I've known Reyes for many years, Guadalupe.

COLLINGS

Right.

DONOGHUE

Michael Woo used to be on the Planning Committee, and what we want to make sure is, number one, there's more than one PLUM meeting, so they carry it over. Number two, that it's a full group and not just two or three members, and that there is a tie-in with the Planning Commission, because it's PLUM Planning Commission Council. So just to make it a very extended kind of testimony and to get good TV and press coverage and to hold up 'SC in a different light, because they have such a strong lobbying presence, and it's like they can do no wrong.

COLLINGS

They're the largest private employer in the city, I believe.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes.

COLLINGS

But that's a big gorilla.

DONOGHUE

Yes, it is. It is. And we're small potatoes, and they're used to just walking over you with no accountability.

COLLINGS

Right. In the years that you've been in that neighborhood, how do you sort of see it in totality in terms of how it's changed? I mean, originally zoned for heavy industry, now there's a lot of housing.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

USC, the four-hundred-pound gorilla, sort of stream-rolling efforts, but perhaps also bringing something to the table.

DONOGHUE

When I came, I was in the Bay Area for eleven years, and I came back in '73. It was African American totally in that area. We had a pastor who finally was able to get a Spanish Mass at St. Vincent, and we had just meager—all the kids in the school were African American, very low enrollment. Central Avenue was the mainstay, and that's when it was called South Central, very much—it just was a different world. Now, first of all, to see the Hispanic, and now it's becoming gentrified big time.

COLLINGS

Yes, exactly, very much, yes.

DONOGHUE

So all of these high-end, and the Lorenzo project, you asked about that. I haven't kept track of that. That's Geoffrey Palmer's group. My understanding is that one of the concessions that they got was to build a clinic, outpatient clinic that would be available, because they took down one of the buildings, an orthopaedic hospital that was all outpatient. So that's one thing. But the details on that, I'm not up on. Nancy Ibrahim is on this sabbatical now for six months, and she won't be back. She left in May. I think it's February she's

back. So this is really critical time, and one of the understandings is that she has no contact.

COLLINGS

Oh, is that one of the ways that the Durfee sabbatical is set up?

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes.

COLLINGS

That's interesting.

DONOGHUE

It is. So people are not to have anything to do with, and so that's the way it is. So they have a team at Esperanza. Two of the team members are going to be going on maternity leave.

COLLINGS

Oh, really.

DONOGHUE

They have three major staff on maternity leave.

COLLINGS

Oh, my gosh. [laughs]

DONOGHUE

Yes. It's huge, but, you know, they're there. Beth is running the Mercado, and then she's the lead team member taking over for Nancy. She is going to be out beginning in October, which is something.

COLLINGS

So Esperanza is really ill-equipped to deal with this challenge right now.

DONOGHUE

Yes, it is. It is. I mean, it happens to be the way it's worked out. So I am going. I'm committed to being as available as I can and as appropriately as possible.

COLLINGS

When these kinds of things are going on, USC's residential expansion, the Lorenzo project, are there ever overtures from these groups to entities such as Esperanza or SAJE to see what can be worked out in advance, or is it always a situation where you hear about what's going on, and you have to go to them?

DONOGHUE

They have been trying. They, UNIDAD, which is the group that SAJE kind of leads that—

COLLINGS

The sort of umbrella coalition.

DONOGHUE

That's the coalition, yes. And they have made so many overtures for negotiation, and 'SC will not come to the table. It's like "My way or the highway," and they're very firm about that. So that's the thing. Ed Reyes is head of PLUM. He's also termed out, so whatever he does, there are no political consequences for him. He can do the right thing based on the right thing. He's pretty good about that. He has not announced anything in terms of his political future, so that's very interesting. Usually somebody will say, "Well, you know, I'm going to be running for Assembly," or, "I'll be running—," you know. And they go back and forth. I mean, Herb Wesson is a very good example. Villaraigosa is a very good example, etc. So they switch from Sacramento to L.A. to back and forth. Reyes has not said anything about what his next—

COLLINGS

So you may have a potent ally in this fight.

DONOGHUE

Yes, I think so.

COLLINGS

Well, that's very encouraging.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes.

COLLINGS

What is actually the history of the relationship between Esperanza and SAJE?

