LB: Because I was the school counselor and P.E. instructor, I had a fairly in-depth relationship with those seventeen students' families. In the second year the principal changed. I had the same students in the second year. I taught the eighth grade. I was (    ) than they were. So then what happened was, the students had gotten to know Father Albert J. McKnight, who was serving in this War on Poverty struggle, and that was the first time they had ever encountered a priest. Probably their first experience with a black priest, and certainly their first experience with a priest who was not saying mass, or in a school/church setting, who was about justice issues. A very important role model. It blew their minds. So they asked me, could I have him come and talk to their class about why he was doing this, why he, as a priest, was doing this. So I said, "Sure." I had had speakers come in, Democratic, Republican speakers, and all kinds of speakers. So I informed the principal was who they wanted, and I was going to invite him. So I invited him, he said yes, and he was scheduled to come. Low and behold, by this time, the pastor calls in the principal and said no. So I was called in, and to make a very long story short, the bottom line was I was told that I could invite any other priest, but not this priest because he was black and some of the white parents objected to having a black priest in the school, especially not that black priest, but anyway. I was given a short list of white priests that I could invite. So I said, "I will go back and ask the class." Outside of the fact that I was incensed, the
students were the ones who wanted one. So I said to them, this is what Father said, that they would prefer you not have a black priest. I just said exactly what they said. Here is the list of names you may choose from. They said, "But why, Miss Bourg?" and I saw little Lorna sitting all out there. The one that drove my mother crazy. "Why? Why? Miss Bourg. Didn't you say and aren't we supposed to?" And I said, "Well, what do you want to do?" And they said, "We want to have Father McKnight come. This isn't right." So I went back and said, "No, they want to have Father McKnight come." And they said, "No." I went back into the classroom and I said, "I've just resigned." Everyone was crying at that point. I rescinded, not with any notice, because I didn't want to make it that comfortable. I walked out of the classroom that day, and I've never been back into a classroom. Then I went into the bowels of the University of Wisconsin for an intensive course on community organizing and proposal writing and community analysis, and spent a little time there.

RK: I'm interested in that, the kinds of training and the kinds of experience like that that are important. There's probably some clear connections to the work that you've done over the years.

LB: I guess the things that were important to me was a good, solid basic education. The clear transmission of values, whether they were values that I eventually questioned or not. But they were clearly some sets of values that you could bounce things off of. Very important. And trial by fire, of trying to carry out values, whatever level you were in your perception of
them. It was very important. And then having supportive people when you hit the bumps. You have to have some sort of supportive community whether it's one or sixteen. Some value community with real people that reflect to you, "Wow, that's important what you did." It's a matter of integrity. That was important. And then the exposures to other myths. The University of Wisconsin experience. But I've never approached, whether it's the marches for the integration of schools or integration of restaurants that we did, from a let-us-deliver-black folks-into-equity approach. It was, it just ain't right, and this is my freedom. So that's sort of where I came from, to answer your question.

RK: Well, for us these issues for important because I think young people really need positive role models these days who do feel passion and anger and a sense of values and a sense of continuity and community. I don't think they get that. I'm not sure they get it in a lot of cases, you know, they certainly don't get it from television or from our national leaders. I think one of the things that we hope to do even in our teaching, and find some other ways through internships and stuff, is to make sure that we're transmitting in whatever kinds of ways. I mean, I know you're doing it all the time, but to make sure that more of that gets done.

AB: I think the point of integrity that you just raised is very crucial also. I think it's something that's in the heart and soul of all young people. I personally remember a very definite moment when I was in church one morning in my home city of (   ) during the war. I was going to church most of the
morning, and a French pastor would say mass at seven o'clock in the morning. At 7:30 there was a Polish priest coming to say mass for the refugees from Poland. At eight o'clock there was a German officer coming to say mass for the German soldiers who were stationed there. It hit me what does this mean, this kind of Christianity that has at the core ( ). What is the symbol of that Christianity. Here we are three nations, fighting one another. We try to kill each other in the street as soon as we walk out of this church. We are in this same church, not at the same moment, we are in the same church, celebrating the same mystery in three different ways. Never combining and then ready to kill each other, and we did kill each other as soon as we walked out. So much so that I remember one morning I said, "I'm going to attend with the Germans." And I did, because it was a matter of integrity. So I think for the young people to have this type of experience, it is a very important thing.

NB: What did that do your sense of God? I think earlier you talked about the Catholic traditions of social justice as one of these traditions. It wasn't ( ) missionary sense to try to ( ), but it just wasn't right, was your response. What did sort of crossing that worship line or whatever and worshiping with the Germans, what did that do to your sense of...?

AB: Well, in my little way, my small way, I was just responding to my own sense of if there is a God, if there is a church, what does it mean? To be honest through and through with that. Also, I think it changed my way of looking at -- of not
accepting what was going outside the church. Why are we killing each other?

LB: It's sort of like, I made a little note here because you were inspiring me as you spoke, and that was redefining church, reclaiming church. How dare they steal my church?

AB: Yes. Yes.

LB: Redefining community, to some extent, is what we're also doing. Really believing the value that was set, not allowing it to be coopted away from me. That I am church, and I'll be damned if I'm going to let them define church in a way that is exclusive or oppressive. I reclaim it back.

