

Oral History with Sister Patricia Ann Crowley
October 26, 2018
Interviewed by Nancy Freeman
Other participants: Dr. Bren Ortega Murphy and Teresa Neumann
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Note: Participants' remarks are distinguished by initials placed at the start of each person's comments. Vocal expressions and sounds that are not words are placed within parentheses; peripheral and editorial clarifications, as well as questions, are placed within brackets. Words spoken with emphasis appear in italics.

[00:00:00]

Bren Ortega Murphy (BOM): So you're going to get a written release.

Nancy Freeman (NF): Yes.

BOM: So, if you just say your name, and "you have my permission to use this in your documentary." Okay.

Patricia Crowley (PC): My name is Patricia Crowley, and you have my permission to use this in your documentary.

NF: Okay. Today is October 26, 2018, and I am Nancy Freeman. And also here is Dr. Bren Ortega Murphy and Teresa Neumann, and we are in Piper Hall, at the Lake Shore Campus of Loyola University of Chicago. And we are here for an interview with Sister Patricia Crowley.

So, to get us started, would you give us your full name and your birth date.

[00:00:47]

PC: Patricia Ann Crowley. And birth date is May 13th, 1939.

NF: Where were you born?

PC: Right here in Chicago! Passavant Hospital, which no longer exists.

NF: Was it in the city? Or—I mean, in Chicago.

PC: Yes. My parents lived on Elmdale, in Edgewater, when I was born. I was born in Passavant Hospital, which is really part of Northwestern. I mean, it folded into Northwestern, later on.

NF: And were you named for anyone?

PC: (Chuckles) For my mother, and my father—Pat and Patty Crowley.

NF: Did they – did they talk to you about that as you got older?

PC: Oh, there were stories. I think the only other name they thought of for me was Caron [said like "Karen"], which was my mother's maiden name: C-A-R-O-N. My maternal grandfather was French-Canadian; so, "Caron" [pronounced like "Ka-rone"].

NF: Oh!

PC: But they decided not to go with that.

[00:02:15]

NF: And tell me a little bit about your brothers and sisters.

PC: That's always an interesting question. (Laughs) I have—well, I have six right now. I have three sisters—one of whom was a foster child until she was twelve, and then she was adopted—and two brothers. One of the brothers is a foster child—that's his history, he never was adopted. And we have lots and lots of other siblings from around the world, and also foster children who I consider my sisters and brothers. So, that's why it's a hard question! (Laughs)

NF: Because your parents took in quite a few foster children, didn't they?

PC: Yeah. There are different numbers that float around. The number in my head is twenty-seven, but I think that counts children that were there maybe for a week, you know. But longer term, it probably was around twelve or fourteen. We don't have very good data on that. (Chuckles)

NF: And where did you grow up?

PC: Well, when I was two, my parents—as all good, young, married couples at the time—decided they needed to move to the suburbs. So, I grew up in Wilmette, for my life, until I left for the Benedictines.

NF: And one thing—now that I think—what is your birth order?

PC: Oh, I'm the oldest. Then I have a sister, Mary Ann, who is in California. She has four children—happily married—and eleven grandchildren. One was just born six weeks ago. And then, my foster brother is the next—that's Al—and he lives in Florida. He has one daughter. And then—who's next—Patrick is next, my brother. And he has four children and zillions of grandchildren and some great-grandchildren already, because he was married at nineteen. And then Cathy, who lives, right now, between Trinidad—the island—and Chicago. [Cathy has one son and two granddaughters.] And then there's Theresa, and she lives in Chicago.

[00:04:11]

NF: What are some of your earliest memories?

PC: Well, I was very much the beloved first child on both sides of the family. My memories are very positive. My grandparents—my paternal grandparents—lived here in Chicago, on Junior Terrace, which is just a block-long street that is just south of Montrose. And my father grew up there; so that was their family home. And my mother's family moved a lot of times. My grandmother was never satisfied, so they always moved. I think she had nine addresses—we figured out one day—when she was a child, in Chicago. All in Chicago [or the suburbs]. And then they moved to Rochelle, Illinois.

My grandfather was a traveling salesman for yarn. He had come to Woonsocket, Rhode Island, when he was nine years old, 'cause his mother had died. His father brought he and his brother Adelard to Woonsocket. He worked in the woolen mills there [emptying spittoons], and then worked his way up and became a traveling salesman. And he met my grandmother on one of his salesman trips. (Chuckles) She was the daughter of, I think, a Baptist minister. But rather high class, in St. Joe's, Minnesota—St. Joe's Indiana—or Michigan. Michigan. Her family ran a resort for wealthy Chicagoans who came across the lake and stayed there. It was the Higman Resort.

And so, she married—they married, and her family was not pleased—at all—and she never lost her upper-class attitude. So, she always [longed for more]—and he worked *so* hard to please her, and to give her a home, whatever she wanted. Over and over again, they moved. Long story.

[00:06:36]

NF: So, you grew up in Wilmette. Tell me about what that was like, at Wilmette at that time.

PC: Well, till I was eight I had a very normal childhood. At eight, we started to take foster children and others—that's another story. I mean, I grew up happily. I went to—there were four years between me and my next sister, because we had a baby who died three days after she was born. So I was kind of growing up alone, in a way, because there were babies that—my sister Maryann was ill when she was young [eighteen months old]. I don't want to say ill, but, the babysitter dropped her, and she had a skull fracture; and at that time they didn't know what to do with that, so they had to keep her still. That was hard. So I got a lot of attention, because I was the only child, really, around.

I had really good friends. I still have my grammar-school friends. But when I was going into first grade, my maternal grandmother wanted me to go to Sacred Heart, because that's where my mother had gone. The madams of the Sacred Heart had *really* helped my grandmother through lots of hard times—because my grandfather traveled, and so she had all these little children, you know. She was in need of some companionship. And she became a Catholic then, at that point. So she wanted me to go to first grade at Lake Forest. So, for first, second, and third grade I did that. We took the train from Kenilworth up to Lake Forest. There were other people—other children, older and younger, that did that too.

[00:08:57]

Then, when I was in *third* grade, my mother gave birth to my sister, Cathy, and she almost died—my mother almost died. And so my father bargained with me, to go to boarding school for the end of March through the end of the school year. And I bargained back, and said, "I'll go, if I can go back to St. Joseph's when I'm in fourth grade."

NF: What boarding school was that?

PC: Lake Forest—

NF: Oh! It was there.

PC: —Sacred Heart. It was part of Barat. I mean, in the same building with Barat College.

NF: How was that?

PC: Oh, I didn't like it. (Laughs) I didn't. I mean, the children in our neighborhood were, you know, my friends. And the children—the girls—it was a class of six, like for first grade. They were pretty uppity, I think, at that time. Although, I still—I don't really socialize with any of them, but I know of them.

I didn't mind it, until I had to be in boarding school. Because I was at home on weekends.

BOM: How important was it for you—in your parents' minds—for you to go to Catholic school? Was there ever a question that you wouldn't go?

PC: No. Never. It was a given.

BOM: Okay. So, repeat the answer. Because they're not going to hear me.

[00:10:32]

PC: When it came time for me to go to school, there was no question—I went to kindergarten, to the local Catholic school, and then I was sent to Sacred Heart for first, second, and third grade. I was a "minimum." That's what they called us. So, there was no question at all. There was a public school down the street, but that wasn't even a consideration.

BOM: And why would that be?

PC: Oh, I *think*, there was such a separation between Catholics and publics. I mean, even adult relationships—except for, I suppose, work relationships—were within your faith community, at that time. I don't remember—I mean, there were *no* Jewish people in our neighborhood, in Wilmette, let alone anybody of color. Except people that came to our house. The taxi drivers always knew, when the people got off the L, at Linden, where they were going, if they were of color. Always. They'd say: "You're going to the Crowleys, right?" They'd say, "Yeah."

NF: So, what was the difference between the Catholic school in Lake Forest and then—you went to, you said, St. Joseph's?

PC: Yes.

NF: I'm really curious—there was a big difference?

PC: Right. The size of the classes in St. Joe's, in the parish school, and in—we had two of every grade. I think at least two—maybe two and a half, because we had split grades. At Sacred Heart, as I said, there were six, I think, in my first grade class; I think there might have been seven or eight in my second and third grade class. So that was hugely different.

[00:12:36]

And then, of course, boys and girls, in the local school. Whereas, at Sacred Heart it was just girls. I don't remember a *whole* lot about classes at Sacred Heart. I never [learned to print]—they taught us to write cursive right away, whereas in the local grammar school my friends were learning how to print. I had to teach myself how to print when I went to teach third grade, so that they [the children] would know.