DONOGHUE

It's very good and it's very strategic. I mean, Gilda and I go way back. Let's see. She had the—I have to get the right name. She had a group, CAR, Community Against Redevelopment. That was a group of kind of nonprofits getting together, and so that group was—the first organizing that we did was around the banks. Security Pacific and Bank of America together had thirty-one branches in South Central. Security Pacific was bought out, and we were reduced to thirteen branches, which was just incredible. Wells Fargo took over Security. So we did a lot of work in working with the banks as it related to the investment that they had and the commitments they had. There was a man at Bank of America, Don Malone, and he absolutely was approachable, and so we worked with him. So we got some very good commitments from B of A. Ultimately, Esperanza got one of the B of A awards for neighborhood investment, and SAJE as well.

We were the ones that did the development, and SAJE really did the research and did more of the academic part of it. Gilda taught at UCLA before she went to Antioch, and she just was a real genius. So we always complemented one another so well.

COLLINGS

So you were doing the kind of on-the-ground organizing.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

And SAJE was doing the sort of the strategic plan.

DONOGHUE

Strategic Action for Just Economy. I mean, that's what that means. So they did, as they got more into organizing, it was training people to understand how the Planning Department works, how you give testimony, how all of this real strategic kinds of stuff. We organized neighbors and residents, and so we did different kind of organizing, but always in concert, and that's continued to this day.

COLLINGS

When you're working with residents and helping them to shape their testimony, what are they encouraged to focus on?

DONOGHUE

Well, first of all, I don't do that at this point.

COLLINGS

Yes, but when you did.

DONOGHUE

When I did, it was always to tell your story from a very personal point of view in terms of impact of unjust wages, of inadequate oversight in terms of planning. Let's see. They used to do inspections on apartments, you know, for—

COLLINGS

Yes.

DONOGHUE

They would go to one or two apartments and then they would say these two have to be fixed, and they wouldn't go around to the rest of the apartments. So an owner could fix up two apartments and—

COLLINGS

Oh, gosh.

DONOGHUE

Yes. So then one of the things that we were able to do was to train the health Promotoras in terms of lead-paint violations and how to make apartments lead-safe and then to learn how to do inspections. So we ended up now Building and Safety has Promotoras on staff who teach them how to do building inspections. That's huge.

COLLINGS

Building and Safety for the city.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Wow.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Because owners were just getting by with murder, literally, because of unsafe buildings.

COLLINGS

So having the health Promotoras that taught people how to do inspections, they're now with the city. That is specifically something that Esperanza achieved?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

That's tremendous.

DONOGHUE

It is. It is. It is. And there's a whole team called Healthy Homes, there's fifteen on that team, and they're in five zip codes doing

interviews, inspections, and so forth and reporting to Building and Safety violations. So they both report as well as—and we know how to get people to come and do inspections. If you can believe, they used to notify owners when they were going to do the inspections, so they'd do a little cleanup, and it was so wrong. It was very cosmetic.

COLLINGS

Yes, right. So would you say that the housing conditions have improved in the Figueroa Corridor community area?

DONOGHUE

They have, but there have been so many cutbacks in terms—I mean, think about from 2008, that was the bubble that burst, and then that's when city services began to be cut back. So, I mean, that's a long time at this point in the last five years, and because Esperanza has not developed any more new buildings because the property is so expensive now as it has gentrified.

COLLINGS

Now, will the Land Trust help with that in any way?

DONOGHUE

We had the possibility of the Land Trust was based on the existence of the Community Redevelopment Agency, CRA. All that money is gone. That agency is shut down. I just heard there is a possibility of the Land Trust taking over a building that was condemned, it's called the Roland Curtis Building, and I'm not sure exactly where that is. But that is a building that, I think, the Land Trust got control of last week. So I'm going to find out about that today.

COLLINGS

So was that the only property that the land—

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Oh, my goodness. The plans were huge.

DONOGHUE

Oh, yes, we had huge plans. We had a whole area down by Slauson and Vermont, and I went down [unclear] and there's—

COLLINGS

Yes. There's a map here. It's a huge area.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes, yes. That's gone.

COLLINGS

Oh, that's gone—

DONOGHUE

That's gone.

COLLINGS

—because of the real estate bubble?

DONOGHUE

Because of CRA.

COLLINGS

Oh, right, yes, sorry.

DONOGHUE

So we didn't have CRA.

COLLINGS

Because of the loss of the CRA money.

DONOGHUE

Yes. That was going to be a big piece of it. So it's like square one for the Land Trust.