AB: That's exactly how I felt. And I think with some of young folks at that time, we changed their attitude toward the Germans who were actually (   ). We went through very difficult years. I remember after the liberation, when the Germans were in the opposite situation, some of them had been taken prisoners and were the but of--I remember one day in a hotel when we had a meeting, there were a number of German prisoners there, sitting on the ground, and everybody was jeering at them and not very pleasant. They seemed to be hungry and so forth and I shared some of my bread with them even though we were under very strict restrictions, because I felt that was part of .

LB: At the same time, your family was part of an underground [laughter].

AB: Yes. In fact, we had some very serious things there too, but the issue had to be....
LB: The personal is very good.

AB: Yes, personal is very political. If you have to be a person of integrity and I could not, as a Christian, accept what was going on.

NB: When we were living in Mozambique, my wife, who is an Episcopal priest, almost an Episcopal priest, insisted that we do the same thing. There were three services. One was Changana, which was the native language. One was Portuguese, which was the national language, and then English. The most comfortable hour, of course, was in English. But she insisted we get up at 4:30 in the morning and go to the (      ) despite the fact that we didn't understand what was going on. But it was the presence.

LB: The presence.

NB: But it was the same thing, how dare they define this church.

LB: It was very political thing you did.

AB: Yes. And for the German soldiers who were there, I was the only non-German, non-soldier attending their celebration. I felt it was important to reach out. I couldn't say a word of German, but I could be there.

LB: It's like having been born German. (      )

NB: It's fascinating to think about that notion, how dare they define the church this way, and then begin to imagine that vis-a-vis the community.

LB: How dare they define our community this way? How dare this be done to ourselves? Why is that the only valid way or approach? And as women, I think especially, I have been
strengthened in that, and I think the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas, just the visual, regardless of the content, just the visual of it. You know, how dare we operate this way? I heard Anita Hill the other night say, "When there's a sexual harassment charge, how dare we define the terms in which we evaluate the charge in how pure is the woman and how evil is the man?" And then it begins to get really difficult when it is how perhaps cloudy is the reputation of the woman and how perhaps upstanding is the man. Perhaps it ought to be defined in terms of power and economic equity, and that is, if you have had so much power, how have you abused it? What have we done as a community to allow you to be put in a position where that abuse might even take place? And why is there such economic inequity here that makes that possible, and that has got nothing to do with romance? It has everything in the world to do with putting up male-only turf.

One of the things she said that was absolutely striking to me, and it was sort of very symbolic, that she got letters from women all around the country where women who had gone into very nontraditional work, had found that their cars had been urinated and defecated in. And this came from different stories. It's sort of like a dog marking territory. It's a very striking, how dare we allow our community to define our relationships that way. We will redefine them. We will revalue things.

RK: I wonder whether there's a prospect or an opportunity for, I mean, the Christian right, certainly over the last twelve, fifteen years, has had a tremendous influence on kind of working against some of the things that you've been trying to do and
accomplish. I wonder if this window of opportunity that you were talking about earlier also might include a kind of a spirituality through our various religious traditions, and that what we also need now, that we are in a kind of political, not only a political wasteland, but in a spiritual wasteland, and some kind of more proactive interaction between, not just the established church, but between spiritual values and religious values and the sense of community and self-help that you're thinking about, you're working on. How about spinning out a little bit about how you think those things or if you think those things might be coming back together in a way that is better.

AB: I think so. I think there is the same hunger for a truthfulness that's coming through in the different churches. I know in the Catholic Church, I know among the sisters, I'm just coming back from a meeting in Washington of the network. There were 250 women. There was such power in those three days there, and so integrated in terms of spirituality, politics, the realities of economic and justice issues, all of that so completely integrated. I mean, all the way through. Art, there was singing, beautiful singing, by a woman from Louisiana, by the way. Integrating the whole sense of the same things, spirituality and political and justice issues and beauty. All of this very integrated, and I think now the religious women especially are retaking possession of our own heritage as Christians, and what it really means to be a Christian. And this is very strongly so, but it's also bothering me now, why are we defining churches in opposition to the Episcopal, in opposition
to the Baptist, in opposition to, instead of, we are all the same family together. We may have different ways of expressing this but we are one. And so, for instance, the National Association of Women Religious has become the National Association of Religious Women. It's started from a couple of sisters, and it's open to the larger women and men. There were some men at the meeting this weekend. A few men that were there, and it's open. And it's also open to non-Catholics. I attended the Women's Church Conference in Cincinnati three years ago, that was a tremendous experience, where five thousand women.

LB: A new way of doing church. And it might not necessarily be in a building [laughter].

AB: One of the stunning things of that Women's Church, among many of the things that were very outstanding, powerful, was a Jewish dance.

LB: Oh yes. You loved that.

AB: Oh, I couldn't stop dancing. I was just [laughter] coming out of a very severe sickness, and physically I was not in good condition.

LB: Cancer surgery.

AB: But I could not stop dancing because it was a way of expressing this unity with the others and this integrity between everything alive, and the different ways of expressing that aliveness and the spirituality that's part of this whole thing.

LB: I think there's some guide posts that kind of are like signals or guide posts to us, and one of them is what Anne is speaking about so much, and that's the diversity. You hear
people say, "We must be more tolerant." And I get very short of patience with that. We must be tolerant of diversity. I think we have to appreciate, treasure, and celebrate diversity, and when we get there, then I think we have more likely arrived with something that might, in fact, have the power to enrich us and balance the violence that we've all experienced in being kept apart and being defined as other and somehow above. Another guide post would be the ladder type of model where you have a domination and a hierarchy, as opposed to circular and partnership and consultative, collaborative models that go on. It's painful, and some would say less efficient, but I would argue how efficient is the latter model when you see what we have to clean up.