I don't know—it was just totally different, really.

NF: Which order taught at Sacred Heart; and then, which order taught at—

PC: It was the Religious of the Sacred Heart. And in fact, I have been in contact with my first-grade teacher. She was a Japanese woman, a Religious of the Sacred Heart. June Takata, her name was. At St. Joseph's, it was the School Sisters of St. Francis, from Milwaukee.

NF: Where did you go—did the school go to eighth grade?

PC: Yes.

NF: Okay. So then, after that, where did you go to school?

PC: Well, much to *my* consternation, my parents really wanted me to go to St. Scholastica. And nobody from my class was going. They were all going to Marywood, or New Trier. And, at that point, people were choosing to go to New Trier. That would have been in '53. So, I—I forgot what the question was. (Chuckles)

NF: Where you went for high school. And you were saying that a bunch of your friends were choosing public schools.

[00:14:51]

PC: Right. I think my parents—because they were so involved with the Christian Family Movement [CFM], by that time, and into social action and social justice—I think because the

Benedictines at St. Scholastica had a reputation for being involved in the liturgy—Sister Cecilia, and Sister Gabriel, and others in social justice—they thought that would be the better place. But they had become oblates of St. Benedict, connected to St. John's Abbey in Minnesota. Women's communities didn't have oblates at that point, but men's did.

My father *loved* the Rule of Benedict. Just simply loved it. He loved to be the abbot, and he loved to have a family meeting—what monastics would call a chapter—and consult with the youngest about what should be done, and what the Gospel meant, etcetera.

NF: Describe to me what it meant, at that time, to be an oblate—for your family.

PC: Yeah. I mean, it meant—for *us*—it meant my father talking about being the abbot, very often. (Chuckles) There was a custom in our house that everybody took a little bit of wine, and my father found a place in the Rule where it says that everybody could have a hemina of wine—whatever a hemina was. So he liked that, liked to consult with us. He just liked the spirit—the balance—that the Benedictine rule presents.

[00:16:53]

So he thought—they thought—it would be a good idea. So what happened was: Because I lived north of Howard Street—I lived in Wilmette—I didn't get in to St. Scholastica. So I was delighted. But, my mother decided that that's where I should go. So she went and sold subscriptions to the *New World*—the Chicago Catholic paper—and she sold 25 subscriptions, and I got a scholarship. So, she took that scholarship paper back to Sister Fabian [the principal], at St. Scholastica, and said: "Now you have to let her in." The rest is history (Laughs) as far as that goes.

NF: (Laughs) That's some story!

PC: I know.

NF: But once you got there, how was it?

PC: It was very different than grammar school. Because we had a clique in grammar school, and very social, and very active socially. It just was—it felt good. And when I went to Scholastica, I didn't know anybody. And everybody was from parishes, so they had childhood groups. It took a while, you know. And I never—I remember, I never quite came into my own. I was always Pat and Patty Crowley's daughter, to the sisters. And that was hard. Eventually I moved out of that. But it was not the best, you know, for me.

[00:18:33]

I loved the classes, and the learning. And we had a YCS—Young Christian Students—group. And that was really good. We did a lot of social justice things. I loved that. I was in debate, and sort of liked that.

BOM: So this is in the fifties that you were at St. Scholastica?

PC: Right. '53 to '57.

BOM: So talk to me about what they were doing in terms of social justice, at Scholastica at that point. Because, I think a lot of people tend to think that's a relatively new interest, for Catholic education. What was the commitment, at Scholastica, to social-justice issues?

PC: So, probably the most obvious thing was that there were—there was a principal of the school [before becoming prioress], Sister Laura Walker, who made a decision in the early '50s—maybe the late '40s, I'm not positive about that—to give scholarships to young women who were coming from St. George on 35th Street, or from Cabrini, from St. Joe's, Joseph's, to down there where we were. Our sisters were staffing those schools. So there were a handful, I'll say, of African American, black, young women in every class. That was different than a lot of high schools.

And then—well, the fact that there was a Young Christian Students group in the school for a long time. You know, other people were adopted—CISCA [Chicago Inter-Student Catholic Action], before that, in the [Father] Daniel Lord's movements among youth. Sodality. And interestingly enough, *all* those had social action as part of them. So, they weren't always the primary. Like, YCS it was the primary thing [along with gospel reflections]. But with the others it was adjunct, I would say. In my experience.

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You know, there were collections—Martin de Porres House, Friendship House. There were dialogues with people in both those settings. We tutored at St. Joseph's, with the boys from St. George [high school in Evanston]. We went down to Cabrini and tutored, on a weekly basis. So, a lot of it was service; it wasn't necessarily social justice policy, but it was, like, giving us experience of other people who were less—who weren't in our social milieu, which was good.

NF: I'm kind of struck with the fact that that was different than living in Wilmette, and going to school in Wilmette.

PC: And different than my friends who were at the other Catholic high school. They didn't have that experience. Although, we continued a YCS group at my parents' house—at least for the first, my freshman year. I don't think we did after that because we all got involved in our own schools.

NF: Go ahead.

TN (Teresa Neumann): I was going to say: What impact do you think that had on you?

PC: The involvement?

TN: Yeah.

PC: Oh, I think it showed me that that was an important value for *me*; not just something that my parents had called me to do. You know, that it's built on relationships—personal relationships. And, the fact that we had—we actually didn't have any African or Latin American students staying with us when I was in high school; the two were from [Europe]—well no, we did. We had one from Brazil and one from Bolivia. So, we did have Latin American. But none from Africa, until after I had left home.

[00:22:58]

I think it's the relationships, basically, that made a difference. And also my father always talked about the *Mystici Corporis*, which was the encyclical that was in 1943, I think. And that was very much a part of the theological framework that I grew up in. So, just the fact that we're all connected, you know, and that everything that happens—wherever in the world—affects us, and what we do affects them. Not so much eating your food, to save the starving children. That was never a part of our upbringing! But, the fact that what we do really matters to the human race.

BOM: So, this wasn't about saving little, brown, pagan babies?

PC: No. In school, yes. In grammar school. But not at home.

NF: Well, and when did your parents co-found, or found, the Christian Family Movement? Because you had mentioned that, and so I'm kind of wondering how it's all moving in, there.

PC: Yeah. My dad was part of a men's group—Father Charles Sheedy, Chick Sheedy, who was a Holy Cross father, started that [at Notre Dame University]. And there were eight men from Chicago who were in my father's class. And they all had gone—not all of them—but a good number of them had gone to the same high school, Loyola Academy, and had gone to the same grammar school, St. Mary of the Lake, right here on the North Side of Chicago. So they had this group, and it was based on the Jocist method—Observe, Judge, and Act—of Canon Cardijn, from Belgium. He had worked on that with the worker priests, and with workers.

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So, Chick Sheedy applied that to young businessmen. And through—my dad went to law school to Loyola. But I think he continued in that group. And then, when my parents got married, the men's group was continuing to meet. And of course, my mother being who she is—was—said: "You know, we're married now. We should do this together. You shouldn't just go off by yourself." (Chuckles) So, they did. And they started to do it—like, movements often spring up in different places. So, different histories of the Christian Family Movement will say that it started in South Bend. Although, most people say it started in Chicago, and that my parents were part of the very beginning. But they were hesitant to claim that too strongly, because there was a couple in South Bend that liked to claim that—the Bauers.

I mean, movements are that—they're movements. So it probably did start in different places.

BOM: What need did they think they were addressing? Start with the name, the Christian Family Movement was founded—

[00:26:45]

PC: Yeah. They called it the Christian Family Movement—not the Catholic Family Movement—on purpose. My father would always say, "Because Christianity is bigger than the Catholic Church." And by that time he was very broad minded. And my mother, too. But my father tended to talk more about it (Chuckles) at that time.

So, I think the need that they found was to kind of interrelate their faith life, in the Catholic Church, with the awareness of social needs, and social realities. And so, the methodology was: Observe, Judge, and Act. They would start with a Gospel reflection, and they would have a specific social focus, and they would report what they observed. And then they would judge it against the Gospel. And then they would choose an action, a small action. The priest was there for the meeting. But he had to keep quiet until the end, and then he could say something.

And so, they developed a whole group of Chicago priests who had been nurtured by Reynold Hillenbrand, at the seminary, and had really developed. So, priests like Bill Quinn, and Jack Egan; priests like Walter Imbiorski. I'm forgetting who the other ones were; those were the three that were at our house the most.