COLLINGS

So the money had not already been committed, because one thing I read was—and this might have been just one thought at one point, was that projects where there were commitments had already been made would be honored.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

But this had not gone this far?

DONOGHUE

It had not gone that far. It was in the pipeline, and they could do so much each year, so we moved up each year, but we didn't make it.

COLLINGS

What a shame.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes, yes. So when you see that happening, and the amount of cutbacks in staff in all of these places, you just wonder if who—I mean, we have a Housing Department, we have a Housing Authority, we used to have CRA, and it was like everybody's doing the same job, but it's three different departments.

COLLINGS

Right. Right. I thought when I saw that I found it very confusing.

DONOGHUE

Yes, and so that's exactly. So now it's a very weak voice because there's no funding and the oversight. They're more interested now in revamping the projects and trying to get mixed incomes in all of the projects. So that's the big move now.

COLLINGS

So sort of piggybacking onto—

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Because the gentrification is happening.

DONOGHUE

Exactly. Yes.

COLLINGS

So try to get some benefits from that.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes, yes. So that's basically how it's working.

COLLINGS

All right. [interruption]

COLLINGS

All right. Well, I did want to ask you, because you said that it's sort of hard to talk about the past at this moment, because so much is burgeoning with the—

DONOGHUE

Well, you know, I can certainly—

COLLINGS

I had also wanted to ask you, I mean, has your career always been like this where there's always something really compelling and new on the horizon? Or is there something particular about this historical moment that we can point to?

DONOGHUE

Well, when I came to Stella Maris, that was 1973, the building was half empty. There were residents who hadn't paid their rent that

stayed there. It was just really a bad scene. So, I mean, we started thinking about what else could we do with this building, and we came up with the Maya Way Program, the Senior Day Program, and filled up the building in terms of residents and programs and so forth.

So the eleven years that I was there, that was—I mean, it was just a 24/7 job, and I had the energy to do that. So I did. And I was involved with that program, but also very involved with the community organizing and the South Central Organizing Committee, SCOC. I was one of the founders for that. So I did as much kind of on the outside as I did internally in getting all of these things going and it was—there was always so many balls in the air.

COLLINGS

Yes. So that's been a constant, then. [laughs]

DONOGHUE

It is. You know, I was thinking. I started working when I was a sophomore in high school. I had worked part-time on Thursday nights and Saturdays. In the Miracle Mile, the stores used to be open on Thursdays at nine o'clock and then [unclear]. So I had a part-time job all during high school. I continued that. I went to school, three days of work, and I worked three days in order to pay for it, so it took me five years to get through UCLA, but I did a lot of things. When I went to Berkeley, CYO paid my tuition, but I worked on the weekends with the leadership training programs at camp. So I've never just had just sort of free time to do just one thing. So I never have. I mean, I don't know how I would do that.

COLLINGS

Yes. You don't have the practice.

DONOGHUE

I don't have any practice doing that. [laughter] And even, you know, since I retired, I talk about retirement, and that means I'm here two or three days but sometimes I'm here every day. It

depends on what's happening. I keep my finger in a few things, and I do have a slower pace now. I mean, I'm most grateful for that.

COLLINGS

Well, if you can call going on a fifteen-day bus tour visiting nine states, a slower pace.

DONOGHUE

Well, I was delighted that I was able to do that, I mean, because I was going on six hours' sleep every night, and I usually get eight to ten. I mean, that's one thing that I know. I've always needed a lot of sleep. That's just the way it is, and so I sleep very soundly. Somebody asked me the other morning, "Did you feel the earthquake last night?" No. "Did you hear the kids over in the park?" No. [laughter] The park is right in back of our house, and there are just all kinds of things. It's just that's how I am. So as long as I know, I kind of have projects in mind, and I line stuff up. So we just finished this huge garage estate sale this last weekend, and I was the coordinator on that, so to make sure that we had enough people and have good coverage and so it worked out really well. And the best part was that everybody got along so well, we had many of our associates and sisters, and everybody took shifts. Then I was just here for the whole time for three days, and it was just amazing. So then I had a long sleep on Monday.

COLLINGS

Oh, very good.

DONOGHUE

So I plan things like that. This has been sitting here for three weeks.

COLLINGS

"This" being the material for the Nuns on the Bus book that you're putting together.

DONOGHUE

Yes, yes. So I look at it and I add stuff to it, but this next week, I will get to it, and it's not bothering anybody by being—

COLLINGS

No.