It sort of reminds me of the domination of the earth with pesticides. I challenge, and I would love, if there's one thing I would want to have, and that is some economists in Louisiana, because I need them here, who have this sense of social outrage also who were really good economists who could begin to factor into the economic analysis on which we base so many of our decisions, factors that have been what I call creatively accounting out, the system of creative accounting. They've just never been put in. If we use pesticides on our roadsides because it's supposedly cheaper, just to take a very concrete example. Have we factored in the lost of all the blackberries that are food? Have we factored in the small like organisms that are now carriers in our food chain of some things that we might not want them to have? Have we factored in just the sheer loss of work
power by the people who no longer mow? Have we factored in the cancer and health implications? Have we factored another very structural thing, and that is, as you kill the weeds which hold the dirt on the side of the road, the drainage is less effective? Now, we have to go back out with a claw and dig it back out, pile it back up. Then you must come behind with one of the these road graders and smooth it all out. Does this make any sense? [Laughter] But when we made the decision at the parish council level to spray instead of mow, the basis of it was we can no longer afford to mow. I say where were our accountants who said you can't possibly afford to spray because here's the balance sheet.

RK: Here's the real cost.
LB: Here's the real cost. So there's some guide posts. That hierarchy is too expensive. It is not, in fact, more efficient. It is far less efficient. It is too damn expensive.

NB: I wondered too if you'd talk about the profit that a business makes when it makes a decision to send its labor production base someplace else because it's more profitable. What is the cost, poverty, unemployment, going to jail? Who pays for that? Why isn't that factored in?

LB: And why are we selling our soul and all of our community goods to smokestack chase across state lines or across international lines even. It doesn't make any sense. I think our development and our growth instead of being territorial has to have a depth instead. We see that in education. We see that in the spirituality that we were talking about, in the
understanding and the cultural exchange. That's not territorial. It's a different, it's rootedness and a growth that way, and I think that's a new value we have to begin to articulate.

NB: You said something earlier that I would like to come back. I guess it's a little bit more of a technical point. Where you talked about the importance of continuity of leadership, and you talked about you had some problems with some nuns who were coming for two to four years and leave, and it's a lifetime commitment. I know in some of our conversations in the past where some people who have been working a long time in the anti-poverty area, and had, at one point, quite bright programs that have fallen on rougher times. If you want to start picking at those, it's often because they were perhaps started by someone who came from up north, down south, stayed for a while, and left.

In fact, I think one of the programs in Mississippi, the three principal players all left at the same time. It was a very abrupt change. So the question, I guess, in some ways is how important is the continuity? Who then really are the agents of change in the long run and what does that say for people who perhaps come in and spend a bit of time here and go? And that may be the traditional sort of self-help mode, and you end up with these programs like Teach for America where, you know, go spend two years teaching before you go on to law school kinds of responses to problems. I mean, it's very different.

LB: There may be a place for some one to come in and teach classes on literary in a poor community for two years, but that's not your systemic change organizer person, and there's different
roles.

AB: I think there has to be rootedness. I know by personal experience, when I left France in 1956, I knew I wasn't going to go back. Because I knew I had to become an American. I knew I had to become a Louisianian, change my culture.

NB: How did you know that?

AB: Well, I knew. . . .

LB: Good question.

AB: Yeah. You have to be part of, and I knew you don't make a cultural change of that dimension twice in your life. So I knew it would take time for me to become other, and I knew I could not do that twice. So I knew I was not going to go back.

LB: There was a time when she would go back after having been here twenty years, when we would go back and she would come back and tell us that she cried most of the time she was back in France. Because it had been five years since she had gone back for a visit, and when she went back, she was, of course, very avant gard in her thinking in this culture. When she went there, she used five-year-old language. That was France at the time, and those words now meant that she was terribly out of step [laughter] quite naive, quite uninformed. She was stuck in a box and was driven almost crazy. That also reinforced that you can't go back.

AB: Well, yes, that's sure. It was reinforced, and when I left one year. . . .

LB: Crossed over.

AB: I left for one year. For health reasons, I stayed in
France for one year, and I came back. It was 1963-1964. When I came back in July, 1964, the world had changed here. It took me another year to get back into being here because the world had changed so much. So it takes time to get rooted, and unless you are rooted and a member and part of, you cannot be a participant in the change.

LB: That's what was impressive about Helen Benton when she came here. She would tell you herself that it took her five years before she became effective. When we interviewed her, what made us want to hire her, because we weren't predisposed to do that, being nun--in spite of having an executive director who's a nun, was the fact that when she was asked what did she think she could do, she very candidly said, "Maybe nothing. I don't know that there's anything at all I will be able to do, and maybe just for ninety days we ought to see whether or not we want to continue this." So she we was wise enough to know she didn't know, and that was enormously important in the decision to invite her to eat some crayfish and never to let her leave again. [Laughter]

RK: That's very empowering in a way, to know that you don't know or know that you have to learn, that you've got to sit and listen and talk.

NB: You talked about the sense of rootedness, I'm just curious, did Simon Bay have much of an impact? Did you read her at all when you were growing up? She wrote a book, The Need for Roots. She was a French activist.

LB: Simon Bay, did she become the first ( )?
AB: Oh yes, I did read Simon Bay. But it did. . . .

NB: Okay.

LB: Was she in the European Community, organizing in the early days?

NB: I think so.

LB: She was the first woman who was president of the European Community, if I recall. But I have not read her work.

AB: No, I haven't read her work. But there was a lot of thinking through, the youth of France during the war.