And then, also, [Father] Ted Hesburgh became a very good family friend. Because, when he was leaving—when he started as president of Notre Dame, [Father] John Cavanaugh said to him: "Here are the keys to the office. Oh, and I forgot to tell you"—he said—"There's a group that's meeting, and I promised that you would give the keynote, or the opening address." So, Ted did that, the very first day he was president of Notre Dame. And he became a friend and supporter of CFM, from then on.

[00:28:49]

BOM: Can you talk a little bit more about Father Hesburgh, just in terms of the role he played in American Catholicism? I mean, he's so revered, even outside of Notre Dame.

PC: Right, right. Well, I think the fact that he welcomed this kind of ragtag group of couples from all over the country— for a conference, with little children there, and kind of controversial speakers—to Notre Dame, year after year. I think he was revered by many of the couples in CFM because of that. I mean, he did a lot of good things—I know him personally, because he found our family and the Stephans, Ed and Evie Stephan—Ed was a very prominent lawyer in Chicago, and my father's best friend. And so, they both knew Ted Hesburgh through Notre Dame alumni; and Ed was the chairman of the board, the trustees, at Notre Dame. All of those connections, you know, came to be.

NF: How was it different—or similar—to know Father Ted? As Bren said, very revered and well known—but you knew him on a personal level.

PC: You know, he was always—in his later years, when I would stop by the library, when he was in the office on the top floor of the Notre Dame library, he would welcome me like he had seen me—knew me—*really, really* well. And he didn't know me really, really well. But he knew our family. I think he was that way with everybody. I mean, I think he just had a personal approach to every human being. That was my experience.

[00:30:47]

BOM: Were you at all aware, when it was going on—because I can't remember the year—at the Land of Lakes.

PC: At the what?

BOM: Land of Lakes meeting? He and Ann Ida Gannon [member of Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, BVMs]—okay.

PC: Nope. Don't know that. (Laughs)

NF: And you had mentioned Monsignor Jack Egan, in talking. Do you want to speak a little—was he a family friend also?

PC: Yes, yes. He was a CFM chaplain, early on. Of course, he worked at Presentation Parish, I think. On the west side, I kind of forget the name of the parish. And so, we would go down there. We would go to Marillac House [family services nonprofit], which was close to that, and also to his parish. Like, at Christmastime, to bring baskets or toys, or that kind of thing.

And then—I mean, I *knew* him, through CANA [pronounced like "Kane-uh"]—through my parents' work with CANA because CFM really helped get CANA started. And then CFM also brought Marriage Encounter here, at one point, from Spain. But Jack was involved with that—and I think, also, with the Chicago Interracial Council, where Ed Marciniak and Russ Barta, you know, bunches of—many, many different people were involved there.

Then I knew Jack later on, when he was going through—he was a very good friend of Sister Mary Benet McKinney, who was in my community of Benedictines. Jack, when he would have young people come in and ask him for advice—because everybody would say, "Go see Jack Egan"—he would send some of them to me, as he did to many other people. He would call: "Patricia, I have this person." (Chuckles)

[00:33:17]

So I got to know him a lot. And also watched him suffer, you know, from the whole situation, in Chicago, under Cody—Cardinal Cody. And then, going to Notre Dame and working, really, with Marjorie Tuite and with my mother's good friend Reggie Weissert, who, she and her husband [Ralph] were part of the Christian Family Movement, but at that Social Justice Center at Notre Dame. So I knew that history from Reg and from my mom. And then, later on, he would call up and just talk—say, "What do you think?" Just like that.

NF: To you.

PC: To me. Yeah, yeah. Because, by that time I had sort of come into my own with my work at Howard Area Community Center and Deborah's Place [both nonprofit organizations in Chicago]. So he knew all of that and kind of encouraged me to do that.

BOM: What was the community—do you feel comfortable talking about the conflict between Egan and Cody?

PC: Yeah, I don't know a whole lot except that Jack spoke out—criticized. I mean, Chicago was kind of—what's the—I think unique, in a way, because of the financial—the lack of financial clarity in the archdiocese. And people like Jack were encouraging lay people, but it was kind of the Call to Action of folks who first started to ask for some transparency in the finances of the diocese. And, I think that was the root of what the conflict was. I don't know it personally; I only know it by hearsay. But I know that Cardinal Cody then—I don't know if he asked him to leave the diocese, he might have.

[00:35:06]

BOM: He removed him from—

PC: Removed him from active—

BOM: CYO. Yeah, from all these organizations he held.

PC: Yes, as chaplain of the organizations—of CANA, etc. It was a very hard time. But I think the whole—the Church time, and societal time, too, because that was in the seventies, I think. And I was just beginning to be more aware of all that, as an adult. Because there was a period of my life when I was kind of cloistered, or not too aware of—not too involved. Except in high school.

NF: So was that period after high school? That you were talking about—is that kind of when you entered the order?

PC: Well, no. I was talking about after I *taught* high school. I left St. Scholastica in 1979. I was involved a *little* bit during the seventies, with the students of St. Scholastica. But then I got more involved when I ran the Howard Area Community Center, which is 1979 to '89.

NF: Well, and, let's go back to after you graduated from high school, to [get] kind of looped, and to loop back: What did you do after graduating? Because, I assume you graduated from St. Scholastica.

PC: I did. I did. I went to Trinity College in Washington for a year. Again, just like Sacred Heart, I didn't like it. (Chuckles) I decided to enter—I had thought about entering the Benedictines in my senior year in high school. I didn't *really* want to do it, because I really thought I wanted to have a family and, you know, be like my parents (Laughs) that way. But, you

know, I kept—the sisters that I got to know in my junior and senior year were very *real* human beings, and I really appreciated that. And just decided—and I loved, I loved quiet, and we didn't have much at home (Laughs), at all. So that was part of it.

[00:37:38]

But, what really made me decide to do it, after freshman year, was: My best friend—the *only* friend I made, real friend that I made at Trinity, told me she was entering the [Sisters of] Notre Dame [de Namur]. So, I said, "Alright." So, I came back and decided to enter.

So I entered in '58 and made final vows in '65. We were the first group in our community to be part of the Sister Formation Movement. So we were sent here to school, to Mundelein [College]. Supposedly we were to get our degrees before we taught grammar school, or high school. But that didn't always happen. I taught third and fifth grade before I finished my degree. And then I was sent to high school.

NF: Describe the Sister Formation—you know, what that meant, and how it was different.

PC: Right. The Sister Formation Movement, I think, was meant to give a holistic education to young women who were in formation in religious orders. I wouldn't say—and to have them get their academic education. I wouldn't say that we got a real holistic education. We got a wonderful theological education through Gregorian—the sister who taught us Gregorian chant. So that was good. We didn't get much else. But, when we came here to school [Mundelein College], we had Sister Anne David, who was Anne Carr [BVM], and also Sister Carol Francis Jegen [BVM]. And, my word. That was—that's the foundation of all my theological growth.

[00:39:42]

So, you know, *all* of us got that, no matter what our majors or minors were. And that was really good. And a lot of people had Sister Ann Ida [Gannon, BVM] for philosophy. I didn't happen to have her. So I just knew her. And I knew her better as my mother['s friend]—my mother and she went to high school together for two years at Immaculata. So they were good friends and both kindred spirits. Sister Ann Ida was a *little* more—I shouldn't say that (Chuckles). I was going to say "gentile." But, my mother was gentile, too. But she was a little more—less direct than my mother was. But they were friends always, always. So that's how I knew her.

But the Sister—going back to the Sister Formation—our getting a good theological background, here, really made a huge difference in us. What impacted me was: I took a French minor. And the sister who was teaching French, the year I made final vows, went to France and never came back. So I ended up teaching French (Chuckles). They sent me to Quebec, for a summer of immersion, so that I would really be able to teach first-year French. But, it was not my favorite.

And then I went—in '69—I went to study theology in New York.

NF: So did you graduate from Mundelein?

PC: Eventually.

NF: Eventually.

PC: Yeah. I mean, '65, I think, is the year. We never participated in our ceremonies, or anything.

NF: Oh, really.

PC: Yeah. But, I did. So I'm a Loyola grad—Mundelein-Loyola grad.

[00:41:20]

BOM: Was the Sister Formation Act [Movement]—what was the impetus for it? And the second part of it is: Was that a distinctly American thing? For women religious.