DONOGHUE

I mean, we're not using this room right now for anything. This is kind of vacation slow time, so we don't have a lot of meetings going. Otherwise we use this room a lot for meetings and so forth. So it works.

COLLINGS

Well, just to conclude then, what are your hopes for the future for yourself and also for the order of Sisters of Social Service?

DONOGHUE

You know, we're 73 members. The highest number I think we ever were was probably in the sixties, and I think we could have been 140, just about.

COLLINGS

In the sixties?

DONOGHUE

In the sixties. We had a huge exodus as Vatican II began to take over, and we had two things: we had an exodus of members coming and leaving, and we had fewer members coming in. So it was both of that. So now we have an aging population. We have eleven sisters at the villa right now. We have probably another twenty sort of aging in place, so to speak. I'm eighty-one. Our youngest members are in the Philippines and Mexico, and here in the U.S., I think we're fifty-three. So when you think about fifty-three and you have twenty-five retired, then you have a workforce of maybe twenty-six or so. So just figuring out how do we pay our bills? How do we do just—that's huge. So I'm on our Development Committee, Finance, just in terms of figuring out what we should be doing, and

that's very important. In past times, Sisters have worked for stipends, very low salaries, with the commitment—we're highly educated. Almost all of us have master's. We've got two medical doctors. We have a number of Ph.D.'s. But we don't have any academic facilities as such, so our salaries—I mean, I had one of the highest salaries at Esperanza, and I did that very deliberately so that Nancy would have a salary that would be commensurate. So we have maybe four sisters that really make a professional salary. You can't operate a family on that. So those are some of the big, big concerns, just the finances.

Then to think about our future, we're going to have a meeting next year in Budapest, and it's a Federation meeting. So it will be the communities in Eastern Europe, Canada, U.S., Mexico, Taiwan, Philippines, Cuba. So it's an amazing coming together, and there's twenty of us from the U.S., and I'm one of the twenty, which I'm the oldest. But I have good health, and so it's going to be very rigorous, but it's hopeful in my sense of expectation. I think religious women's congregations today are all under the same challenge, membership, older members, and taking care, making sure that our retired sisters are cared for. The increase of medical costs, which are huge, and everybody lives longer, so that's a big one. So those are some, and I don't have any answers. I can name the challenges. LCWR meets next week. What that will mean in terms, again, it's the double challenge.

COLLINGS

Yes, the double, I can see.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Internally, does that fracture and spread a community? And then externally, what does that do to the organization?

COLLINGS

You are referring to how you would respond to this sort of receivership under the bishops that's been proposed.

DONOGHUE

Yes. Yes, it is. It is definitely a receivership, and we're not bankrupt in terms of our principles and our commitments, and so to be perceived that way is very damning.

COLLINGS

As we were discussing early, The New York Times article, you need to make the decision about whether to bow as a body to this pressure.

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Or the largest extreme would be to just step away from Vatican control completely, which you indicated would create a vacuum where more conservative women's orders would fill the vacuum.

DONOGHUE

Yes. That plus the whole understanding of does that mean excommunication? That's pretty serious when you've given your life and your commitment to an institution with a full heart, and then to have had that experience. I mean, I was very close to the Immaculate Heart community, going to school there, and we've always been very close.

COLLINGS

And that community was excommunicated.

DONOGHUE

They weren't excommunicated. It was like they were banned from—they weren't kicked out of the church, but they were kicked out of their ministry, so to speak. They were pulled out of all the schools, and they were a big force here. So they had then to be sort of, quote, "laicized."

They had to become self-supporting. They lost a lot of their property just financially. They had the college. They sold the college

to the American Film Institute, just because they needed the money. They have one in Montecito. They are making it financially. Their sisters have to tithe 30 percent, but they all have very good teaching positions academically and they work in mostly public facilities. Their membership now is men and women, and it's interfaith. So they've gone in a whole—and they have many of their members who are ordained now as women priests, so that's a whole 'nother thrust. I don't know that we're there, but it's where we will be going. But the experience of what they did and how they were acted upon was profound. So this next month, six months, kind of will be an unfolding just in terms of process and consequences. The oversight is supposed to be five years, but, to me, what happens in the first six months is going to be quite telling.

COLLINGS

All right. Shall we leave it there then?

DONOGHUE

Yes.

COLLINGS

Okay. [End of August 1, 2012 interview]

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