LB: She was a Boy Scout.

AB: Yeah, I was a Boy Scout, too [laughter]. But there was a lot of thinking and going down deep into what it means, what life means, which I think is normal when you're a teenager to start with, but confronted with all of the problems of the world at that time, and on a global perspective also at that time.

RK: Well, growing up in the church in a more organic society like France, I think the tendency to feel that you had to become part of something and kind of dig your roots deeply and to have a long term perspective is probably. . . .

AB: Well, I think also the French (         ) [Laughter]

LB: Europeans have thousands of years of history. We in America have just a little bitty tiny drop of history, so that was another perspective that she brought to the team. That there's several lifetimes of work here.

RK: I was thinking of this thing of whether to spray or mow the sides of the road. I was in Bavaria a few years ago, and I was just driving around in the countryside. The one thing that I
was just amazed at, among a lot of things, was that every inch in grass along every road, right up to the side of the road, people pay, and it was haying time.

LB: They pay and use it.
RK: They pay and use it. The grass grows and there are wildflowers.

LB: It's a resource.
RK: It's a resource. They cultivate it. They keep it.

There's not an inch of ground that isn't, in the farming community, it's not true in the cities so much. But there's not an inch of ground that isn't precious in a way, or that people don't understand is something that helps give them sustenance.

LB: We don't have that war experience and that long history experience in this country that make you understand so much that you might understand.

RK: I think that's right.

AB: That's true.

LB: I mean, this is not an advertisement for war but.

AB: I think it's true, because I think also from that perspective of history, I like history. My father is from an area on the Mediterranean which was colonized by, not only the Greeks, but also the people from the Middle East way back when. When I was going back to see my grandfather, we would see monuments still there from prehistoric times, from the Roman times, from Greek times, and so you get this continuity. In any one of the cities, you have next to each other a church from the second century and the latest architectural designs, and they
LB: That's something the global community, we wiped out the opportunity to learn that in America through the taking of the country from the native Americans, where inherent in so many of the native American cultures was you make decisions with the seventh generation in mind. We don't have so much access to that value, but maybe as we get more global, some of those values will be introduced.

NB: That's interesting. I think one of the attributes of leadership really is this sense of legacy. That you do try to leave the world a bit better off than you found it, and, you know, a sign of civilization somehow is that you plant trees, so to speak, that you'll never see.

AB: That's right.

NB: Full grown, but others that come after you will.

LB: That goes to the whole concept of property and ownership and perspective of yourself to all that is. If you are dominating it and have dominion over it, as we've been taught in our Bible, you're a man and take dominion over it, then you don't have that sense. If you see that you are just part of an expression of life that moves through time, then you have a sense of perspective. I remember a defining moment, personally for me, spiritually for me, was the first television scene I ever saw when I was in the space capsule out here looking back to earth. Do you remember that fabulous, blue marble. Seeing the earth rise.

RK: Oh yeah.
LB: That was an absolutely important spiritual moment.

NB: The fertility of the earth ( ). I'm just curious, what would you say is the concept of ownership right now at this point in time, and what ought it be?

LB: Being a woman, I'm very sensitive to what it means to have things defined as property, and to have dominion over them, since women were so often, and still are on the earth. Fact, that's what we were doing in Russia was trying to define women as human, because if you could define women as human, legally, then women would be automatically included in all the human rights agreements that were being made, who are excluded now. So that's very important. I think at the same time, a lack of ownership and lack of rootedness are not necessarily healthy, so I think you have to have maybe the sense of stewardship, of belonging to and being responsible for. So that home ownership in this country is absolutely crucial to our national defense. It's a national security issue. It's an earth security issue.

AB: It's part of rootedness.

LB: It's part of rootedness. It's also part of the national security of the United States. Having sustainable rural communities is a valid national defense policy. Having food grown regionally at least and not transporting all over from Mexico to here or from California and having things somehow centralized and controlled, if you had to design a more vulnerable system to mad people that might exist in the world, that would be system I might design to go bad. So some sustainability, and a local and regional self-sufficiency,
although understanding interdependencies, is really kind of important.

AB: Not to have a simplistic approach, I think that's what I'm hearing from you. A simplistic approach to property or to anything. Things are complex. And to take them in their complexity.

RK: Yeah, this idea that it's mine.

LB: Therefore, I can do anything I want. And we're having to redefine property rights, the way that we've defined freedom of speech. There are limits, because the common good has some value. So can you do anything to this property that will affect generations and the ground water, the aquifer that is underneath it. Perhaps not. Can you remove your trash on your property by pumping tons of it into the air by burning it? Perhaps not. So we're redefining now property rights. Can I take a piece of property that I've bought and clear cut it or drain it of the wetland area, and do as I damn well please. Put a crawfish pond in there. Because maybe when I bought it, I should have realized that I didn't just buy a piece of land that I had dominion over, but I bought relationships and dynamics and continuity.

NB: How would you take that same concept and apply to the work force or employment or employer-employee relationship?

LB: I own my labor and the wealth that is created has in most cases been sort of like the extractors of the earth, I go out and I find oil, as though it belonged to me, and I extract it. I find fish in the seas. I find lumber. Never mind that the trees do things for our air. It's my lumber.
AB: And it's the same thing for the labor.

LB: It's the same thing for the labor. There is an ownership that we have, and that that labor, especially and I see it so clearly with the farm workers. Farm workers have created an enormous wealth in south Louisiana for the plantation system. That wealth is extracted and held here, and their children do not have paid colleges. They do not have retirement and homes that they can repair, and medical coverage.