PC: I think it was particularly American, the Sister Formation Movement. I think the impetus—I don't know that, because I've never really read about it. But I think there were so many of us entering religious communities at that time. And many of the communities, like my own, were German in origin, you know. And some of the sisters didn't have much education. And the sisters were—all over the country—were starting schools and universities—or had started them—and were making them grow. So I think, just the need, of the numbers of young women who were entering, that they would be solid in that.

Now, that education happened. And then [Cardinal] Suenens—as I said before—the religious formation happened as well as it could have. But this is pre Vatican II.

NF: Well, and that does bring me up to the time that you entered, and then the time you took final vows. So, that's a time period when there was starting, a lot of shifting. How did that affect you? Like, I'm almost thinking: there's a macro level—or a micro level—and then larger.

[00:43:07]

PC: Well, my father was—and I never have traced this—but he was at Vatican II, as an observer I think, of some sort. My mother wasn't. And he sent us Xavier Rynne; that was a pseudonym for, I forget who. But he wrote about the council on daily, weekly basis. And it was published in pieces. My father would send it to us, and Sister Laura [Walker], who was the prioress at the time, had it read at table. So, we were hearing about Vatican II, all along. So that when it came time to ask—to make final vows—I wasn't all sure that's what I wanted to do (Chuckles). And I said that to Sister Laura. And she said, "Well, why?" And I said: "Because everything's changing, and we're not changing." And she said, "Oh, we will." And something in me trusted her. So, I did it.

But, we knew—so we knew what was—I knew, what was happening. I don't know how much other people took it in; but I knew. And it was exciting that my father had sent that, and we were reading it.

NF: Well, and then, when you entered you were in a habit—

PC: Yes.

NF: —I assume. Did you also take a name? A different name?

PC: Yes, of course. Sister Mary Patrick. (Laughs) What else! (Laughs)

NF: Makes some sense! So, those are very concrete things. So when did those change, and how did that affect you? What did that kind of look like, or feel like? I mean, like, when those in the order—did you have a modified habit? Or did you immediately lose the habit? Just those kinds of specifics.

[00:45:22]

PC: It's all a blur (Laughs)—I'll tell you that (Laughs)—what happened as we were looking at the call to return to our roots. That's what the call was from Vatican II, to religious—to women religious. And our roots were that you wore the dress of the time. So, theoretically, there was no problem. That's what we needed to do. Practically speaking, it was a very hard thing. Because, you know, the older people had grown up and lived in those habits for decades. And, we weren't about to—well, I wouldn't say that. When we did change, we did say: "You can do what you want. Everybody doesn't have to do the same thing." So we never went to a modified habit, as such. Although we did change the headdress, showed our hair. And then we shortened our skirts, and other things like that.

How it happened: I remember well, my parents were moving from St. Joe's down to the 1300 Lakeshore Drive. It was probably '68, 1968—maybe it was '67. There was a party at St. Joe's, in Wilmette—a farewell party for them, at the parish. So I was allowed to go, which was unusual. I had never been home (Chuckles). So I had to borrow a headdress, because we had changed, but I didn't have one of my own, at that time. So I borrowed Sister Calista's headdress and wore it.

[00:47:36]

I know that happened. And then I know, *very* soon after that, we changed. Gradually changed, more and more, into it. But we were never—for what we would wear, once we took the habit off—we never were told we had to wear this color or that color, or this style or that style. And that's very—in a way, that's very Benedictine. Benedict really does respect the needs of the individual, in terms of food and clothing and other things.

NF: What other changes did you see in the order, with Vatican II? And, I kind of appreciate that it was a blur, because there had to have been *so* many things.

PC: Well, and in addition, during those years of change, so many of my peers and friends were deciding to leave. Most of my good friends left.

NF: Left the order.

PC: Left the order, right. Um, so probably the most significant thing was that we decided that we could each choose what kind of ministry or work we wanted to do. And that made a huge difference, because we had worked all in the same place, the same time, either on a mission—parish mission—or in the high school. And now people were going out, had different schedules, and so the monastic horarium—what you call the schedule—didn't accommodate everybody. We had to deal with that. And then we also—so that made a *huge* difference. And also, it made a huge emotional difference, because the older people kind of resented that we were going out to work, rather than staying home. Because we were monastic, so community is of very high value.

[00:49:41]

Probably, there are a number of other significant things that happened during those years of transition. I think—I can't think of them right now. (Laughs)

NF: Well, you can think about them for the next—

PC: Let me get a drink of water.

NF: You bet.

PC: You get talking!

[Background noise, movement, and cross talk.]

[00:50:36]

NF: And back to when you taught—you taught, first you said, grammar school and then—

PC: High school.

NF: What grades did you teach?

PC: Grammar school, I taught third grade, right next to the mother of one of our sisters, which was great. Because I really wasn't very good at third-grade teaching (Chuckles). And then I went to—that was at St. Lambert's, in Skokie—and then I went to Queen of All Saints, in Sauganash, Lincolnwood, and taught fifth grade. That was better for me.

NF: What was the difference? I'm just curious.

PC: I think the age level. You know, third graders are pretty young—although, I think they're older now (Laughs), more mature. But my experience—and I was so new. I mean, you know, and I never—I never had any hope of ever teaching third grade. But by the time I got—the next year—to fifth grade, I had settled for one year. Your first year of grammar-school teaching, I think, is the hardest. Everybody says that. But I wasn't good at. (Laughs)

NF: And then after third grade, and then fifth grade, you went to high school?

PC: Yes. I went back to finish college and then I went to St. Scholastica. And that was mainly to teach French, but my major was English. And then we all taught religion. You taught many things. And then we went—I went to Manhattan College, in New York; Gabriel Moran, who did really the whole theology of revelation and was very formative for me. Built on what I had learned here, at Mundelein. So I went there '69—June of '69—through '71. The summer of '71. And got my master's there.

[00:52:38]

NF: How did that change what you—how or what you taught?

PC: Then I went back, and I was chair of the theology department at St. Scholastica, and just taught theology. So we developed it. It was a time—the school was really big, we have a thousand—over a thousand—students in the school. Everybody had to take religion; so we would have a large group, and then in small group we did world religions, and things, and various expressions of religion, like yoga and that kind of thing, as well as Christianity and the child. We did a lot of creative things. That was mainly in the seventies.

NF: Do you have any particular memories about that, in terms of something you're particularly proud of?

PC: Well, I mean, I think: always trying to involve the students in some kind of service or social action was part of it. But also, the whole sense of scripture, of revelation, as ongoing. I remember. I mean, that's really what Gabe Moran's whole approach is, through catechetics and through theology. It was exciting when a student would catch that, and be excited about it. I'm still in touch with a couple of them who really got it—who don't practice Catholicism anymore! (Laughs) But they got the God thing.

[00:54:26]

I mean, the students were very thoughtful about religious questions, at that point. They were trying to make sense out of what was going on. Because there was a lot of confusion going on in the Church—I guess there still is. So that was—I mean, I can remember a very crowded classroom and just the intensity of those students, in trying to grasp what that means, for God to be revealing; it cuts through many different things. I really enjoyed that.

And then I enjoyed—my students were much better at the soup kitchens that we went to, than I was. I liked to serve the soup; they were really good at visiting. And that was always very impressive to me, and challenged me.

NF: And that was going to be my next question. When you look back at your teaching career, is there anything that stands out as particularly challenging? Or something you went, "Oh, I just did not like that," about teaching. Is there anything?

PC: I really didn't like standing up and, so to speak, telling the class what they should think. (Laughs) I mean, I liked it when—the model of discussion, you know, and conversation. I didn't

like teaching, a whole lot. And I think maybe I didn't have good education methodology. And I didn't do it naturally. Some of my peers did—were really good teachers. But I loved being with the students.

I think my memories are more of after school, and activities, and conversations, and just getting involved in their lives, than they are about standing and teaching.

[00:56:45]

NF: Well, and before we leave your high school teaching, I want to loop just a little bit back; what did your parents think—we kind of missed—about you entering the order?

PC: Well they wanted me to finish college.

NF: Did they?

PC: Yeah. Yeah, particularly my father. I saw the wisdom in it, but I decided it was my decision, so I did it! I think I was a little stubborn. They thought that I would never travel again, and they had traveled all over the world, for CFM. So they took us on a CFM tour of Latin America, between my junior and senior—no, between my senior year and freshman in college. And then they took us to Europe on a CFM tour, after my high school, so that I would get to see the world.

NF: And this was the whole family?

PC: Didn't prove to be true at all! I traveled a lot.

NF: And the whole family went.

PC: Yes. Theresa was a baby at the time. So she didn't go. And none of the foster children went, because you could never take foster children out of the country. So the four of us—the four children went.

NF: Do you have any particular memories of that trip? Kind of your "last," supposedly, last trip to travel, type of thing?

[00:58:27]

PC: Oh, well in Brazil—well that wasn't the last trip—in Brazil, Father Imborski got to take care of us while my parents went to a meeting. Then, I got to go to a nightclub with them, and dance with him (Laughs), which was an experience. In Europe, the same thing. We were taken care of by a priest, Father Bernard [pronounced like "Ber-nerd"] [Saunders], who was a Benedictine from Oregon. Yeah, just sitting by the Seine [River] with him and eating bread and cheese, was fun. Drinking wine.

And then we had a papal audience, with Pius the Twelfth.

Yeah. There were a lot of different things. I mean, my most poignant memory is: my brother didn't want to be with us; he wanted to be home, playing with his cars! He was not a happy camper. But, that's a different story.

NF: Well, describe the papal audience, and your parents.

PC: Well, basically, we had a papal audience with a pretty large group, I think. And at that time you had to wear a mantilla [veil] on your head, and you had to wear black, for a papal audience. So I remember it as very solemn. I don't remember—if the pope said anything, nothing stood, in my memory. But my parents were just thrilled, we got to do that. So I remember that. They were very proud of it.

[01:00:10]

BOM: And what year was this?

PC: Would have been in '57.

BOM: Okay.

PC: So Pius the Twelfth died the next year, right?

BOM: And then that was?

PC: He died when I was a novice.

BOM: On the twenty-third.

PC: '59.

NF: So I'm thinking about, kind of, what your parents were doing with CFM while you were—in the sixties and seventies. How was that all happening in your family? You know, what was the tie in?

PC: I guess I would comment on a couple things about the sixties and the early seventies, family. I think if you were to interview my siblings, it might be a different story, you know. Because they were at home during all those years. From Cathy—Patrick and Cathy and Theresa, the younger three—it was a very different family experience, for them. My parents traveled, they went around the world—when I was in high school they went around the world. They just traveled a lot, and so there were a couple of women who—and one couple—who came in and took care of us and them, during that time. It was very different. So they didn't have as consistent a presence of my parents, as I did, and my next sister [Mary Ann] did. And Al, my brother—my foster brother—who's just a year older, had that in some way. He imbibed that more than my own brother did.

[01:02:12]

So that's one thing. And then, of course, my parents were invited to be on the Birth Control Commission, in the sixties. And were very surprised by that. But that was because of their role as the President Couple—International President Couple of CFM. I remember them—my mom saying that when they got the invitation from Rome, they weren't sure what to do with it. But they went to, I think, Cardinal Meyer—I'll have to look that up, but I think it was Cardinal Meyer—and said, "Well, what should we do? Should we do this?" And he said, "Of course!" (Laughs) "Of course! Go for it."

They took that invitation very, very seriously. My mother had not been able to have more children, so birth control wasn't a question for her. They wanted more children, so they got foster children and foreign students, instead. But, they went to Rome truly believing that the Church's stance was correct, and that birth control wasn't morally right—didn't have a moral basis. And then they listened; they were the only non-profession—my father was professional, he was a lawyer—but non-professional to the birth-control issue. Because the other people—the other couples—were doctors, I think. And I think the single women—I think they were scientists of some sort. Didn't look this up, again.

[01:04:06]

So they were the only ones. So they decided, after the first meeting of the Birth Control Commission, to ask CFM couples what their experience was. And how it fit with the Catholic teaching. So they contracted with Professor DiAntonio from Notre Dame, and he conducted a scientific survey. So they sent the request and the survey out to all the lead couples in all the different countries, and then they were asked to spread it around. The couples were asked to write letters back. They could fill out the survey, but to also write what their experience was, narratively.

My parents were just amazed at all the conversations; because they didn't have that issue, you know. That just wasn't their history, because my mother had to have a hysterectomy after Cathy was born. So there was no question. So they read those, and brought the results back to Rome and shared that with the other—the Cardinals, and the scientists, and the moral theologians, and the other laypeople. I think there were just, maybe, eight laypeople in the total commission, I think. Not positive. Maybe nine. So, I think *that*, plus the reflections of the theologians, and the Church historians, changed the minds of ninety percent of that commission.

[01:06:08]

And so they left Rome, I think probably—I should have looked this up—but I think it came out in '68. I think so.

(Unintelligible background comment)

PC: Huh? No, no.

(Unintelligible background comment)

PC: *Humanae Vitae*. [Unintelligible] was much earlier. (Laughs) But I think it came out in '68. They had left Rome two years before then, is the way the story is told. My father was awakened by the phone—the phone was by his bed—and it was a journalist from a French magazine, comparable to *Life*, was *Paris Match*—saying, "Oh, what do you think about what the pope said about birth control?" And my father said: "I don't know what that is." And so then the journalist told him what it was; they were not even notified.

So they were crushed, because they *really* had been changed by the witness of Catholic laity, married couples. Of course, we know the whole history after that, that it really shook the whole Church and still shakes the Church.

That was a big thing in their lives. And I think it—my father was diagnosed with cancer less than two years after that. So, my own sense is that he internalized all that. But, who knows what that's all about. So, it was a hard time—a *very* hard time.

[01:08:10]

NF: Did they think—in that two-year time period, were they confident that *all* that they had learned would be taken into consideration? I mean, kind of, what was the sense? As you said, they were crushed. But did they think: "This will change the Church"?

PC: I think they were hopeful. I never really talked to them about it, so I don't really know. But my sense is that they knew there were some strong voices in that ten percent of the commission. I think they expected it to be changed, the teaching to be changed. I really do. And they had a meeting scheduled in Laprade, France, after that, about the workings of the commission. That's published—I think that's in the [Notre Dame] archives. Even though this happened—I forget what month; the meeting in Laprade was soon after that—they had to move it, I think, to a non Church property. But they did. And it was international meeting on it [birth control]. So they went ahead and did that, so I know they were, like, "This isn't right," you know. "We're not going to keep quiet."

But, they were asked to keep quiet.

NF: Really? How so?

PC: I don't know by whom, but I know my father never talked about it before he died. And my mother didn't talk about it until the twenty-fifth anniversary—of *Humanae Vitae*.

NF: And then what did she say?

[01:10:06]

PC: I should—some of what I'm saying—my mother spoke of their disappointment and their sadness at how that affected young people in the Church, at that time. And how the credibility of the Church, because of that one moral teaching, really was affected. She spoke to—I think it was

a meeting of priests, out at Niles, when Niles Seminary was on Harlem. I wrote some of it for her; I was her ghostwriter. She liked to talk, but not to write.

BOM: And this may seem obvious, but do you think some of the disappointment also came out of their grounding in Chicago? Because by that time, one of the things [Father] Egan was famous for, was involving lay—listening to laypeople. Not just about birth control, but. Can you talk a little bit about, then, the culture of Chicago in terms of—by that time of—welcoming lay voices into real decision making, like your father.

PC: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I think that, you know, through CFM, people found a voice—in their parishes, for one thing. And that would be the first arena. And then, in the greater Chicago area. And there were lots and lots of couples who belonged to the CFM; even today, when I meet the son or daughter of a CFM couple, they talk about how important that was to their parents, in their faith formation, and just in their *adult* formation. And I think, you know, certainly the seminary training, in the forties and fifties and sixties, made a difference for the priests. I mean, that's part of the issue *now*, is that the seminary training isn't the broad scope of what Catholicism is.

[01:12:22]

But I think at that time, you know, that—coupled with the couples movement—certainly made for a very vibrant dialogue on different issues; on racial relations, on inter-religious relations. I still belong to a Catholic-Jewish dialogue group that my parents helped to start, that was very prominent Jewish people and very prominent Catholic people. And it's been going for thirty-some years now. So I think there was just a lot of activity around political issues; there were a lot of people involved in politics at that time, and particularly in—fitting for Chicago—Democratic politics!

You know, it just—kind of an amazing number of people that were involved in a great variety of ways. In housing? I mean, you look at the Contract Buyers League [organization that fought housing discrimination], which wasn't from couples—that was young Jesuits, Jack Macnamara and crew. But, you look at—oh, the integration of CFM? So, my parents would attend groups in the project, at Cabrini, and some down along the Dan Ryan [expressway in Chicago], which was unheard of, you know, because most people stayed in their parish. In Chicago, we say, "I'm from this parish," you know. I don't say "I'm from" what neighborhood. It just was an amazing time, I think, to be alive, as young couples in the Church.