AB: And food.

LB: In some cases food.

NB: What is the vision of this sense of stewardship?

LB: Sufficient fuel. And we even celebrate that.

NB: What ought the relationship be? (        )

LB: I think more people have to sit at the table when we make a decision about whether or not we develop this piece of equipment that will now displace 10,000 farm workers, because it truly a transfer of wealth from the laborer who made the work and had the wages going this way to cutting that to a tenth or a third, and saving that money so I can build my pool or build my bigger house or have my CDs. It is an extraction of wealth. It is a transfer of power and money that is unjust. So that farm worker and those policy makers, hopefully some of whom might be farm workers, would have a voice in, if we go to this machine, because we don't necessarily always not have to operate with machines, then what are we doing for this perspective? This has to be on the table. We must redefine progress and redefine the problem, to some extent, that progress might create. So I would
say they have to be sitting at the table.

NB: So progress has to be more equated to a common good than a...

AB: Yes, yes.

NB: ( )

LB: I think so. That doesn't mean that you can't have entrepreneurship. When it gets beyond making money to serve your family and your community, and it gets to be pure greed. I think the WalMart phenomenon is a wonderful example of that. I think it has extracted from our rural communities especially and concentrated to a person who is now a multi-billionaire, who then out of perhaps the goodness of his heart, might create a small conduit of charity back to those same communities that he devastated. Does that make any sense as a policy? Who was missing from the table here? The consumer sure as hell weren't, the laborers perhaps, and where were our policy makers? Were they the same kind of good, old boys who were trying to do the little Donald Trump kind of thing, where you must gobble up and get bigger or you won't stay in business. It's again the ladder. I've got to climb that ladder. I've got to get bigger and bigger, and more and more.

RK: We just had a big debate in Durham about putting in a WalMart. The discussions about that, trying to involve all the community. There were lots of tensions and conflicts between the beneficiaries of lower prices, perhaps, versus the destruction of smaller operations that that would entail. One thing that's interesting here in listening to you is the relationship of the
individual to the group or the collective. Because on the one hand we're talking about self-empowerment.

LB: That's the first time that word's been used, collective.

RK: Is that right?
LB: I just wanted to say that [laughter]. That calls up other images, you know.

RK: Yes, this is post-cold war.
LB: Well, there's still China.

RK: That's true. But we're talking about self-empowerment, and you talk about the church taking back. They can't do that to my church, my religion, my thinking. We're talking about labor. This is mine that people are taking from me.

LB: There is some sense of ownership, and there's a good sense of ownership.

RK: Yeah, and I think that's one of the things that's really gone wrong in our society is that relationship between the common good and the collective.

LB: As a woman being raped, it's a violation of my physical integrity, my psychological integrity, if that should happen. It's the same kind of thing. There's certain things that belong to you.

AB: I think it's what we're concerned about. It's a reclaiming of our power together. And I put those two words together. Our power together, it's not just my power. Of course, my power is important, but it's our power together that really changes things.
LB: Well, you have, certainly, some models of that that aren't so good, and that is, the mass hysteria or the Jonestown.

AB: But that's again, it's a controlled situation, a domination of power over.

LB: Who's making the decisions? And that's why the abortion, and she's not going to enter into this discussion [laughter], that's why the abortion issue is so critical, and so many people just don't get it. Who's making the decisions? It becomes absolutely crucial. It becomes more important, and the sense that women are not to be trusted as moral agents.

AB: That's under God.

NB: Well, you confronted the same issue, it seems to me, at least in your earlier struggles when the higher echelons of the Catholic Church weren't necessarily supporting your work with the cane workers.

AB: Oh yes, absolutely.

LB: You've done a lot of your homework.

NB: Did you experience that same sense of the church ought not be this way. I'm not going to permit it to be that way.

AB: Oh yes.

LB: I don't know about permit it. I'm not going to permit myself to be victimized.

RK: You don't have to participate in it.

AB: Well, they don't feel that way. That's their privilege. I have to be me, and I have to be truthful to myself.

LB: And they can't take ownership of what is mine, as such.

AB: And I'm not going to try to convert them. That's not
my responsibility.

NB: What does that say about leadership, because in this hierarchical model . . .

LB: I go back to something Gloria Steimem said to me, and I did it one time on an airplane. It was really neat. She said, "I have learned," and this is in terms of the explanation of what feminism is, "if a person, usually a male, wants to know something, I will spend a lot of time to explain it. But if he cannot hear, what is the point. He's not ready." That we would take the position of not devaluing ourselves because that person can't hear. I remember one time coming back from a women's march in Washington, and sat next to a fellow who was from the country, and he asked where I was coming from, what I had done. So I explained it, and he said, "Oh, are you one of those feminists?"

I had just heard Gloria Steimen, so I turned to him and I said, "My Gosh, aren't you?" [Laughter] And he was flabbergasted. I assumed my position of power. [Laughter] Instead of trying to explain to him, and then he began to ask questions, and as long as he would ask questions, I would give him answers. And then we had our lunch and things went very well. [Laughter]

RK: Well, I think moving in this direction of learning what the relationship is between individual rights and responsibilities and the kind of common good of the larger community is one that we have to think a lot of about and talk a lot of about and experiment with in ways that probably we haven't, certainly our culture hasn't rewarded that or hasn't approved that.
LB: Our laws are even structured not for that. Look how long it's taking us to determine common good in property rights, or look at our laws of business and ownership. Our laws don't even have space for that yet, so we're remaking law a lot, too. It's going to be an interesting next several lives people have, you know [laughter].