[01:14:25]

I got lost.

BOM: No!

NF: That was great.

BOM: It's all weaving together.

NG: Do you have anything else?

BOM: Go ahead. We haven't gotten to Deborah's Place, or—

NF: Well, before we go too far, there was somebody that I wanted to ask you about; well actually, kind of—Peggy Roach.

PC: Yeah. Peggy was Monsignor Jack Egan's assistant and companion. And I think did so much behind the scenes, you know. As the end of her life came, I became more and more aware of what she really did. But, I think—you know, Jack Egan, he was known for writing a thank-you letter the very day that he would see somebody or have a conversation with somebody; and it was Peggy that wrote those. But Jack got the credit for it, for so long.

I don't—some of our sisters, in my community, knew Peggy better; Mary Benet [BVM] did. I guess Mary Benet—Jack had helped Mary Benet start the Urban League—Urban Apostolate for Sisters—in the early—well, it would have been in the seventies, maybe. Late sixties and seventies. And Peggy was certainly part of that, with Mary Benet and with Jack. So I knew Peggy and always admired her, but she really was behind the scenes, a lot of times, for me.

NF: And, the Catholic—oh, I'm totally blanking. Catholic Council—Council of Catholic Women—she was very big into that.

[01:16:27]

PC: Yeah. My mom wasn't real involved in that.

NF: She was not.

PC: I mean, I knew about it. But I don't have any personal experience with that, except later on, talking to them about Deborah's Place.

NF: Right. So, a little bit, back to your parents—what role did their work play in your life? Again, kind of a micro or macro, when you look back on it.

PC: Yeah. Well, you mean in terms of my parents' work with CFM?

NF: You know, just, any or all of it, yeah.

PC: So I think, personally—you know, my father was an attorney, and he was always able to help people, because of that. And so, part of my young self wanted to become an attorney. But that wasn't too, too open to women. So I decided—I put that aside. But I think, when I look back, had I grown up in this time, I probably would have done that.

My mother was a great organizer, you know. Before my father died, she was often behind the scenes. And then she came—she came into her own. She said: "Okay. That part of my life is over, I'm not going to get married again, ever. And I will focus on women." And she did. So, I

think that decision-making—that she really said, "Alright, I'm gonna go on. I want to do this."—was a real influence on me, for that.

[01:18:29]

In terms of CFM—I mean, my early years, as a teenager, was one as a babysitter (Chuckles) for CFM meetings and conventions and everything. Which was fun, because I like to organize, too. But I think there's a deep impact of that approach to life: of observing, judging, and acting. And of the love of the Gospel, that was always very much a part of our family conversations, at table. Especially on Sunday.

I think it had both a micro and a macro impact on me, in many, many ways.

BOM: It seems a little afield, but—so you—I'm struck by how warmly you talk about your relationships, your family's relationships with clergy. But this, of course, is at the same time of the height of the abuse actually going on. So, a) did you have any hint that that was going on? And b) what was your reaction when you found out?

[01:20:00]

PC: I had no, no sense of that, growing up. And I have asked my siblings if they had any; and they didn't. So whether we were just blessed with really good, solid priests—men who were in our lives? So when the whole sex abuse, clergy-abuse scandal was—it began to be part of us in early 2000—you know, I was shocked. I remember—I remember hearing stories at one of the parishes I was at, you know, that said: "Don't let the servers be alone with a priest." I didn't know what that was about. I actually didn't really think about it, at that time, but it came back to me after the scandal. And that was probably from our religious superiors.

I just was not tuned into that, at all. But I must admit: I have a friend—a good friend—who was abused when she was a child. I knew that, but I didn't realize it—I thought it was her father who had abused her, and it was. But, I didn't realize that it also was a priest, until after the scandal hit the press. And then she shared that with me. So I must have been living in a bubble, you know, because I didn't—I really didn't relate to that. Now I do.

BOM: I didn't either, but.

[01:22:08]

NF: Well while we're still kind of on your parents, can you tell us a little bit, like, what they were like?

PC: My parents. (Chuckles) My father was a very likable, lovable, Irishman. [Father] Andrew [Greeley] really wrote about him after he died, that nobody didn't like Patrick Crowley. And I think that's true. I never met anybody that didn't. And, he was from a family of two; he only had one brother. His brother had 10 kids, so I have quite a few cousins. He was a lawyer, like his father, and practiced law with his father. He had a really good heart, and wanted to help

everybody. And somehow he managed to make people think that he helped everybody. (Laughs) And I suppose he did, but he must have had some limits.

I was very—I felt very unconditionally loved by my father, as a child. I mean, I was the oldest; we would talk, late at night in the kitchen. That kind of thing. So I had a really, very fond relationship with my father.

[01:23:52]

PC: My mother was the oldest of five, and she—she went through Sacred Heart [schools except for two years at Immaculata High School], and Trinity [college in Washington, D.C.], and went to France for a year, and did all the things that her mother wanted her to do. She was deeply affected by John A. Ryan, who was a Catholic writer, social doctrine. He taught at Trinity, and all her friends took the course because they could write letters during it, because he just read from his book. But she, and a couple of them, liked to get him talking. And then he would travel back to Chicago by train, at the holidays, and they would too. So they would get to talk to him, a couple of them. So she was *deeply* affected by him.

So I think that tilled the soil. Because my grandparents were quite conservative; they were owners of manufacturing, on both sides of the family, and very conservative. As opposed to my paternal grandfather, who was much more liberal.

So my mother, you know, met my father. They got married in '37. This was the gift that my father gave my mother on their engagement, if you can imagine [showing a silver cross with engravings on it]. So, I wore it today. I think my mother, with my father, I think she continued, then, to be awakened to things. As I said before, she wanted him to make the men's group into a couples' group. So that was kind of the birth of CFM.

[01:25:41]

She was somebody who didn't—she didn't like to write; she didn't like to read a whole lot. She liked to hear things and to speak them. And she was intelligent, but she just wasn't a writer. My father was a writer, and I am too. But she was a great organizer; the CFM office, the international office, was on our dining room table from 9:00 to 4:00, and then was cleared off so we could have dinner, you know. She just really knew how to organize things, and to keep my father—he was sort of a dreamer, you know, great ideas. She kept him focused. And got things done.

They were very different personalities; very, very fond of each other, consistently. The only time they ever argued was when my father would go too fast in the car—turnpike or something. But otherwise, if they disagreed I never—not that they—she didn't, like, just echo him. She thought for herself. But they didn't disagree about petty things, for sure.

Yeah, they were a very interesting couple. Complementary, in that: the dreamer and the organizer; it's a great match.

NF: Well, and you mentioned: when your father died, your mother started to work on women's issues. And what were those?

[01:27:31]

PC: Well, she simply—first, she made herself available to other widows, because she really didn't have any financial background. When my dad died, there was no money in the bank that she could access, which was really scary. So she made herself available; if she knew somebody whose husband died, then she would call and say, "You know, why don't you come and have lunch," or something. She did it on that personal level.

And then, she started this women's group, and I think it was going for a long, long time. And it was a great mixture of women, from the building—from the Hancock Building [in Downtown Chicago] where she lived—and people she would meet. And she would invite in very radical speakers (Chuckles). Some of the people were like, "Hmm, I wonder about this." And then she would open her home to other women's groups, like NARW, the National Assembly of, what was, Religious Women first, N-A-R-W, and then it was—no, it was Women Religious, it was nuns. And then it was the National Assembly of Religious Women. So it included all women.

And, you know, we would break bread and share wine, share Eucharist, at the top of the Hancock Building. For years and years that went on. Just, you know, sometimes take actions; and sometimes invite a speaker in. So she would do that.

[01:29:16]

Those were the primary things. Oh, and she was a communion minister at her parish, at Northwestern Hospital, Holy Name Cathedral. She didn't want to be on boards. After my father died, she was invited on boards; and she got on them at first, and then she said: "I don't want to do this. I want to do something." So she did. I'm trying to think if there's anything else.

Well then, she with another—with a group of women from different churches downtown—founded Deborah's Place. Because there were women sleeping on the street, or in doorways—there still are, actually—around Quigley, and Fourth Presbyterian, and the Hancock. So they started Deborah's Place in 1985. That's a wonderful story of collaboration among women, from the Churches.

So, they started—they got the basement of Immaculate Conception Church, which was in the Near North area [region of Downtown Chicago]. Father Jim Jakes, I think, was the priest there. And he let them use the—I guess it was the gym floor, for the very first shelter. And so they would go out on the street and try to talk the women into coming; because, of course, they were founded for women who were alone, unaccompanied. So didn't have children; didn't have a significant other, with them. Most of them had been on the streets for a long, long time. So it was a very—a population that was afraid of the systems, for sure.

[01:31:09]

So they started, and then after one winter there—and my mom would go and sleep on the floor, there. And she was in her eighties, at the time. Maybe she was in her late seventies. Then the parents got upset, of course. Because there was a grammar school there; so the parents didn't want the women's diseases, or whatever, to be there. And so they got a daycare center in the—it was called the Marshall Field Apartments, at the time. Now it's called Town and Garden. It's on Sedgwick, near Cabrini. So they would be in there from 6:00 in the morning—well from 6:00 at night until 6:00 in the morning, and then people would have to leave, because the daycare was there. That was there until 1993. So from '86 to '93.

So she would volunteer. She slept on the floor at least once a week; she made dinner another night; and she was on the board, of that.

In eighty—no, in '91—I had won a community service fellowship and had traveled in Latin America for fifteen months, studying women's organizing, and was looking for a job (chuckles) because I was getting back. So I applied for the job, and became the director of Deborah's Place, and was there for thirteen years. During the time that I was there, we decided to do housing, not just shelter. They had sort of begun that—that thinking—before I came. But we definitely developed it. So, we built one hundred and fifty-nine apartments—or rehabbed them, we didn't build anything new. Nothing new.

[01:33:23]

She was part of that. My bargain with her was that she had to resign from the board if I was going to take the job. Because I wasn't about to have her (laughs) on the board of directors! So she did. She did. But then we started an advisory group, and she ran that. That was fun. It's a great program.

NF: Well, I'm struck with what you had said, that you left teaching in 1979, and you went to the Howard—

PC: Area.

NF: Right. So, I mean, it sounds like this was a trajectory, in terms of moving into community action, community service. Talk about what you did at the Howard Center.

PC: Yeah. The Howard Area was a service organization when I came. And then—it's a very long story—but there was a group of banks and corporations—Amoco [oil company] and the savings and loans—that invested in that neighborhood and bought twelve multi-unit buildings to develop. They came to us to ask which buildings they should buy. And then, they didn't want to do the support services, so they said: "We'll give you the money if you could develop that." So we developed daycare and healthcare, and employment services, and after-school programs for the kids. And they funded it for the first couple of years, which was really good.

We turned the Howard Area Community Center, at that time, from just a service agency and food pantry and clothing and some referrals, and also a housing service—we worked with

property owners and also with tenants—and we turned it into both service and education and community organizing. So that's when I first learned about community organizing.

We developed it with the women in the neighborhood. We had wonderful staff, just terrific staff. I mean, I was raising the money and keeping it all coordinated, but it was the staff that developed the programs.

[01:35:49]

NF: How did you get there from teaching?

PC: We had all these workshops when we made the decision that everybody could decide where they wanted to do ministry, or where they felt called. And my dream, at that time, was to do something with my theology in a storefront. (Pause) Go figure. The Howard Area was separating from St. Jerome's, at the time. The board—who were all part of St. Jerome's—decided to not have the Howard Area Community Center become part of Catholic Charities, but to separate it into a not-for-profit. So they were hiring somebody, and their one criteria was: the person had to live in Rogers Park. And I was the only one that applied. (Laughs.) So I got the job. I didn't know very much; I really had to learn. I had to learn accounting, I had to learn fundraising, I had to learn everything. But it was good.

And my mother came and helped.

NF: Really!

PC: Yeah. She said, "You need somebody at the front of this." This was this long storefront. And my desk was way in the back, and one caseworker person. She said, "You need somebody up front." So she got her friends to come and staff the reception desk (Laughs) for all week long. Which really was a good thing, you know. Because we had some control over the space! (Laughs) Which was not a bad idea!

[01:37:32]

We learned a lot. I had done a day camp for that agency, for five years, with a friend of mine, who was in my community. She left; and she died just this year. Judy Beaumont and I ran that camp; we were crazy. A hundred-and-fifty kids, and two adults. We had high-school students, but other than that. Anyway.

So I knew the agency, and I knew a little bit about the family makeup, and some of the issues that were surrounding the kids. So, I didn't go in totally, totally ignorant. But, pretty ignorant.

NF: Did you like it? Better than teaching?

PC: Oh, I loved it!

NF: Did you?

PC: Yeah. I loved it. I mean, I loved it because—why?—because I could make things happen. And because I loved listening to the people. And, in my older age I'm learning spiritual direction, and doing spiritual direction, which I love, too. So I think the "listening" part is part of who I am.

And I loved forming a team, you know. We had great staff, just a great staff. It was a wonderful ten years that I spent there. Not easy, but wonderful. And interestingly enough, there were some of the religious—the Sacred Heart, who I had gone to grammar school with and I liked [Marina Hernandez RSCJ & Rosemary Pagiliani RSCJ were two of them]—they lived on Sheridan Road. And a number of the retired people, who had been administrators at Barat College, came and volunteered [Mimi Burke RSCJ and Flavia Augustins RSCJ]. It was wonderful. It was a nice partnership.

[01:39:25]

NF: So you were there ten years, you said. And then what did you do?

PC: After that?

NF: Uh huh.

PC: I was one of the first to receive a fellowship from the Chicago Community Trust, which was given to people who were running social service agencies. And the idea was that you would have a year off—they would pay your salary, and pay for your replacement—and you could choose a topic and choose what you wanted to do. So I chose to travel—because I like to travel—to the countries of origin of the people of Rogers Park.

I went to Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Peru. I didn't go to Jamaica—I should have. Haiti, I went to Haiti. I went to Trinidad, but not because there were a lot of Trinians in our neighborhood, it was because my sister was there! And my focus was to look at how women organize. So, that's what I did for fifteen months. Except for a couple months; my mother broke her leg, so I came back (Chuckles) and took care of her for a while.

NF: What stands out for you, from that experience? Those fifteen months?

PC: I think my time in the Salvadoran refugee camps, for a couple of reasons. One: There were *many* more women than men, because the men had either been killed or they were fighting a civil war. Yet, the way that camp was organized, by the people, they had equal men and women on the governing teams. And I was really impressed by that.

[01:41:23]

And then, just the—it was a very barren place. It was December, but it was cold. You know, you're in the tropics, but it was cold—we were in the mountains. And you could hear the bombs across the border. That was a new experience for me. Because I had never lived in an area that

was in danger. And they weren't in danger of being bombed in the camp, but you knew that their families were over there.

We were supposed to—well, let's see. I was there for two weeks, and then I went back, later on, to what they called "accompaniment," to walk with the people back to their villages. We never did get—I never got to go to the village, but just the stamina of the people who were held up by the military, who wouldn't let us go. They were just amazing. I have a picture of a woman and a child; they're very—they hadn't been fed well for a while. But the eyes are so powerful, on that woman. Because they just *so* believe that they can rebuild this country. Now, of course, we know there have been multiple problems since then, not always their fault.

BOM: What year was this? Your fifteen-month sojourn? What year?

PC: I went in the end of November, '89, and came back just as the Iraq war was starting, in '91.

BOM: So it was after the assassination of the four women religious, obviously. Because that was 1980.

PC: Yes. The Jesuits were in—the Jesuits were killed when we were in Guatemala. We wanted to go to San Salvador; we ended up the next day at the airport, and they wouldn't let us in. It was pretty powerful. I've been there since, and been to the UCA [the Jesuit-run University of Central America] and the rose garden.

[01:43:40]

BOM: I just finished reading a biography—an excellent biography—of Maura Clarke [woman religious missionary to Central America].

PC: Oh, I have that.

BOM: Do you? Have you read it?

PC: Not yet.

BOM: There's a wonderful quote by the author, who said: "When Maura Clarke first went to Central America, she thought she was bringing Christianity to them," because that's just how you thought, at the time. So this would have been in the '50s, I think, or '60s. And she realized that God was already there.

PC: Yeah.

BOM: Can you talk a little bit more about—I mean, you're starting to.

PC: When I went to Central America and to Mexico, I thought: "Oh, maybe this is the time"—my community had never responded to the invitation to send people for mission—"and maybe this is the time for me to go there." It wasn't, you know. And it wasn't, because they had such a

vibrant faith; and they were teachers. I mean, I was learning more from them than they from me, for sure.