NB: You both have been remarkably able to keep a sense of hope and optimism over the years.

AB: That's true. I think it's because we knew right from the start that vision of the long haul. That you do not change a situation that exists overnight. That a situation that has its roots in centuries, it takes time, and we don't measure progress in. . . .

LB: We generally look every five years to see.

RK: To think where you've been.

LB: We generally do that.

AB: Not from week to week.

NB: And if things don't change profoundly in your lifetime, is that going to be a disappointment?

LB: Well, that's another thing that we do, and that is, it's not really just our responsibility. It's my responsibility to do what I can do, and I'm passionate about that. I'm angry about that.

NB: I know. I stay angry [laughter].

LB: As you choose. Would I be disappointed? I guess I see change enough. I'm certainly not satisfied with all the change. I see lots of dangers and pitfalls. And I wonder sometimes if
the model is one of moving in circles forward like this, you know. We evolve, and I suspect that we will either be extinct or we'll evolve [laughter]. And it's sort of the same kind of thing. We just do what we can do, the part that we can do. I hope that answers your question.

AB: And change takes place over centuries. When you go back into history.

LB: So then why did we hurry to do the civil rights movement?

AB: Because there are crucial times. There are times when there's that window of opportunity. There is a window of opportunity (               )

NB: You speed up history a little bit.

RK: What's your five year plan in, say, those terms, we can use those terms, this post-cold war period?

LB: What is it we're trying to do?

RK: What's your five-year plan right now?

LB: Southern Mutual?

RK: Yeah.

LB: I think right now we're quite in the process of defining and articulating. It's interesting that you should ask.

The model we have in Four Corners, rebuilding a rural community, is clearly spreading. We made a five-year commitment, and we're into the third year on that commitment. There are hundreds of tiny communities, just of displaced sugar cane workers here. So how many five years do we have? So clearly what we're having to do is to learn how to "keep mud on our boots," if you will, how
to keep our hands to the plow. At the same time that we get better at a process of making opportunity available, and that's why that partnership is so important, because they have pledged to learn as much as they want and can learn, and teach us as much as we can learn from them. Out of that, what we're learning is that we don't have to do every community. The community has to do the communities, and the communities have to help each other.

So what perhaps we can evolve is this process by which there is a federation of self-help associations, if you will. There's a federation of banks because I spoke to the banks recently about these two models that I explained earlier, the banking models, and they're very interested. I got a phone call two weeks ago from a banker who said, "Our bank" -- I don't think he knows and I don't know what he means yet -- "we might like to adopt Sorrel."

He doesn't know that Sorrel might or might not agree to adopt him yet. [Laughter] I mean, that's going to be negotiation. But I can see that possibly you can create a new model for banks to work together, because they have been competitors. Now, we're putting forward a collaborative model. The same thing with churches.

AB: And with the banks, you can call a Chamber of Commerce to... .

LB: To speak for all the banks in the community.

AB: At their request.

LB: So right now what is happening is that our work is going so fast we have to really run. We really have to run right now.
AB: In the churches, you were saying, the same thing is happening last week. We had this coming summer a project of twenty Jewish teenagers coming to spend seven weeks here to help build a community center in Four Corners.

LB: With the Four Corners.

RK: You're doing this again. You're doing this this coming summer.

LB: Yes.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A
LB: His wife, who is an attorney, and he is coming. He's a musician. He and his wife are coming as the directors.

AB: And in order to prepare this thing, where we don't have the money. We don't have a place yet to house those youngsters. We need still a boss and so forth. We have been doing some groundwork.

LB: She started out first of all trying to put the pieces in place, and then she said, "I can't do all this." [Laughter] So if the community wants it, they have to do it.

AB: Yes. They set up a small community at Four Corners, but Four Corners does not have all the skills and know-how and where to go yet.

LB: Where do they find twenty beds in one building? They don't know (       )

AB: So I suggested that we form a committee in New Iberia with some folks who might be concerned.

LB: In partnership with the Four Corners committee.

AB: With the Four Corners committee, and so that's the beginning. Last week we had a meeting, and they organized a group of people from New Iberia, to formally organize as the Four Corners-New Iberia Mutual Help Committee to help prepare this. Now, on this committee are representatives of the different churches, men and women, they approached now, I understand--this was a phone call just before leaving for Washington--the vice president of the bank and the (                     ), who said he was honored and certainly would like to serve on this
committee. They approached one of the big.

LB: Very prominent businessman in town.

AB: Prominent businessman in town who said the same thing. He would be very pleased and proud to serve on that committee. So that they together, they have a meeting next week. I will not be here. They are meeting next week, and their first order of business is to find a place where they're going to house those youngsters.

LB: It's a mind blowing experience for both communities.

AB: The people from Four Corners came out, and one of them said, "I have never sat in a meeting like that."

LB: And I know the others went home and said, "Gee, I have never sat in the meeting like that." [Laughter]

AB: And that was true. A woman has been invited to speak to the churches in New Iberia, to the white churches in New Iberia.

LB: So they're going now to make presentations in those churches, to educate those churches. See, it's a mutual help. Our name really doesn't necessarily mean just insurance. It sounds like an insurance company, doesn't it?

RK: Yeah. Well, it is insurance of a sort.

AB: So it's mind blowing both ways, and it's beginning to establish this new society. It's still a dream, but it takes its roots like that.