I thought, this is not the time for new people to go there. Because they're really nurturing themselves, you know. In Mexico, when I was learning Spanish, I participated in a Comunidad de Base, a group on scripture. Powerful. Powerful. I made that clear decision, that that was not the time to go to Latin America.

[01:45:11]

NF: What do you think were some things that you brought back, with you?

PC: Oh, I think, a broadened view of the impact of our policies on Latin America—especially on Central America. But on other countries, also. And how obscure that all is to most people, in *this* country. But in *those* countries, they know. In refugee camp, there was this rudimentary sound system, and every night there would be international news. They knew the impact of their being in the refugee camps, and fighting the civil war, on international life, at that time. Much more than we do, even today, here.

I think that was the biggest takeaway—I mean, a respect for people who live in poverty. Because, they're happy, even in the worst situations. Yeah. Just, and really, an emotional connection to the murders of Romero and the four women and the six Jesuits and their housekeepers. And one of my friends in my master's program was a friend of Maura Clarke—Katherine [(Kitty) Cardin, MM]. So, that made a difference, too. Because I knew of Maura from Kitty.

[01:47:07]

NF: So you came back, and you were at Howard Area.

PC: No, I came back to Deborah's Place.

NF: Oh! To Deborah's Place.

PC: I looked for a job to use my Spanish, but my Spanish is still pretty basic. It's not good. I speak French much better than I speak Spanish. So I took the job. Edwina Gateley wanted me to take the job at Genesis House, and I don't think she's ever gotten over the fact that I didn't! (Laughs) But I decided that I knew more about homelessness. Because I had helped to start two shelters when I was at Howard Area [Dehon House and Housing Opportunities for Women (H.O.W.)], because we had people sitting in our front lobby, who were homeless. So I knew more about that. So I decided to take Deborah's Place, instead.

NF: What was the Genesis House?

PC: Genesis House was a program and a home for women who had been caught in prostitution. It folded after a while. But there's—some of the women who were in prostitution now have started something else, something that's called "Rainbow" something. I can't remember.

NF: Well, and I'm struck with: at Deborah's Place you had quite a connection, I mean other, besides the Howard Area connection. How long were you at Deborah's Place?

PC: I was there thirteen years. And probably the other thing that happened during that time, besides building housing, we had to fight a zoning battle, so I got involved with United Power for Action and Justice, in that zoning battle, in South Lakeview.

But the other thing that happened is that: agencies never talked to each other except when they were at meetings with the Department of Human Services of the City of Chicago, for funding. And so it was always a rivalry, trying to vie for funds. So we started—a bunch of us started to talk, and it was an amazing thing. We eventually formed the Partnership to End Homelessness, which morphed into "Chicago" something, now. (Laughs) I can't remember what it's called! But it is a collaboration.

[01:49:39]

TN: Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness.

PC: Yes. Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness, that's right. Although, I think it has new name.

TN: It's One Chicago, now, maybe?

PC: Something like that. I'm not sure, because I'm not too much in touch with them—a little bit, [very faint] some friends. But the collaboration really was very important. We did such bold things as: develop a ten-year plan to end homelessness, which was very controversial! But our idea was that, if you don't start to think about ending homelessness, you never will. Even if it's not going to happen in ten years. You know, a lot of things affected that. Money for housing, [very faint] if it happened.

That was important. And then, when I left Deborah's place in 2004—primarily because my mom was not real well—and then I was encouraged to take over the Chicago Continuum of Care, which is the funnel through which HUD [United States Department of Housing and Urban Development] funding came to Chicago, at that time, for homelessness. Part of the problem—a friend of mine was running it, and she didn't like the job (Chuckles). So that was part of what happened. And then some funders said, "Would you do it?" Because the providers in our—HUD has always required, in the past twenty years, that providers be in a collaborative effort. And the providers were not happy. They knew me, so I went and did that for two years; had some other really good staff who ran the HUD funding, but I brought the providers together.

That whole collaborative effort, which continues—but it wobbles, right now, according to my friends.

[01:51:47]

NF: Well back to Deborah's Place, when you—when you think about it—are there some things that you're particularly proud of? That you did there?

PC: Oh, I think the whole approach of, "we're going to end homelessness, one person at a time," is very important. And I think, also, the realization that: if we were gonna do housing, we should not evict. We should figure out how to help people move to another possibility, for them, that would work better. And so, by the time I left—that took a long time to process with the staff, but I'm really happy about that, that they don't evict anybody. So they don't cause homelessness, you know. And I think that's a good model; a hard model, but a good model.

TN: I have a follow-up question about that. So, the—at that point, is harm reduction starting to come into practice? And organizations like yours are being asked by funders to start implementing this? How did that end up playing out in your experience with Deborah's Place?

PC: Well "harm reduction" is a hard concept. It started in Minnesota, I think, with Native American housing (sound becomes distorted), I want to say. You know, if you do permanent housing, and people are renting, then what happens within their apartment—as long as it doesn't bother other people—is a form of harm reduction.

[01:53:36]

But, in order to get—at least at one point in history—in order to get subsidies for housing, you had to do some screening, you know, so that it would work. And that's where the harm-reduction model came in. And HUD bought into it, and did it, so that people who were active drug users or active drinkers couldn't have an apartment. Services would be available, as long as they didn't interfere with other people's safety or their *own* safety and well-being.

But it's a controversial model for social work—the social-work approach. And it's not an easy model to manage. But it's an important model, because everybody has a right to housing. You know, certainly the UN [United Nations] has talked about that forever. The United States doesn't always buy into that, but we built on that—that every human person has a right to housing.

BOM: I'm sneaking out, continue.

NF: I have one more question—to keep on Deborah's Place—when you look back, were there any particular challenges?

PC: When I came?

NF: When you were at Deborah's Place, when you look back, can you say, "Ooooh." Either a challenge, or, "Dang it, I didn't get—" Something that didn't happen, you wanted to have happen? Or a particular challenge.

[01:55:16]

PC: I think, when you grow fast—which we did, because between '93 and 2001 we opened a hundred and fifty-nine apartments. I mean, that's a number of years, but it's still a short time. I think there are staff issues, you know. Because maybe you don't do as—maybe I didn't do as good a job of offering support and supervision, at times. We were blessed at Deborah's Place, because we had three people who are still there, who are kind of the heart; I came and I was the—I could make it move, the structure—but they were there, the heart of the approach. So I think, that.

I think the whole zoning process—we went through seven zoning battles, and we won four of them. But the others we lost. And the time you have to spend, and the political connections and influences that happen in that whole thing, is just not good. I mean, it's not a good system. In this city, anyway.

TN: Were you able to use any of those skills and observations from your observing women, organizing? That you could take to those kinds of battles?

PC: Yeah. Persistence! (Laughs) For sure! I think that. And also, I think women organize by relationships. You know, I remember the alderman at the one—at St. Alphonsus Parish—was a good Catholic. And Father [Dominic] Grassi was the pastor at St. Josaphat [Parish]; and he and I would go, and every—I don't know what it was, Wednesday or Thursday night—we would sit in the alderman's office and just wait until he would see us. And he was a parishioner of Father Grassi's (Chuckles), the alderman was. So, just that relationship building really was good.

[01:57:48]

And I have to say that—it's an organizing principle, too—that there really aren't any enemies. We all have something in common, and you have to find what's in common, and then try to move your agenda, and what you want.

And I have to say that Cardinal George—you know, in many, many ways, I could be critical of his work in Chicago. But, he really was very supportive of us during our zoning battle, at St. Alphonsus. He was really very helpful.

And I have a wonderful story of his. One of the women—Irene's was our day program, and it focused on art. It had a lot of art therapy; they still have a lot of art therapy at Deborah's Place. One Christmas Eve, one of the women came down and she said: "I want to give this to the Cardinal." And I said, "O-kay." (Laughs) What do we do with this? So, I said, "Alright. Well wait for a little bit, and I'll drive you over to his house. We can ring the doorbell, and you can see if he's there." And he was there. And he graciously accepted it, and asked her how she made it. I mean, it was just a very special moment, both with that woman—who has since died—but also with his openness, to her. And it was really her idea; I didn't set her up to do that.

So that was—you know, those kinds of things are very special to me.

[01:59:42]

NF: Well, I'm looking at the time, and we are almost exactly at two hours. And it seems like a good place to stop; we can finish with Deborah's Place.

PC: Alright!

NF: So, thank you very much—

PC: You're welcome.

NF: —and we will end there.

[Incidental talking for several minutes.]

[02:03:12] [Audio recording ends.]