LB: I went back because I wanted to know, does this really work? When I was a junior, between my junior and senior year, at USL at Lafayette, there was a priest there who, as a person, had
been a defining moment in my life. That's Father Alexander Seiger. He challenged in a speech—he always gave these wonderful sermons, very unbiblical, but they were quite biblical. He said, "You must not graduate from college without having experienced service in a poor community. I think that you might not want to do that. So those of you who want to sign up, sign up and go do something." So I did, and I signed up to go to Spanish speaking community at the base of a migrant stream on the outskirts of San Antonio near ( ) Mission. I arrived there, and this was 22 years ago, I guess, or something, and there was no sewerage. There were no streets. There was no organization. The homes are extremely poor. The people were extremely poor. The vertical oppression. It was just quite awful, not the people but the poverty situation. The priest over there said, "Just listen and learn and see if you can help them do what they want."

Wasn't that a nice direction. I was very fortunate to have that direction. So I did that. And they wanted to have a fire station because so many of their houses burned, and they wanted to do something about child care for their children, and they wanted to be able to come together. So we organized them into an organization. I was one of the first volunteers into that community, and as we left after that summer, other volunteers came over the years.

I wanted to go back and see does something like that really work, because here I had gone in, but there was a core group of people who stayed over the years to make it happen. So in 1991, I got into a plane, rented a car, and came out of San Antonio,
and found this little community. I drove in, and it was quite an experience. I went to a little corner store, where I thought there used to be a little corner store, and the woman, I think, pretended to speak no English. As I proceeded to ask lots of questions, she lost more and more English. Clearly, she wasn't going to answer this strange white woman coming into this community asking all these questions. And I knew, also having had that experience, that if I went into the back and took fifteen minutes to look for some orange juice, that the word would filter around, and I might have an answer. So I did that, and, sure enough, fifteen minutes later as I was selecting my orange juice in the back at the cooler, a gentleman came out of the back door. He had been summoned by this lady who understood nothing, of course, who understood everything, of course [laughter]. I introduced myself to him and said who I was and that I had been in this community many years ago, and that I had done this. That the community was this way, and now I see it this way. He said, "I'm one of those men that you worked with."

RK: Really?

LB: Isn't that wild? I get choked up [laughter] telling this story. He was now elected to the city council that had gotten incorporated into San Antonio, and he was now the associations of associations. Because they had done this in other little communities that were unincorporated and very poor.

When they got that power, he happened to be their current representative as the council person sitting on that council. He said, "Gee, I wish you were going to be here tomorrow. We're
having a dedication. Come and see." And he took me out to the edge of the community, and there were these acres and acres of beautifully groomed greenery and trees, and they were dedicating a community resource, which was this beautiful brick building which was a community development center, a recreation center, but in a little walkway right over here, there was this beautiful building where this organization now meets to do the business of their community. They had sidewalks, sewerage, paving. There was probably some houses that needed work, but there was no destitution. I stopped a gentlemen, there was almost no one hanging around the community. I had to go into a store to find someone, but I did find a young man walking on the sidewalk. I crossed the street, rolled down my window. I said, "I'm from so and so. Where is everybody?" And he was quite nice to me. He said, "Well, they're working." I said, "Working where?" because people didn't have jobs on the base of the Migrant Stream. He said, "In San Antonio." I said, "Well, how can they get there?" He said, "Well, we have a rail that stops here every half hour, and we have a bus system that stops every fifteen minutes or half hour. So people can get in and out easily." It can work.

RK: That's remarkable.

LB: It can work. So I came back with that education. That community gave me something back.

NB: This is outside San Antonio.

RK: So you are running? You're running at this point?

AB: Yes, we are running. It goes faster and faster.

LB: We had a motto with them that if they sleep, we'll
snore. If they take one step, we'll take two. They're taking lots of steps, and we're having to run. [Laughter]

RK: Well, I think that kind of activity, and even the little successes keeps both the energy and enthusiasm up, but also the optimism and the hope. That's a way you have to, a kind of confirmation. I think one of the things that we want to do with this. . . .

LB: Yeah, I needed to know if that what I think I have, and I'm hearing from the communities, will it work? Did it ever work? Then I remembered my own experience and went back to the well, if you will, and just found it there. There was fresh water in the well.

AB: And to see people go. Visually, we can see the difference of people going and taking their own power together. It's visual almost.

LB: Yeah, it's quite visual, quite visual.

AB: So this is what it's all about.

LB: Quite spiritual. So I have some of the most interesting work I could have ever possibly imagined to go into. I mean, I am not on an assembly line. Zip, zip -- sewing -- zip, zip, zip, for ten or twelve hours a day. Have just absolutely exciting work that calls forth every ounce of whatever it is you've got, but that also gives you back. So that's how you don't run out.

NB: Just a quick follow-up question, earlier you had sort of listed things that were important in living a life--a good basic education, a clear transmission of values, a trial by fire
testing your values out in the real world, and the last one was
the support of community. Two questions, is the support of
community what maintains optimism if you're going to be a pioneer
in this area.

LB: I think if you have isolation, it is a devastator.
AB: (                         )

LB: It can be. You must be in another depth of
extraordinary [laughter], you know, having lived is
extraordinary, and then having defined values is extraordinary,
and then having chosen among those values is extraordinary, and
then having tried to live them and survive the fire, and then
having reaction and dynamic with the community of support is
extraordinary. But I think if you are isolated, what a few do
survive that. That must be extraordinary.

NB: Well, so far in our looking at this, I think when
programs don't sustain themselves, this seems to be an area where
it breaks down. The other question is could you have the support
of community without the church or without your religious. . . .

LB: I think we've had it in spite of the church.
AB: We're just beginning now. . . .

LB: You mean the structural church?
NB: I didn't mean the structural. I mean, you all sort of
come together as Catholics.

LB: No. Our board has got an atheist, a Muslim, men,
women, black, white.

NB: So is it your board that sustains you? Is that your
supportive community?
LB: Our board is one.

NB: Who is your supportive community now?

LB: Well, there's varying ripples of it. Certainly, Anne and I, we've worked together now for thirty years I guess, twenty-seven years. Helen and Anne and I have worked together for a dozen years.

NB: So there's the three of you. Are there others that you include in this community?

LB: Yes, I would say Henry Pelly, one of our founding board members, is very much a part of that. I would say Overton White is extraordinarily so. He's a civil rights attorney on our board. Very interesting, he asks the kinds of questions as a board member that need to be asked. That's the wonderful, support always there, but piercing, not accusatory questions, but like the Rachel Poe question was.

AB: The challenging questions.

LB: Have you thought of? How will you deal with? Not expecting you to give him an answer right now, it's not that kind of a challenge, like a test.

AB: It's a vision type, I think, the long term vision.

LB: He's got a wonderful sense of world. Henry is a mill worker, retired now. I think Simon Daniel, I would say, gives me an awful lot. He's a farm worker member of our board. He constantly, I remember, if I can just tell one brief story. We were going through quite a traumatic time, and Anne never has liked to fire anyone, and was having a particularly difficult time doing it with a person. So finally, after two years, had
decided to do this, and had brought this trauma to the board with great years of justification for the firing, which was probably a year and a half overdue, and made this explanation. When she finished, asked what did the board think, and Simon just leaned back and said, "You know, my Mama used to save eggs in a barrel, and when those eggs would float to the top, some of them would, those were the bad ones and you didn't want to leave them in the barrel. You had to take them out." Then he sat back and never said another word. [Laughter] He sat for four hours of presentation. Was that wisdom? So Simon is a wonderful reality checker.

   AB: Yes. Down to earth, never been one day in school.
   LB: Doesn't read and write. Teaches us an enormous amount. He's a teacher to me, a mentor.
   NB: I was just curious, as you talk, trying to kind of imagine what this supportive community is.
   LB: Values.
   NB: It's not the New Iberian total community. It's a group of people. Is it a group of people coming around, getting together, meeting over a common purpose and vision?
   LB: Common purpose, vision, values, and kindness. That doesn't mean that we've not had some really heavy--Henry Pelly and I have had some of the most knock-down, drag-out arguments over whether there were any women working in the fields. I mean, for years he had maintained that there were no women farm workers, and then we indicated to him how many thousands in fact we had documented that there were. So after several years of his
running dialogue which was quite kind, but very vociferous at the same time, never personal. He has acknowledged that, in fact, there were farm workers. I had to do similar things that I've learned on the board from Overton, I think, especially, as he has quite--Overton and I, that's the attorney, (     ) get into very philosophical kinds of discussions at the board meetings. We switch positions in the middle of a two-hour discussion perhaps, because then I want to try to out from what he was saying, and then he takes. . . . So that bouncing off each other is very essential. So he's quite a mentor to my thinking and formation. But there is a common sense of trust, vision, and values. Almost friendship (     )

AB: Our board is quite out of the ordinary. We do not go by Robert's Rules of Order or anything like that. It's more the coming together of minds.

LB: I can recall only one vote when we had to go by, a dissenting vote, a vote that was not unanimous. And that was when Hollywood wanted to make a movie of our organization and the various people in it, and the board was quite split on that. So we had, I guess, three meetings around that, six hours each in length, around that question, shall we do that? It was sort of a docu-drama, which meant that it wasn't going to be exactly truthful. Dramatization (     )

AB: And no say.

LB: And you would have no say in it.

NB: You had no say over the content?

LB: No say over the content whatsoever. You get to tell
your story, and they get to fictionalize it based on some, docu-drama, dramatization of some truth. There's maybe another phrase for it. And we split, quite clearly, farm workers and non farm workers. Farm workers wanting it, and non farm workers not. That was the first vote. As it went down, it split further, some farm workers saying, "No, let' don't," and only one farm worker holding out. And the one farm workers position was we have historically been able to tell the story, and bring a consciousness of the situation by telling that story. And the other saying that we don't want to be ripped off.

AB: Whose story is it going to be?

LB: Whose story is it going to be, and who's profiting? And that it's quite different from something else that might be done. So the compromise was that we would use whatever means that came our way to tell, in a truthful way, in a documentary type style, the story. So that's what we have done. It's almost like someone sat and observed our board meeting, because we've had CNN, two NBC pieces, another piece done. We've had the New York Times.

NB: So you voted not to do that movie?

LB: We voted not to do the Hollywood dramatization.

NB: Were they going to pay you a lot of money?

LB: At first, there was no mention of that, and then when they heard we were debating it, they went to $10,000. Then they heard we were on the verge of voting no, it went to something like $60,000. But the vote was no. And we could have well used the money [laughter]. That was when we were getting
disentangled.

AB: But we have never given to getting the money if it meant not being honest.

LB: Well, as we perceived it anyway. So we have, in fact, been quite poor for [laughter] (       ). We owe her several years of back wages now, and varying degrees of payable, still do.

RK: I think we ought to stop.

NB: Yeah, I very want to thank you both.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW