WILMA WARREN: When I say we, I'm nearly always talking about Virginia Water Project but I might be talking about the Community Action Agency [laughter] Network, because we were born out of a community action agency here locally. The network that we and the other rural water national, the ARCAPS, created is our, what we call our national network. And there's a -- are you familiar with the ARCAPS, for rural communities?

ROBERT KORSTAD: Yeah.

WW: Okay. So we have seven states, and we have a lead agency in each state, almost all of which are community action agencies or were born out of, like the Beaufort-Jasper Comprehensive Health, JOCCA in North Carolina, the Maryland Rural Development Corporation in Maryland, a CAP in Delaware because there's only one rural CAP. Two rural counties, they have five -- what do they have? It's a huge territory. But Florida is a community action agency. Georgia, we had a real hard time in Georgia with CAPS. So we worked directly with the state.

RK: Yeah, I noticed that. I was surprised.

WW: Well, it's a long story, which we did everything I knew in my--I knew how to do anything about, but it just--they're a different breed. If you want to know why--you're not going to quote me on this--why Jimmy Carter had problems in Georgia, in Washington. I didn't understand it at the time [laughter] until I got...
RK: Got down there and started working with them.
WW: They're a different kind of people. They really are. They're very strange. I can't figure it out, still, to this day.

NEIL BOOTHBY: Is it an uncooperative spirit or is it... WW: I think it's bedrock. It's racism.
NB: I see.
WW: But some of the good black CAP directors get in. But I think bedrock, they've never dealt, they really haven't dealt with racism in the community action agency network. But the same kind of behavior is what we saw in Washington with outsiders, outsiders! You know, this... But anyway, it's not that big a deal. I mean, I don't want to take up a lot of time on it, because in the big picture it's not that big a deal. But it's like you say, what are some of your failures. That has been a major failure in trying to break through the problems there. Although we're working though, one of our best projects or one of the ones we're the proudest of is in Keysville, Georgia, which was featured in, had lots of national press, called "The Town that Time Forgot," where this white family who ran the nursing home dropped the charter in 1932 [laughter]. They decided they weren't going to have a town any more. And that story is just an incredible story. That woman. . . .
RK: This is Emma Gresham.
WW: Emma Gresham, who is black, and Maxine Waller, who is
white, are the prototypes.

RK: So we should probably go, we should probably interview them?

WW: If you could, it would be wonderful.

RK: I had thought about her at one point, then I couldn't figure out whether it was rural enough.

WW: It is rural!

RK: It is rural, yeah.

WW: Not only is it rural, well, the first time I went there, now it looks a lot better than it did. The first time we went there it was so, it was like [pause] 1935 [laughter].

RK: This is not that many years ago you were there?

WW: No, three or four years ago. Oh, we were all so depressed. I mean, we'd seen a lot of depressing... But we wanted to be up because, see, we had brought them to Fentrest, the community that started out pretty much like they did. Just about as bad. And then, so then we went to Keysville, well, Jackson Hall, a number of the staff people had been there so they knew, but most of us hadn't. It was the hardest time I ever had to get myself up, because all I could feel was just, oh my God. There's no way this town, there's [laughter] nothing to be done. Let's get out of town. No, I didn't feel that way, but it was just like, oh God, this is beyond us. But I didn't count on the spirit of Emma Gresham and the people there.

NB: I know I've been struck in Georgia, I mean, it's all
this, Atlanta, the city of this and that, and then you just go, you know, several miles out and there's this abject other world.

WW: But to give you an example, to get at why I think we've had so much trouble in Georgia with the CAP network, is that here's this little town, had never had a daycare center. Didn't have any of the neighborhood youth corps, the summer youth corps, none of the programs that almost. . . . Well, we'd never been in a community that hadn't had some of those programs. Had been just totally ignored by the CAP in Augusta. So we started out thinking, well, maybe they didn't know about it. So we started out so friendly, you know, and set up meetings. Nobody showed . . . from Augusta. A lot of what I call "profiling." Like the leadership thinks that's the center of the world, you know. [laughter] But anyway, that's the only. . . .

NB: I've got to just ask you a quick question about your art from. . . .

WW: Okay, New Mexico, southwest.

NB: Are you particularly interested in that part of the . .

WW: Yes. If I didn't have family in this part of the country, I would be making plans to move to northern New Mexico, not in Santa Fe but some inexpensive place.

NB: And is the wood carving from there?

WW: Yes. Pick it up, feel it. It feels so good. It is done . . . I went to a show. They didn't not want to do what we asked them to do, but it was awkward and hard. They weren't angry
about it, they weren't -- it wasn't that. It was just, it was very -- it was new. But it was good for them to think of things in a different way.

RK: That's right. Well, there's a lot of new things you can do too. In doing this, I thought maybe we could do a combination of things. One, we can just kind of talk around your life and some of the influences in your life and some of the particular projects, like this whole issue of limited leadership is one that we're in the process of starting in this leadership program that we teach in, the Women in Leadership section of it. At some later time, we probably ought to explore this and bring you down to Duke.

WW: Well, Maxine's another one, too, who would . . .

RK: Bring maybe the both of you all down next fall some time and talk with our students.

WW: That would be fun.

RK: That would be nice. So those are little topics that we want to talk about. I thought about one way of doing it is to kind of do an autobiographical interview so we can kind of talk through your life some, and we can interject, and Neil, just, whenever you . . .

WW: And if you want to move me faster, you will not hurt my feelings.

RK: Okay [laughter].

WW: I tend to go off on little side trips.
RK: That's all right. The side trips are usually (      ). When people had this tight little narrative that they're trying to take us down, that's when I get worried. But one of the things that we're interested in is the kinds of, where people have gotten their kind of moral and ethical vision that has guided the work and the efforts that they've done. And a lot of that comes from people's backgrounds and their childhood and their families. So I was thinking one way, just talking about this, is to tell us a little bit about your family. Something about what do you think was important about them, your mother, your father, your grandparents? Things that were influential in your childhood.

WW: Sure, and I've done a lot of thinking about that. I mean, I've lived long enough to think about those things.

RK: Well, in the South you can't get away from those kind of things.

WW: No, although the most important thing to say is that I did not grow up in a typical southern family. My mother and dad came to Virginia in '28, late '27--I was less than two years old--from Arkansas. My dad was a U.S. forester, and he was transferred to the Shannondoah Valley of Virginia. We lived in a little town of Broadway for about a year, and then he was transferred to Bridgewater, which is where my real roots of growing up are. But see, my family was an Abraham Lincoln Republican, growing up in this little southern town that did not have a single picture of Abraham Lincoln on its walls in the
schools.

RK: [Laughter]

WW: It had Robert E. Lee and George Washington in every room. I think in Bridgewater in my growing up years, there were probably at the most seven Republican families. All the rest were old southern Democrats. It was a segregated town, of course. My mother and dad were wonderful people. I was blessed. Rarely—you know, a lot of times you'll have one wonderful parent, and the other okay, or even not so okay. But I was really blessed with two wonderful parents who were absolutely unified in their goal in life, and that was to raise us, to pass along their value system, to have a good time. We had company all the time. My dad, he called my mother, 11:30 during the middle of the week, and say, "so and so's here from Philadelphia. Thought I'd bring them for lunch." His office was in Bridgewater. And my mother never, never said, "Oh, it doesn't suit," or anything. She just did it, and she could just turn out the best biscuits and things like that. And so I grew up in this house where everybody was welcome.

Strangers were welcome. Friends were welcome. Everybody was welcome. There were five children. I was the youngest. On any given night, summer or winter, spring or fall, I'd say at least three of us had a friend sleeping over. We had this one friend, Hub Allen, who was a little older than I but he stayed at our house a lot because he loved my brothers, they were older. And Mrs. Allen would call, eight or nine o'clock at night, many's the
night, and say, "Mrs. Casey, is Hub over there?" And mother would look and say, "Hub," and he'd say,"Yes," and she'd say, "Are you spending the night?" "Yes."
I mean, it was that kind of town. Totally safe. And when I wasn't sleeping in my own bed with a friend, I was staying with somebody. And you could walk the streets--my friends and I would decide at ten o'clock at night, one of the others would spend the night. So we'd call, so-and-so, "Can I spend the night?" "Yes, come home and get our pyjamases."
So we'd walk a quarter of a mile or more to your house to get--no fear, eleven o'clock at night. So I grew up in a safe environment. Also, something that I know is different from a lot of people's experience, in that little town there were two things.
One, it was one of the headquarters for the Church of the Brethren. So a strong influence, and people used to say there were more churches than people in Bridgewater. I mean, [laughter] there were. But the Church of the Brethren, and Bridgewater College is there, and we all went to Bridgewater College. The reason we went there is cause that's all we could afford. But as it turned out, that was lucky for us because it's a first rate liberal arts school. So that's important. But the other thing that's very important is that the adults, the parents, genuinely cared about what happened to other people's children. So when you did well, not just in school, but if you did well in sports or did well in anything, everybody acted as if you were their child. There was not the kind of competition that I saw a lot of when my
kids were growing up. And it was genuine. And the parents--because Bridgewater didn't have a theater, we didn't have much to offer kids--the parents, especially the mothers, they started--we had dances at our house. Moved all the furniture into one room and had dances. I remember my mother, and other mothers too, when we were about fourteen, began to have formal dinners for our crowd. Now, we didn't dress formally, we dressed up. They took us to C. Right Springs swimming pool every day in the summer time, mainly because they didn't want us swimming in the river. But there was this wonderful, wonderful--and I'm not unusual in how I talk about Bridgewater. As one of us, as Hub said later to a friend, if you didn't grow up in Bridgewater, you didn't grow up. So I really had a very, very, very fortunate childhood. Now my father was better than any of the rest in that he was easier. He didn't have a lot of rules. He wasn't stern. He didn't believe that hard work makes kids good, you know. I don't think he ever asked me if I did my homework. He assumed I had done my homework. [laughter]

He only had a couple of rules, really. One was never lie. Now, of course, you know you're going to lie anyway, but lying was about the worse thing you could do. Leave the world a better place then you found it, and never bet against the Yankees.


WW: Because if you bet against the Yankees you were a damn fool, and that's almost as bad as lying. And my dad was on the
school board. My mother was very active in all the things that women did in those days. They organized a women's club. They got a cafeteria for the local school. They raised money for things that the school system couldn't afford.

RK: A very civic orientation.

WW: Oh, very, very. My dad--In Bridgewater we had a black elementary school. If those kids couldn't afford bus fare or didn't have some way to get to Harrisburg to high school, that was the end of their schooling. They also had a big pot-bellied stove in the middle of it that my dad worried--I can remember him worrying about that, talking to mother about it. He was just so afraid. He said every time the fire siren went off he was afraid, when school was in session, that that school had caught on fire. Well, he nagged the superintendent of schools for several years about the school system paying for those kids to ride the bus to school from the seventh and eighth grade on. He finally did get that done, and he finally got something, that pot-bellied stove removed.

We had this woman that worked for mother, fifty cents a day. That's what the going rate was. He paid her double and swore her to secrecy because he knew the other women in town would just... But even then, he said he always felt guilty about that. I mean, a dollar a day.

RK: It was nothing.

WW: But they were not firebrand, world changers in the sense...
of, you know—thay wasn't this kind of self-righteous indignation, it was just a . . . And at our dining room table, lunch and dinner was free-for-all conversation about everything. He always encouraged me. I was the youngest. I remember when I first began to take part, the others would say, "Shut up, Wilma Jean, what do you know?" And daddy would say, "Let her talk." Well, I didn't know anything [laughter] but I. . . . And I remember when I got married, I married into a typical southern family. I remember early on, Mr. Warren loved to talk politics, and I did, too. And he began to talk politics at the dining room table one Sunday, and Francis said, "Now, Jim, you know we don't talk about religion or politics at the table." And I can remember thinking, "Oh, my God, what do they talk about?" [Laughter]

RK: If those things are out, what else is there?

WW: But I was to some degree, a stranger in a foreign land. I always knew I didn't quite belong. Like my fifth grade teacher, she was on her third generation of kids, and she just sort of ignored me because she didn't teach my parents or my grandparents. RK: [Laughter]

WW: But I didn't care because I didn't like her anyway. She was so mean to the poor kids. So I didn't care, but I knew she didn't like me because I hadn't lived there forever. I always knew, I'm not a southerner. I could figure it out. I was thirty-six or—seven years old and went to Little Rock to a meeting. Walked in an Old Marion Hotel lobby, and it was just
mobbed with these sheriffs from all over the southwest, big hats, boots, badges, guns, which I hated guns, you know. Why did I like these guys? God, I loved them. I wanted to hug and kiss everyone of them. It was the voices. I said to the person—I was with Fristo—we were at an community action, some sort of a regional meeting. I said, "Oh my God, you will never believe what's happening to me." He said, "What?" I said, "I know who I am." [Laughter] He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "I'm a south westerner. I knew I wasn't a southerner, but I didn't know what I was [laughter]." And that's the first time I had any idea how important voices are to us. Oh my! And Maxine and I have talked about that. That's why I'm so attracted to the Appalachian people and communities, because my generations grew up on the Ozarks. And even though I have not really been around Appalachian people much in my lifetime, I was, am immediately attracted to them. I feel most at home. I feel like when I go to Ivanhoe this summer for a week, I'm going home for a week. And a lot of it comes from voices.

NB: You know earlier in the car you mentioned that one of things that was most distinctive about the work that you're doing and that (               ) is this sense about that people are equal. That whether you're speaking with someone who's very poor or more influential, that we're all kind of human beings and that this is a fundamental attitude or esprit de corps of this network in some ways. As you were sort of talking about your home
earlier, about kids coming over and spending the night, your mom always being willing to kind of open the door and cook biscuits, that's also the spirit of hospitality.

WW: Definitely. Well, that's what the Casey coat of arms, is the outstretched hand with the sheaf of wheat in it. Yeah, and my family was proud of that. I mean, that was not just an unstated norm, that was a norm. And as kids, we gave up our beds for visitors and were expected to. It was no hardship. We had to sleep on the floor in one of the other's rooms. We did that. I mean, that not, that wasn't unselfish. That was just what you did because you want people to have a good time in your home. But the other is, my mother had a snobbish streak, which she got from her grandparents in Arkansas, but my dad was the leveler of that. He just, if my mother, like sometimes I'd have a friend that mother didn't approve of. Usually though, it was their behavior she didn't approve of. She was not a snob in the sense of how much money do you have, but it was behavior. But my dad would say, "Now, Meadie," and that would sort of be it. But I--we definitely got it from our father, and mother, but more our father than our mother.

NB: How important, I guess this is sort of a retrospective question, was it, in retrospect now when you're sort of looking back on what you've accomplished and what you've been a part of, was those conversations at your dinner table, the free-for-all political conversations, and your dad saying, "Now let Wilma Jean
speak her mind." How important was that?

WW: Extremely, extremely. The inclusive attitude, I've always hated exclusivity. Like growing up in a town that was segregated always hurt me, always hurt me. I knew it was wrong from the time I had the earliest memory, like going to the post office. During the war, they put the mail up three times a day, and everybody would come to the post office and wait for them to put the mail up. The blacks would kind of hover over in one corner, almost like they didn't have any right to be inside the building, and they had sons that were in battle. And then they'd wait to the last to ask for their mail. You know, it just, I hated it. Oh, the other thing, this is one of my most vivid childhood memories. Like my friends, say two or three of us walking down the sidewalk, and a couple of little black children walking behind us, just by coincidence. No, they'd be walking in front of us. They'd stop and look. Stop and look. Stop and look. Well, we thought--they thought--my friends thought that was funny. I never thought it was funny. I mean, it was like there was something wrong with them that they. . . . An object of derision. Well, we were never allowed to use the word nigger in our house.

RK: That was a big. . . .

WW: Yeah, never, ever. But we also weren't allowed to bring home movie magazines or True Story magazines either [laughter]. Daddy would say, "You can read them. I can't keep you from
reading them, but I don't want them in this house. And it's not because they have anything to do with sex, it's not content matter. It is that they are just terrible grammar. They're written so poorly." [Laughter] He didn't want us to read them. Of course, I read them at other people's houses, but it didn't take me long to realize they were very boring.

RK: One thing I was wondering, the work that your father did in the forest, did that play any kind of impact of your... WW: I didn't realize it. I didn't realize that until years later. Some of my earlier childhood memories, my dad loved his work. So he worked six days a week, sometimes seven. I mean, five days a week, sometimes six. That was in the days when the Forest Service was building the lookout towers. Like he took us to spend the night in a lookout tower, one of my earliest memories when we first came, that he had helped build. Then they were building the camps, during the days of the CCC. So they were building the campsites and that sort of thing. What did we do on Sunday? We all went out to see what they'd done the week before. And so we spent a lot of time—and stopping at the fire warden's, because see, that's the way—I learned a lot about networking and didn't even think about it. Because the whole system of fire protection depended on these fire wardens, and he'd stop by and chew the fat, and we'd all get out and he'd introduce us, and he would shake hands, and we'd all shake hands. And Daddy treated everybody the same. There's no question where I got that from.
And it wasn't phony. It was, I mean, he truly, and I do, I believe that it's awesome, in the sense of fearful, for me to think I am somehow better than somebody else. That's not to say I don't recognize I have skills that somebody else doesn't have. They have skills that I don't have. But I really believe that's the greatest sin against God, you know, is--and it's, does it set you up for a fall. Even if I didn't believe it, the consequences to me are so . . . nuts.

Anyway, but definitely getting to know the people in the mountains. And they came to our house all the time. My God, at Christmas and Thanksgiving, hunting season, they came by. They brought venison; they brought bear; they brought deer. My mother never learned how to cook the deer or the bear [laughter]. They brought ( ), you know what that is? Well, it's something they make when they butcher hogs, that my daddy loved. You slice it and fry it. My daddy loved it. Somebody always brought us a Christmas tree. One year somebody brought one that took up about, almost a fourth of our living room. My mother just raising hell, "We're not going to use it." My daddy said, "Yes, we are now. Mr. ( ) brought it." And it was so big, my daddy had on his desk at the office, "Now Entering George Washington National Park." He brought it home and put it under the Christmas tree [laughter].

And they called on the phone all the time. Oh, during the CCC days my daddy was a social worker as well. Those guys were so homesick. On Friday nights and Saturday nights, they called our
house nonstop to talk to daddy, because they couldn't go home but every so often. They'd call and cry, grown men, cry. My daddy would sit at the phone and cry. It just killed him. He said the most touching, one of the most touching things was—he was in charge of Camp Roosevelt, the first CCC camp to open up near Front Royal. And he said one of the young men was the son of one of his fire wardens, who had gotten married to this young girl because she was pregnant. And he didn't have a job, so he went to CCC camp. And daddy said he went up there the first payday, and he said they were all so happy, first pay for work they'd had in God knows how long. He said this young man came up to him with tears in his eyes and said, "Mr. Casey"—I don't remember how much it was, thirty dollars or something—"you see this. You know what I'm going to buy with this." And he said, "No, what are you going to buy?" He said, "I'm going to buy a baby carriage for that baby of mine." [Pause] So yeah, it did have an influence on me.

RK: So did you spend a lot of time in the outdoors, I mean, like the natural environment?

WW: Yeah.

RK: So you were kind of aware of the importance of. . . . ( )

WW: Oh yes. See my dad—I remember when my oldest son was a baby, two, three years old, I guess. During fire season, and we were in Bridgewater. And daddy, during fire season, would go around to the hunting lodges and just check in and say hello,
"Don't y'all forget to be careful." As we drove around those mountains, it was on the Dry River district to the GW, we were way up in the mountains, everywhere you look mountains. And my daddy--Frank and I were sitting in back seat and Daddy was in the front seat. Daddy said--he had long arms--he said, "Frank," he said, "you see those trees out there." Frank said, "Yes, Granddaddy." He said, "Who do you think planted those trees?" Frank would say, "I don't know Granddaddy." He said, "Your Granddaddy planted those trees back in 1930," whatever or '40. Thirtysomethin'. So yeah, but I never, I didn't think about that, because I didn't--I mean, it took be a long time to get into recycling [laughter].

RK: A confession I'm sure a lot of us could say. What about the New Deal? That seems like another. . . .

WW: Oh well, my daddy was, he hated Franklin Roosevelt because, see, he was a Republican. I always told my daddy, when he'd come. . . . He remarried after my mother died. He went back to Arkansas and met a childhood sweetheart, and remarried, and moved back to Arkansas. But he'd come and stay a month every year. We would argue the whole time, because by that time I had become an out-and-out Democrat. But he never forgave me for it.

RK: [Laughter]

WW: Because he didn't ever really see the difference between the kind of Republican he was and the kind that had taken over with Nixon. He said I was brainwashed by the preachers. I said, "No, Daddy, I wasn't. I just happened to see Richard Nixon the
night in, what was it, L.A. when he said, "You won't have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore." Late night television, and I said, "That man is sick." [Laughter] And I said, "That man is sick," never dreaming he was going to be president.

RK: So he was, so you didn't grow up in this kind of strong, New Deal family?

WW: No! No!

RK: Just the opposite.

WW: No, now he was probably the least sexist man I ever knew. Like he and mother had the same checkbook. He never said, "What'd you buy? What'd you spend that for or anything?" The only time they ever argued about the checkbook was if one of them would write a check and forget to enter it, and whoever it was would bitch at the other one and say, "Why didn't you tell me?" But he expected the same thing of my sisters that he expected of my brothers. There was never any question, like the girls don't get to go to college, as happened to a lot of young women in the '30s. But no, not the New Deal. Although, yes, he approved of the CCC camps.

RK: Yes, that's what I'm wondering.

WW: Oh yes, he approved of that.

RK: You have all these programs, particularly the National Forest ( ). That area is one of the major beneficiaries. Started the parkway, the Blue Ridge Parkway.

WW: Oh yeah, daddy worked on that. I mean, he supervised a
group of work people up there. And he said years later--see, they'd discovered up there, you now, Carl Sandburg came up there and wrote that book, *Back Woods America*. He talked to the people, recorded. . . . See they found people who spoke pure Elizabethan English when they were building the Parkway, and of course it changed their lives completely. And my daddy, when he'd talk about it years later, he'd shake his head and say, "Worse mistake we ever made."

    RK: [Laughter]
    WW: "We didn't do those people any favors."
    RK: Yeah, that's probably true.
    WW: I don't know if it is. He also, in later years of his life, wasn't sure that--I mean, he wasn't serious, but I think he was--that he wasn't so sure that the war with England was a good thing. He wasn't an anglophile. What he worried about was Canada and the U.S. You know, it's too bad we weren't all one country. No, I don't think, anyway . . .

    But I became a liberal, a real liberal, over desegregation. I mean, that's what formed my adult behavior.

    RK: Before we get to that, maybe a little bit about, you say you went to Bridgewater.
    WW: I just went one year, and that was a big disappointment to my mother and father too. I was the only one who didn't graduate. But I got a job in Harrisonburg one summer in a music store. And I was in charge of all the phonograph records,
decorated the windows, and the sheet music. The man and wife who owned it, Mr. and Mrs. Miles, who didn't have any children, who adopted me and gave me just free reign to be as creative as I could be, and, I mean, they were incredible, like 5% of all sales could go into advertising. So I wrote a classical music, one hour radio show every week, all the narrative for it, a country music one for Saturday morning, and a popular one. I mean, I just had--it was a wonderful life, and I kept saying, "Well, I'm going to quit and go back to school," but I just didn't do it. Then the war was over and I got married. We moved to Stanton, and I kept the same job until we moved to Richmond several years later.

But Bridgewater College was an enormous influence in my life. And across the street from us, we lived in a big, old, turn-of-the-century, white clapboard house with gingerbread and a two turret attic--oh, that was the other thing. See, you could get up there and see the whole town. It was filled with books. I'd go up there. Daddy would disappear sometimes, people would--somebody'd say, "Where's your. . ."--mother would say, "Where's your father?" And we'd say, "We don't know." Well, we'd finally, we'd go to the attic door and holler up, and daddy would be up in the attic, reading and looking out over Bridgewater. We all did it. And the people across the street lived in a similar house, the Mynor C. Miller family, and he was the secretary of the Virginia Council of Churches with headquarters in Bridgewater. We all did it. And the people across the street lived in a similar house, the Mynor C. Miller family, and he was the secretary of the Virginia Council of Churches with headquarters in Bridgewater. His brother was, helped form and was the first head of the
National Council of Churches. These two brothers grew up near ( ), Virginia. Church of the Brethren. Quinton Miller was the other one's name. Mynor C. had eight children. We had five. So there were thirteen children there. So they were our neighbors and friends, even though we weren't Church of the Brethren.

During the war, their son Myron—who everybody in town just loved, he'd been a pet of the town—he decided to become a consciousness objector. He was in college. He wasn't finished. And this was a watershed experience in my life too. The way he was treated by the people of that town who had sons in service was, mmh, it was terrible. I was just terrible. Like when he'd go to the grocery store, they wouldn't wait on him. It was terrible. He was shunned. It was a real shunning. And my father was so horrified at that, and, you know, you can't go storming up and down the street and say, "Stop this! This is terrible. What are doing to this kid?" This was not easy. It wasn't easy for him to make that decision.

So that was my first real experience—although the Millers always had blacks in their home. He had been to World Council of Churches meetings. They had people from around the world visit them. So that was an exposure to me that an average kid in a southern town isn't going to have. But the big thing was, you know I didn't even think of what Myron did as being an act of passivism. You know, it was just that he had the right, he was an
American, and he had the right to make that decision. And at the
time, I didn't realize how important that was to me, but as years
went on, and then when the Vietnam War came around.

RK: Yeah, that was a harder thing to do in World War II.

WW: Oh yeah. But it helped me think through that whole
thing. I mean, World War II, I supported, and I think I would
again, under the circumstances. Given, I mean, that picture I got
in Poland, that is old Warsaw where World War II started on a
Saturday or Sunday afternoon when the Nazi planes ( ) innocent
people there. You know, just leveled that place. But I hated,
it's when I first began to think, look, there's got to be better
ways for the human race to solve a conflict than war. It's not a
simple issue, but it had a big influence on me. That
whole[Interuption]

My family was, my dad always said we were hard up. Well,
with five kids, trying to put them through college, and he didn't
make a whole lot, but he made more than a lot of people and it was
good, steady work. But in thinking about, and I have thought a
lot about it, in thinking about poverty and the effects of poverty
on children, and then as they become adults, I really believe that
parents who share a common cause of raising a family with a set of
values that include forgiveness have high expectations, but also
don't, it's-never-too-late sort of philosophy. Who believe in
your-word-is-as-good-as-your-bond, that are dependable. Like dad
and mother didn't expect us to be the brightest student or make
the best grades, they just expected us to do our best. A lot of times parents say that and what they really mean is do better than your best, exceed your best [laughter]. It wasn't like that. But especially parents who, by their actions, are giving to others outside the family, in their community, to their neighbors.

I went through a period during the '60s, because I really felt betrayed by my peers on the issue of race. The way my friends would explain how I, where I stood, was I was different. I'd say, "I'm not any different from you. I'm not privy to any information that you aren't privy too. You have the same responsibility to open your mind that I do." And I personally, I mean, my friends didn't drop me, but the way they dealt with it was, "You're different." And somehow or another that was just nuts to me. It was a cop-out.

So I stopped going to church for about ten years after Martin Luther King was killed. My clergyman, who was wonderful, Dick Beasley, suggested that everybody who wanted to make a witness, meet at St. John's Church, which is right downtown, and walk together to the other church where they were going to have a memorial service for Martin Luther King. And so lots of us at CAP came, blacks and whites, and except for Dr. Beasley and his wife and Bob Bondurant and his wife, Bob Bondurant's an M.D. here in town who is just an incredible guy, (end of tape on editing copy) nobody else from St. John's church was there. Well, shortly after that, coincidentally, Dick Beasley died one Sunday right after
church with a heart attack, and I just said, look, I didn't want to give my money to the institution. I was wrong, you know, and when I went back, I went back because I realized I needed to hear the word of God on a regular basis and to join in worship. And I'm glad I do but I've never let myself get quite as involved as. . . . And that's one thing I'm having to watch now.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A
WW: The only person who articulated that was this man, who was our, and when we lived in Richmond he'd been our next door neighbor. And we went back there to visit one weekend, and when we all got together, that's what we talked about--I don't know about you? So we talked about and argued about. I remember John Prophet said to me--we were sort of like in the kitchen and nobody else heard it--he said, "I want you to know I really admire you for taking the stand you take." But he said, "I can't afford to do that." He said, "I'd probably lose my job." I said, "John, I think you'd be surprised that you wouldn't lose your job." He said, "Well, I can't risk it."

So, I think it was--I really think a lot of that had to do with what was their perception of what would happen. I don't think enough people were willing to test the reality of it, frankly, because really most of the people who did lose their jobs were clergymen. You know, whose, you know--that's one of the reasons I left the church for ten years.

RK: Yeah, I think that's true, particularly among the middle classes of the South, they were so frightened, and I grew up in that world, and I could never quite figure out what it was they were frightened about, what this, what they thought was going to happen.

WW: I think they were afraid of being shunned, like what happened to Myron Miller.
RK: Yeah, I think that's true (          )

WW: They talk about it in economic terms, "I'm afraid I'll lose my job," but I don't think that was it. I think there's too much at stake in their social life. But I know one Saturday in about '66, we had friends who were black who would come to visit us when we lived up the street from here and then here, not too many but a few who we knew through the church. One Saturday, though, I had worked that Saturday. I was working at TAAP then, and we were working on the legal aid grant application. I want you to know I wrote the first legal aid grant application that was funded in the state of Virginia. I'm really proud of that. I had a lot of help, you know, but I was the person who did the writing. Anyway, these guys from Washington were here who were consultants. One was black, and one was white. So, they had picked me up that morning but it was early in the morning, they brought me back that afternoon about four, and I said, "Y'all come in and have a drink. I want you to meet my family." When we got here, the street was just filled with kids, playing kick the can or something out there. And when we got out of the car--seems just like this camera in my head--we got out of the car, when that black guy got out of the car, every kid there stopped what they were doing except my children. And my children just naturally--but it was like . . . really.

RK: What's going on?

WW: Like frozen in time. And I said to myself, well, these
kids need to see more of black folk.

RK: Without going into much detail, I'm kind of interested in how you made the transition out of the world that you were in before you started working with TAAP and working for the schools. I'm trying to figure out what brings you into this more activist role for people that are influential, and just kind of how you.

WW: I was very, very involved in the Episcopal Church during those days. There were a number of, lot of priests but also a lot of laypeople who fought the segregation. There were also a lot who were fighting the integration, too. When we moved to Roanoke, I just didn't have-- I didn't feel I had--we got involved in the church but it wasn't until Bishop Marmian, he came here about the same time I did. And about two years afterwards, he just, by fiat, which he had the power to do, declared that Hemlock Haven, our camp conference center, would be desegregated. And her father was his assistant, Bill ( ), Episcopal priest. And he was very--he and the Bishop were very influential in my life at that time, because I felt for the first time, I have a ground to stand on. I have a ground to stand on on this issue that has some substance, that has some reality to it. So there was...

RK: This would have been in the early '60s or '50s?

WW: Late '50s and then all through the '60s. And people pretty much, I mean it really did, it tested my ability to stand where I stood but not be angry and not--a lot of times I was
angry--I mean I was real angry. But not to act that out in a way that was destructive. That was the first time I'd really ever had to do that.

Then there was a crowd of us, her parents and about eight couples, that used to get together after church every Sunday. All the kids get together, and we'd have coffee and cinnamon toast. Kids would be all over the house. We'd go to different peoples' houses. And where we really talked about, not just segregation, desegregation, but a lot of thing of spiritual importance but as it had to do with the political scene. For instance, we had this Episcopal priest who was supposed to come to Roanoke to our church. We helped start a new congregation, and we had this guy named Jim Jones from Chicago that one of our crowd had just happened to go to this church when he was at a business meeting in Chicago, and heard this guy preach. And so he stayed afterwards and said, "Do you ever do preaching missions?" And he said, "Yes, I do." So Charlie came back and we arranged to have Jim Jones come to do a preaching mission.

Well, two weeks before the preaching mission, Jim Jones was on the bus of Freedom Riders...

RK: Oh, wow, ...

WW: in Alabama, and I'll never forget, Charlie came by my house one day. See, I hadn't made the connection. 'Cause all these guys were in the paper. Charlie came by my house and he was really surreptitious, and he said, "Wilma," he said, "we've got a
problem." I said, "What's that?" He said, "You know this Jim Jones that's coming to our preaching mission?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, he's in jail in Birmingham." [Laughter] He said, "I've heard from his church and they want to know. They say that Jim said it was perfectly alright to cancel the mission if we want to because he realizes he'd be a controversial figure and doesn't want to. . ." Charlie said, "What do you think?" I said, "My God, Charlie, we can't cancel him." He said he also wasn't sure he'd be out of jail. I said, "We can't cancel." I said, "My God, everything we stand for," I said, "We can't." And Charlie said, "Well, that's the way I feel."

Well anyway, he came, and he was very controversial [laughter], but he was wonderful. And later, Bristo Harding hired him to come to work at TAAP. He worked at TAAP for about four or five years doing neighborhood, doing organizational work. So we were involved in a lot of stuff like that, writing letters to the editor. Sort of being gadflies. We were more gadflies than. . .

RK: Sounds like you probably had a little crew, a little crowd of people.

WW: Oh yeah. We went to Washington, not for the big march, later. This was a little later because this was when I was working at West End School. We went to Washington for the march up to the Washington Monument when Coretta King--that was after Martin Luther King was killed--when Coretta King spoke. We did
some things like that but we were more gadflies in the community than anything else. But supporters of the Bishop and the clergy in the church. That was an important role, probably the most important role we played. I don't think we changed a lot of minds. I think the most single important thing that happened was the passage of the Civil Rights Act.

RK: Did Roanoke deseg. . . . I mean was there a--I don't remember what the fight in Roanoke was over desegregation of schools, probably took place later actually.

WW: It did.

RK: I grew up in Greensboro. There was some kind of token desegregation but it really was the late '60s before there was any kind of, mid to late '60s before there was much significant integration.

WW: Right, right, exactly. My daughter graduated from high school in the first class that had had black students. She graduated in '71. So it was '68, '67 in the senior high school. Now, they had them in the elementary. In fact, Bristo's Elementary School, West End School, was the first school in the city to desegregate. And that was '63. '62. They had Life magazine, Time magazine, all of them. What he did was, he brought the black students in. Ten, let me see, I think there were ten or twelve of them. He lied to the press about what day they were coming. So they came a day before he said they were coming, and he absolutely would not let the press come across the street and
get close to the kids. He was a big--you've read about him--you know, he's this big, burly--he looked like a typical southern sheriff. I mean he was the prototype of the worst racist-looking you could ever imagine. But he just had such a force of his personality that he cowed those photographers and reporters. And so they really, it was a non-story by the time they realized he had conned, you know, he really had pulled the wool over their eyes in that school. And that's the school I worked in for two years.

RK: When did you go to work there?

WW: I went to work there in '63.

RK: Had you been working before that, or had you been raising the kids?

WW: Right. We had four kids, and we simply had to have more money. There was an opening at the diocese. I was going to work for one of the men, not Bill Reardon, but the other guy, director of Christian education. And Bristo called me and he said, "Why didn't you tell me you were looking for a job?" I said, "I thought I did." He said, "Dorothy Ikenberry has just called and said she's got a teaching job." That was the school's secretary. He said, "I want you to come for work for me." I said, "Bristo, I've sort of made a commitment to Bob Thomas." And he said, "Hell with that." Well, I made about half the money, but he just, you know, just. . . . [Laughter] The story of my--what are the influences--one of the major ones is Bristo who simply--it was
easier to say, "Okay, okay, I'll do it," than to fight—and I'm normally not like that. But he was such a powerful personality, and managed to also make the job sound like it's just going to be so wonderful, you'd be crazy to miss it. And as it turned out, it was even better. So yeah, working at West End School was a good experience. It was a wonderful experience, but it was the first time I had been in a school where it was desegregated in my lifetime.

RK: Were there a lot of problems around that?

WW: No, but there would have been more, I guess, if it hadn't been for Bristo.

RK: I think that's true in a lot of other places.

WW: No, Bristo acted it out, you know, the acceptance. He was very playful. He had an MFA in drama from the University of Texas. So, you know, he was always on stage. We'd save anything that came in the mail in those rollers, you know. He kept a supply of them, and on a bad weather or something about two o'clock in the afternoon he'd start up and down the rooms. He'd take two of them and he'd walk into a classroom, third graders, sling open the door. He'd say, "Miss Penny, on guard," [laughter] and throw her the thing, and they'd fence all over the room, up on top of the desk. And he'd get her almost down, he'd almost get her, and he'd say, "I'm going to get her." And they'd say, the kids would say, "Oh, Mr. Hardin, please let Miss Oakie go. She's the best teacher we ever had." [laughter] And finally he'd say,
"Okay, only because the children want you to survive."

The only racial problem we had was this one father called. There was this wonderful little boy named Jerome. He's bound to have been from, he must have been from a--he was black and shiny, he was gorgeous. He had to be from royalty somewhere. Stood straight as an arrow. He had seen his father commit suicide in his backyard when he was about four years old, with a gun. But he was so proud and smart as a tack. He had this big crush on this little blonde headed, curly headed girl, and wanted to sit beside her. Nothing to do but sit beside her. And Penny put him beside her, you know, at first, but then, as most teachers do in the year, you move the kids around so they socialize with each other and don't get into little cliques. Well, the day she moved him--he wasn't going to move. I mean, it was a crisis. He got a haircut one weekend in the spring when it was getting up pretty hot, and the barber almost shaved his head. He came to school in a little jacket with a hood. He wouldn't take his hood off because he was so embarrassed. Anyway, this little girl's father called the office one day and said, "I want to speak to Mr. Hardin." So I put Bristo on and he talked a long time, and Bristo came out, eyes big. He said, "I don't know if this guy's a nut or not, but he says he's coming to see me tomorrow. He wants to talk to me, and he said he's bringing a gun." I said, "Oh my God, Bristo," [laughter] "what are we going to do?" Bristo said, "I told him I'd see him." I said, "Well, that just scares the hell
out of me." He said, "Nah," he said, "he's not going, I don't think," he said, "don't worry." Well, of course, I worried. Our offices were on the second floor of this big, old school, and I could see anybody that came up the steps. I saw this guy coming up the steps that next afternoon, my heart was [beating sound]. I really was terrified. Because violence was not unknown in that community. So when I walked out to meet him and spoke to him and shook his hand, I could smell alcohol. And I'd say, here he's got a drinking problem. That's part of the problem. So I took him in. Bristo greeted him, shook his hand, and said, "Come on in, Mr. so and so." And they stayed and they stayed and they stayed with the door closed. Every minute I was sure I was going to hear a gun go off.

Well, in a little white, out they came, Bristo with his arm around this guy. The guy saying, "I'm sorry I bothered you, Mr. Hardin." He said, "I'm sure everything's going to be all right."

Bristo walked him to door, came back. I said, "God Almighty, what was that about?" He said, "You know what that was about. He said he came in saying he didn't want his daughter sitting by any nigger. What the real problem was, he finally told me, he couldn't read or write, and his little girl is smart. She's in the third grade, and he knows she's going to find out he can't read and write. And he didn't know what to do about it." That was a heavy, that was a big learning lesson for me, too. So that was the biggest racial incident we had. But see, we had
elementary kids. You're not going to have a lot of that problem.

NB: He sounds like a wonderful human being. When you talked about him sword fighting on the desk, I tried to imagine would they even permit, with all these rules and regulations today, I mean, if a principal were to do that today, I wonder if he would even be able to keep his job.

WW: Oh, they didn't want to permit him to do it in those days. As the superintendent said, "Bristo, every school system needs somebody like you, but only one." [laughter] But he was way ahead of his time. Everybody loved him. Kids came back to the school all the time.

RK: To visit him?

WW: Yes. And often we'd get to work, get to school on Monday morning, there'd be anywhere from eight to twenty mothers, grandmothers, and children waiting to see Mr. Hardin, to have him arbitrate the conflicts of the weekend. [laughter] 'Cause see, what we didn't recognize then, which now is so obvious, that was the beginning of the time of women heads of household. The men--there were marriages breaking up, or the men away traveling, driving trucks. And most of the people--not the blacks--but most of the white students were first and second generation Appalachian people, migrated to Roanoke, finding it hard, being isolated. Oh, the other thing, we had many, many mothers, most would send their kids to school with measles, mumps, chicken pox, and call with a note saying, "You see those spots? Johnny has... Do you know
what this is?" So we'd take the kid home and tell them what it was, and call the school nurse, or take them to the health department. That was a wonderful experience, those two years at West End. Rare, rare, rare. I mean I don't want to take any more time, but there are just so many stories, and I learned so much from Bristo about how to. . . . The important thing about Bristo was he never stopped being a child, you know, the playful side of Bristo, which I needed because I always tend to me a serious kind of person. I can get into my head, you know, and problem solve. But he understood that. I guess he learned that, he may have always known it, but certainly in drama that's one of the things, you know, the importance of comedy, the importance of laughter.

NB: ( ______ ) childhood. I think sometimes ( ______ )

WW: That's right, that's right.

RK: It sounds like you were already beginning through your two years here at the school to learn about families splitting up, . . .

NB: . . . kids coming to school with illnesses that their moms didn't know what the problems were. Was this in any way the genesis of. . . ?

WW: No question. I was ripe, ripe. I had no idea. I had lived in Roanoke ten years when I went to work there, twelve years. I had no idea what city poverty was like. See, I'd lived out in the suburbs. I was completely isolated from them. And the first time I went with Bristo to take a child home, we went into
this awful, horrible building. It was originally, I guess, four
apartments, maybe six, I can't remember. It looked like it had
not had ever had a coat of paint, ever! I can smell to this
minute the smell of that building, like cooked cabbage, dirty
clothes. I tell you, and it just knocked me down. We went in,
and the child lived upstairs, and there's this long stairway of
just these walls. It didn't even have a color. I started to say
gray. It wasn't gray. It was just a no-color wall with this
awful smell, and the mother wouldn't come to the door. We knew
she was in there. We could hear her. But whether she had a man
friend or whether she just didn't want to be bothered, couldn't
cope or what. We had to take the child back to school and call
the city somebody, to come and . . . .

RK: Social services?

WW: . . . to get the mother to open the door. That was a
big shock. Because I had thought in terms, growing up in
Bridgewater, of poverty as black. Black people were poor. I
really, I never recognized that mountain people were poor. I
never did. I knew we had some poor white families in Bridgewater
during the Depression, but the other families helped them. I
never really was sensitive. One of my best friends told me years
later that she dreaded Christmas because the church brought them
Christmas baskets. And see I never—-I had a bias, that I didn't
understand then, about poverty. You know, it was like, oh yeah,
but you weren't really poor. And they weren't, compared to the
blacks, who lived on dirt floors in those days, a lot of them.

RK: And this is a white family you're talking about in Roanoke?

WW: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. Actually many of the black children who went to West End, once it was fully desegregated, were the, some of the middle class black families.

RK: Yeah, that's usually the early, the first group.

WW: And that was by plan. And the other big learning I had was, after I went to TAAP and got to know. . . .I can remember, I had a very life changing experience in the '50s at a church conference thing. It was the introduction of experiential education in the diocese, and I really had a life changing experience. I realized that I was heading down the wrong direction. I was becoming Miss Anne. I didn't like that a bit.

I can remember being at a church conference. There were a few blacks there. I mean the only place you ever saw blacks socially was in the Episcopal Church, but that wasn't many. Here we were, all these white folks, sitting around in the living room of this very nice home at night singing, with our hands crossed, We Shall Overcome. I can remember thinking, "This is--wait a minute." [Laughter] There's something wrong with this picture. I vowed I would never sing that song again until I knew some black people as peers, you know. And I wouldn't do it. I couldn't do it, and I didn't. So that's one of the things that took me to TAAP, because I knew that was going to be really desegregated.
And it was at that point that my friends, the people—not my friends so much—some friends in my own church. You see, we were the first integrated group of workers in the city. No, there was one before us, the YWCA, but it was so small nobody even knew it. But TAAP was the, like it became the lightning rod. We'd all go out to lunch together. There's this one wonderful restaurant, The Frontier, they're closed now, who never blinked an eye. There was never any question we'd be served. It was just incredible when you think about it. But I'd have people from my church, not close friends, but I can remember sitting in that restaurant at a table with blacks and whites, and several different people in my church coming by and saying, "Hi, so and so," and I realized they weren't going to speak to me. They just went right out of there. I said, "Well, good night, that is really amazing to me." But we were the lightning rod, and then it was then that we began, like I got some hate letters. Bristo, when we all got hate letters. We got anonymous phone calls. But those were the cranks, you know. The people like the man who came to the school. Well, all of them weren't. Some were.

RK: Serious.

WW: No, I don't think ever serious. Well, one of my colleagues moved into the, bought the house two doors up, and the people that lived here at that time, the Mosleys, well, I found out later from the people that sold them the house that a number of the neighbors tried to get enough money together to buy the
house to keep the Hoffmans from moving there. And they thought I put the Hoffmans up to buying that house. I didn't. Billy found the house. In fact, I told him, "I think it's overpriced, Billy."

As it turned out, it wasn't because they stayed there long enough that real estate went up. Anyway, Mr. Mosley told the people that sold them the house that the day those niggers moved in, he was going to shoot them. Well, just about scared me to death.

RK: This is your neighbor right next door?

WW: Right here. Well, he'd had a mild stroke a year before, and he was flaky. So I thought, my God, he might do it. I knew Mrs. Mosley wouldn't.

NB: Not enough oxygen to the brain.

WW: Right. I told Bristo and a couple of people at TAAP and we got a lot of people to come and go all day and help them move. All of us just terrified. I mean, you don't do these things and think, "Oh, well, this is the right thing to do." I mean, you can't do otherwise, but God Almighty, we were scared. And we never told Billy until later. Well, hell, Mr. Mosley didn't show himself all day long. Whether Mrs. Mosley had him tied up in the house or not, I don't know. But do you know that was one summer, the next summer—Billy and Scarlett were very fastidious. Billy loved his car better than his children. And Billy washed his car every Saturday. He kept his grass mowed. He just did that. Well, they were so impressed.

RK: Right, thought they were going to come in here and have
pigs in the front yard or something.

WW: The next summer, the Mosleys had never asked me to keep their house key when they went on vacation. They left their house key with Billy and Scarlett. Yeah. And did it from then on. So it was an interesting.

NB: I just missed just kind of a little(         ). How did the two of you get from the school to TAAP?

WW: Oh yes. Now, enter the scene E. Cabbell Brand.

NB: E. Cabbell Brand?

WW: Have you heard of E. Cabbell Brand?

RK: Read a little bit about him.

WW: Well, E. Cabbell Brand is of the Virginia Cabbell family. He's a real patrician. Went to VMI. He had, probably still, he posted the highest academic and all records at VMI that anybody ever did. He was head of the cadet corps. He served in World War II with the, not the CIA, but the OSS. Had a distinguished career. He came back. His father owned this shoe company, mail order shoe company. He went with the State Department, and his father got sick and needed him. So he left that career, which he always knows that there was something he could have done in life different. And I think a lot of what he did here was to compensate for the fact he didn't do the State Department thing. I don't know how he got this way, but he's always seen the world as a whole. That's why he wanted to go in the State Department, to bring--peace has driven him. I guess
what he saw in World War II because I've known him for, since '65 and only just in the last year or so, we were talking and he talked some about some of the experiences he had in World War II. But his driver was shot and killed in a jeep, and Cabbell was safe, didn't get killed, and I think that was the, that's the driving thing.

He was a liberal. I mean, Cabbell has always been--I hate using the word liberal, but he was... I really don't like that word because it doesn't really describe. Cabbell came back here. He's a product of here, grew up here, was a member of the upper crust. Cabbell just declared himself and he was looking for something, something to stand on. And he belonged to the Torch Club--you know what the Torch Club is? I guess it's still in existence. It was, at that time, a group of men, usually businessmen, who would get together once a month, one would present a paper on something enlightening and intellectual and then they'd discuss it. And Bristo and Cabbell got to know each other and were friends in the Torch Club. Well, Cabbell at that time was taking the Federal Register. He read--he took a speed reading course about that time and was reading about ten newspapers a day. I mean, he's a certified, I mean, he's a bonafide genius. His capacity to retain, he is, let me see, Cabbell is sixty-eight years old, and I said to Ted Elec not long ago, I said, "Ted, do you see that Cabbell's slowed down any?" Ted thought, he said, "No." I said, "Me either." I told Cabbell many times he'd kill
me. I can't see him but every so often. [Laughter] Oh, I'm serious. So Cabbell read about this OEO legislation, the War on Poverty, . . .

RK: In the Federal Register. . .

WW: . . . and Cabbell said, "God," he said, "this sounds like a wonderful thing." So he talked to Dave Herbert, who was head of the Roanoke Valley Council of Community Services at that time, and he said, "Dave, have you heard about this?" And Dave said, "No." So he got Dave a copy and they talked about it, and Cabbell said, "It's my turn to do a paper at the Torch Club." He said, "I'm going to do it on the War on Poverty legislation." So he did. And this one guy in the Torch Club who was the bellwether for conservatives. I mean, if he was against it, you knew you were for it. [Laughter] Well, this guy just hit the ceiling when Cabbell did his paper that night. Dominated the conversation, went crazy. Cabbell said he and Bristo and Dave Herbert walked out of that meeting, and Cabbell said, "We've got to have us a community action agency in Roanoke." [Laughter] He took a month off from his job, maybe three months. I think he took the whole summer off. And he and Dave and a couple of others--Bristo was off in Florida at a seminar on racism put on by the University of Florida at Gainesville.

RK: He's still the principal and everything.

WW: Principal. And they just, they went everywhere, to every town, county, they went everywhere talking about the OEO and
the community action agency, and they applied for a Headstart grant, which they got, and then they--yeah, they got that. That gave them enough money to hire a couple of people, and that's when I got hired. They interviewed--I don't know how many applications they had for the executive director--but anyway, Bristo was the one they picked. And so then Bristo--I wasn't going to come, because I felt like West End was too important; if both of us left at same time, it would be really hard on those kids. Well, he and Sam Boroni and Osborne Payne, the three people they hired, came to my house and they just, they just wore me down. I said, "All right, I will come. I don't have any idea what it is." Bristo said, "Don't worry. We don't either." I mean, here were four people hired. We knew what--it was easy to understand the daycare center, the daycare, Headstart idea. That was simple to understand. But this thing, see, by this time OEO had put out these workbooks, you know, description of how-to start a community action agency. I remember like I'd been there a week or so and Bristo called me, he said--it talked about building blocks. That the money from OCS, I mean OEO is the first building block and then you get other things. Well, this was a new concept. The whole one-third, one-third, one-third board, it was a new concept. And I remember Bristo called me about ten days after I was hired and he said, "I've got it. I've got it," he said, "I finally understand the building blocks." From that moment on Bristo had a clear vision of where to go. Now, not all the particular programs
but he knew how. So then we began developing--we developed a planning grant and then this, the big, the big operation grant. We went to Washington to GW, met with some consultants that OEO put us in touch with that helped us think through it and decide what the ingredients ought to be. So the first time we added up all the budget, it was 2.3 million dollars. OEO had said, you know you, Roanoke, according to population and all the formula should get about $700,000. Bristo called them and said, "You know there's no way. I'm not interested in this job, a $700,000 program," he said, "That'd be an embarrassment. It wouldn't scratch the surface." "Oh no, no chance."

So then we'd work them again. Every time we'd rework the programs and the budget, honest to God, it would come out to 2.3 million dollars. [Laughter] So Bristo and Sam and Osborne drove to Washington because you had to take seven copies, and I swear to you it was this tall. That's the kind of proposals you wrote in those days. And they drove to Washington and hand delivered it, and then we waited and waited, about five months. Cabbell was chairman of the board, president of the board. Cabbell was calling and saying, "Bristo, are you sure you're doing everything you can to get funded?" Bristo said, "You can call." Finally they called and said, "We've decided to give you 2.3 million dollars." Bristo looked at me and said when he put the phone down, he said, "Oh my God," he said--there's this joke he used to tell about a little boy and a red wagon. Anyway, the punch line
was, "Good God, what do I do now?" And Bristo looked at me and said, "Good God, what do I do now? How do we spend 2.3 million dollars?" Well, I'll never know where this came from in me. I said, "One dollar at a time. It's no problem." [Laughter] "And very carefully." So that's how we got into it. I mean, we didn't know, but neither did anybody else. So Bristo and Cabbell both had a vision far beyond what I had or anybody else had. They really did. We used to tease Cabbell and say, "Yeah, Cabbell, we know you. Today the Roanoke Valley. Tomorrow Virginia, next week, United States, and next month, the world." A joke. Cabbell would say, "That's exactly right." [Laughter] So that's why we've always, why we've had an international interest. Cabbell has traveled the world many times. Even in those days, in those days when he traveled, like during Watts-- Cabbell, if he had a business trip to California, he'd go straight to the top, the mayor's office, and say, "I want somebody to take me to Watts. I want to talk to the people." I remember he got an audience with Hailey Selasse when he was in Ethiopia. [Laughter] He got an audience with the Leakys when he went--he also has this big anthropological interest. World view, he belongs to all the world, what's the group down in Texas that, the environmental, World Environmental Group with headquarters in Texas. But Bristo said, "We are writing the textbooks on poverty." NB: So he was aware of that sense of what you were doing? Just one quick question.
WW: And we can afford to make mistakes. Thank God they gave us enough money to make mistakes.

NB: The paper that was presented at the Torch Club, do you recall what year that was?

WW: It was in 1964.

NB: 1964. That must have been a fascinating paper.

RK: So you probably could ( ) I've forgotten when you got the. . . .

WW: '65.

RK: '65 is when the grant. . . .

NB: So you all worked pretty quickly after that?

WW: Oh, well, it may have been, no, the legislation was passed in '64. So it was probably in the fall of '64 when he presented it, and then they got, submitted and got the applications in by April and were funded in first of July. Oh, you have to know Cabbell to understand. He probably thinks they wasted a lot of time [laughter]. The first time I met him, I had met him socially, but as a working person, he came charging in our office. All I had was a desk and a telephone and a chair. We eventually got all of our furniture from one of the law firms here, old furniture. See, because of Cabbell's connections, and Bristo's, they were able to get the support of a lot of important people in town who were liberals, moderate to liberal. But Cabbell came charging in, first time, after I was hired, "Get me so-and-so at the White House on the phone. Tell them Cabbell's
friend's calling." I said to myself. . . And then he charged into Bristo's office, closed the door. I said, "Oh my God, how do you call the White House?" I'd never--can you call the White House? I'm serious. I said, "What do I do?" I remember my hands just perspiring. So I called the operator and I said, "Could you give me the number for the White House in Washington?" And she said, "Could you tell me the address?" Well, I could remember, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Just like that, she gave it to me. So I called and I said, "I'm calling for Mr. Cabbell Brand of Salem, Virginia. Is Mr. So-and-So in?" "Just one minute." I said, "Oh my God, I didn't know you could do this."

NB: This is sort of a retrospective question, but then as you talk, I think it'll go quite quick. It sounds like the fact that this fellow was quite a prominent individual in the community, and that a prominent individual in the community who also was, sounds like he was incredibly bright and energetic, took interest in this. I mean, could it have happened without that? Would it have happened later, do you think, anyway? Or, or. . .

WW: Well, it did happen in other communities all over the country, over a thousand CAPS were created. 'Course, the North Carolina Fund was a prototype for community action agencies. That had a lot of intellectual prowess behind it, too. The one that started in Richmond was, the first director was Wes Hair who then came to North Carolina.

NB: Oh, I know him.
WW: You know Wes?

NB: Oh yeah, we went to Belize together, spent two weeks together. . .

WW: Wes took the job with one understanding, from the beginning, that he would only stay long--the only reason he took it was 'cause they said they had to have a white person to head it up to start with. Because Richmond was in a very transitional period. It wasn't this transition completely, but it was clear. The board didn't want it to be a black-only agency. But Wes said, "I'll take it, [end of tape on editing copy] but I'll take it and stay until I can train somebody, a black, to be the director." And he did. I don't remember if he stayed three years. I've forgotten how long. Oh yeah, I knew him real well in those days.

So in the communities where you had the strongest agencies, there was either a Cabbell Brand. . . . And I think in all of them to get them created, there had--I'd say there was some prominent people behind it.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

WW: They shot over our outreach workers' heads in their cars. Oh, that was the Klan. The Klan was active in those days. Down in southwest Virginia, oh, it was even worse. The Marinol sisters and the Appalachian, what were they called?

RK: Vista Volunteers?
WW: No, before Vista, pre-Vista. Like Vista but much more radical than Vista.

RK: Yeah, I forget.

WW: You know. . .

RK: I'm going to interview somebody from that one, but I forget.

WW: Yeah, now they really got the, because upsetting the status quo in Roanoke is one thing, but I tell you, upsetting it in a place like Washington County, Virginia, where even today, not Washington County, but two other counties in southwest Virginia, they are so paranoid. One is always Republican and one is always Democrat-controlled. One of them, within the last four years, really and truly believed, and told somebody I know well, that they believe that the other county has guns stored along the county line. You know, that they're really going to invade and take them over [laughter]. Oh no, I mean the risks, the people who really took the risks in my experience during those days were in Appalachia, but especially in that part. The interesting thing is that a lot of the good old boys, truly ignorant, controlled everything, controlled the government, the electorate in those days. But they were smart enough to fully understand the threat to their power. Whereas, in places like Roanoke it took a while for. . .

RK: You'd already gotten in on the ground floor before they figured out what you were up to.
WW: Mmn hmnh.

RK: This name, Total Action Against Poverty, that's a...

WW: I know, it's a terrible name, right?

RK: No, but it's also interesting.

WW: That was Cabbell.

RK: That's what I was wondering.

WW: That's Cabbell.

RK: I mean it's just like, it's not grandiose, and it's not really radical.

WW: It's Cabbell.

RK: It's kind of radical but it is a kind of larger than life name for community action.

WW: It's Cabbell. And he's going to be really mad if he dies before poverty is erased from the world [laughter].

RK: Better be around for a while.

NB: Does his moral sensibility come out of the same sort of Judaic-Christian tradition that you talked about?

WW: Yes, yes, it does, definitely. But it also, you know how some people who live in small towns--because he grew up in Salem, which is different. Salem is older and more southern. Roanoke's not a southern city.

RK: It's more of a new South.

WW: Right. You know how every now and then somebody just completely transcends their family, their culture, and just have this world view of uh, of the... What Cabbell has seen from
the beginning, and God knows, I do not know when he first saw it, but he fully understands that the poverty in the world, everywhere, limits the growth of people everywhere, and that the cruelty in the world, hurts everybody. He's also very practical, a problem solver. I mean, that's the other thing is, he just sees it as solvable, and why in the hell can't we build the public support for it.

RK: He started this business, or kind of took this family business, and kind of restructured it.

WW: Oh yeah, made lots and lots of money. Then sold it.

RK: He is one of these kind of, not like a Ross Perot, but is one of these practical.

WW: Yeah, he's definitely an entrepreneur.

RK: Likes to make things happen.

WW: Oh definitely. But, you asked me a question, would it have happened. In the Shannondoah Valley it didn't happen. Nobody rose up fast enough, and by the time there was a group there that was asking us to come help them start one, OEO, the funds were limited. They wouldn't start any more. In Virginia, one-third of the counties didn't have a CAP by the cut-off time. Now the state and the feds have put more money in gradually and those CAPS that existed branched out. I'm not even sure the whole state is covered now. I think the State of North Carolina is fully covered. Some states got fully covered in the beginning. I don't know how they did it.
RK: This notion of—we're going to talk to Dick Boone in a few weeks. He worked in the White House or in OEO. He's one of the people who dreamed up this idea of maximum participation, or whatever.

WW: Yeah, maximum feasible participation.

RK: How did you try to implement that here?

WW: Absolutely.

RK: What did that mean in terms of—'cause that really is a, was an extremely. . . .

WW: Radical.

RK: That was really a radical idea.

WW: Well, one-third, one-third, one-third on the boards, which was the first way we started that, and to get the money you had to do it. There were certain things you had to do to get the federal money, and the federal money bypassed the governor's office in those days. They had a sign off, but after thirty days if the governor didn't sign off, they sent the money anyway. I'd say the way TAAPS started was with the board, but with the full understanding that that would be the norm for everything we did. Like with the Headstart Center, the parental involvement, we did all kinds of workshops with newsprint, with both board members, with parents. The one thing TAAP didn't do that a lot of other agencies did, which I don't know how much of that is still going on—now, we organized a lot of neighborhood groups, rural and urban—we did not do this big, one day election for board
membership, and membership on those--like a lot of them did. I can't remember exactly why we didn't. I can remember what I remember, and that is that Bristo felt that in some ways that was phony. Because you've only got so many neighborhood groups organized. Now, they had their own boards, and they elected their membership. Then we had like twenty, because at one time we had thirty-six board members--so one-third, twelve--twelve of those neighborhood groups who elected their own representative to the TAAP board. But Bristo felt that voter registration was more important, voting in real elections was more important than....

When he was at West End School, he mainlined. He was the first person to mainstream children who were physically, special education classes, he really believed in mainstreaming. So there was that bias he brought that I bought into, and I think Cabbell did too and others. But you ought to talk to somebody where they did do that, because it may have worked really great. But Cabbell treats people with dignity too. So the members of the board, well, in the early days the representatives from those neighborhood groups were given a half-a-day training session before each board meeting, to go over the agenda, so they could ask questions too. Because many of them, course, some of them were ministers who knew Robert's Rules. So it wasn't like they were all like that. So it was a mix. But there were enough of them who really were poor, and this was their first opportunity, first-time exposure, to how to participate in a meeting and how to
be heard and how to be persistent if necessary. Oh God, we just spent hours and hours and hours, I'd forgotten about it, in workshops, meetings. The development of proposals, the Headstart proposals, the Headstart parents spent probably two or three days going through that process. What were the objectives? The neighborhood group representatives, we did that with the other, yeah, we did that for a number of years. We don't do that any more, but the board does, like TAAPS board. And what we saw, pretty soon, I don't remember how long it took to see, that the people representing the neighborhood groups were the most, they were contributing the most to the board. They never missed meetings. Once they learned they could speak and people would listen to them, they loved it. Oh, then after Kennedy and Martin Luther King were killed though, you know, in Washington, all the burning of the city, we went through a real hard time then. That was a real hard time.

RK: Just because of the racial tension on the board?

WW: Not just the board, but in the staff. Like the day after Martin Luther King was killed, I went to the office so distraught. Black people didn't speak to me. I mean, I'd known these folks now for, when was he killed?

RK: '68.

WW: So four years. I couldn't believe it, and then I realized, I mean, they were so hurt. They felt betrayed. Every white person was guilty. Bristo was in Atlanta to an OEO
conference. So he called and he said they were all staying down there for the funeral. So Jim Stanford, the deputy, and I decided we would have everybody bring T.V.'s in, you know, to watch T.V. together and watch the funeral together. We just closed the doors. That helped more than anything. But just the anger, that's when the Black Power Movement rose, the anger of the blacks. There's somebody I wish you had time to meet, a guy named Ivory Morton. He's not rural, but he was the leader of this hostile, angry, black group. He was about nineteen, twenty years old. And TAAP—in those days we had enough money to pay the rent, to rent some different places so these groups could, we could pay the electricity, the rent, the water.

RK: Had their own offices?

WW: Yeah, and meeting places, but sometimes not a staff. It was you know like just the volunteers. So we'd rented this place in one of the black parts of town, and they called it the Black House. It belonged to them, and they called Bristo one day and said, "We want you and Jim, Mr. Stanford to come for a meeting. We want to talk about some of the things we want to do." It was the day of the Chicago Convention, because we were all going to the Stanfords for dinner that night. Well, Bristo and Jim didn't come and didn't come and didn't come. About 9:30 they arrived, and Bristo, they were just bugged out. Those young black men had held them at knife point, making demands on Bristo. You know like you're going to do this, and you're going to do that. Ivory was
the ringleader. And Bristo said, "I'm sorry, you know. I don't have the money. I'll tell you what we can do. We'll talk about it and see if we can get a couple of staff people. But I can't do it." And Bristo just, you know, he didn't panic, he just... So finally they let them go with the agreement they'd meet again later in the week.

Well, Ivory, from that day, became Bristo's most loyal, ardent supporters, friends, fans. He said, "He's the first white man that never lied to me." And he's still one of my best friends. He went to work for the school system. We got him in. Bristo got him into Hollins College. He's got artistic inclinations. He did some drama there. He just simply either couldn't, wouldn't, whatever, do the academic stuff. It was too much for him. I don't mean too much here, 'cause that isn't it. It was just keeping it all together at that time in history, for him. But he went to work for the school system--I don't know how long ago, since before Bristo died--doing maintenance work. But he's good at it. But his big thing is he befriends all the poor and the homeless and the black students, especially in the elementary schools. He encourages the young to stay away from drugs. He's just a wonderful influence, and just turned out so good. He always knows what's going on in the community. He told me not long ago, he was by the office, and he said, "Wilma," he said, "you remember what it was like in the '60s?" I said, "Oh yeah." He said, "Now," he said, "I know that was scary for some
of you white folks." I said, "It was." But actually I was never scared of him. But he said, "I want you to know," he said, "I don't walk the streets of a lot of the parts of Roanoke now at night because of the drugs." He said, "Drugs make these kids crazy. And the guns."

RK: Yeah, put the two of them together. How about poor whites and poor blacks, what was that relationship, say, in these early years, the kind of spirit of the thing?

WW: Oh God, it was wonderful. You're asking questions that I'd forgotten about.

RK: That would be where people would have expected the conflict to come. They would say that you and Cabbell can, you know, you can work with these poor black people or these poor white people, but if you bring them together, that's what's really threatening or problematic. How did, did that . . .

WW: Well, the group at George Washington University that consulted us told us about this other firm, a private firm, called University Trainers. In fact, some of the trainers also taught at GW, who did experiential education. Bristo had written in training money, lots of it. That was one of the big bones of contention, and Bristo said, "I'm not taking the money unless you give me the training money, because we don't know what we're doing." So they came in on a contract. They stayed a year and a half, I think. We did a lot of group stuff and talking about race and how we feel, focused on ourselves. Every one of us on the
staff, no matter what the job, was assigned to a neighborhood. Not everybody on a team, like I had a black neighborhood, but I had also a black person. So the teams were sort of integrated. It was not really scary for whites to go into black communities at that time, as it was for blacks to go into white communities, poor white communities. So when they went into Southeast, we were nervous about that. As it turned out, there may have been some minor incidences like kids would do, but no really scary, dangerous experiences. It really was surprising, amazing, to me how little conflict that caused. But like if they went knocking on doors, it would be a black and a white together. Most of the workers were hired out of their neighborhoods. So if they were in Southeast, it would be somebody from Southeast, a white worker who had a black person. A lot of our early workers were also black clergymen. A lot of our white employees in the beginning were white clergymen. The white ones were ones that had been either been kicked out of their church or on the verge, because of their stand on race. That's what happened to the present director of TAAP, Ted Edley. He was a Presbyterian minister in a rural area.

So we talked a lot about it. God, it was crazy in those days. I mean, I had four kids and a husband. [Laughter] When I came home at night, I finally reached, very early, the point, I said, "Do not call me at home, nobody. I'm not going to talk on the phone at night." You know, it's just so hyper. Everybody's so intense. And it was fun, but, you know, I couldn't take that, but a lot of
them could. They'd get together at night, you know, and they'd just go on and on. It was like college sophomores, but important.

RK: Real stuff.

WW: Yeah. I think the big thing was the getting to know you. That's when I first learned when I first went to TAAP, there was a large, middle class and upper-middle class black community in the city of Roanoke. I didn't know that. I didn't know these people. Lots and lots of college graduates who had a wonderful social life. They invited us to their dances. It was just great. I mean, what an enriching experience it was, and freeing, you know. But there were flare-ups here and there all the time. There was one rule Bristo had, absolute, no exceptions, if he found out anybody brought drugs of any kind on the premises, you're fired. Because he knew that could be the death knell for the agency with the people who wanted it to die. I mean, that was just an absolute rule. No drinking in the building, not that he was opposed. He wasn't much of a drinker. It was just the image.

He understood the importance of those kinds of messages. Because the word was that we had these sex orgies [laughter], drug and sex orgies. I said, God, little did they know, I go home every night so beat down to work another five hours taking care of my family.

Oh, and the word was in the early days that Cabbell Brand was making $40,000 a year from TAAP, which, of course, he wasn't. Bristo, at the most, when he died in '75, was making $26,000.

RK: Nobody got rich.
And Cabbell wasn't paid anything, of course, as a board, you know . . . But there was definitely a very conservative element in the community, and some pretty powerful people, who wished we would die and go away. But they aren't like that anymore. There's still some, but most people, now, see, I'm honored for all I've done for the Commonwealth of Virginia, you know. But that's because a lot of time has gone by. In the early days--now, my neighbors all stayed friendly to me, and they were nice to my children. But as time went on, I gradually saw--interesting to me--the women of the neighborhood would begin to say to me, "You know, you really are lucky. You are so lucky that you get to travel. I wish I had gone to work." And I said, "Well, I didn't do it because I wanted to do anything good. I did it because I had to earn a salary." And it wasn't begrudging. It was just a recognition there's a new world. And I think basically, how I really feel, see, I think fear and love, or whatever the word for that is, are the two basic emotions that we have. And I think fear causes us to do some very ignoble things. And that, where at the moment I would get mad as hell, especially at the good old boys, and like to just wipe them off the face of the earth, I always knew they were afraid of change. Just that fear of the unknown, fear of the unknown, and then gradually I began to see that for whatever reasons, I have never been afraid of that. It's no credit to me. I mean, my parents probably shaped it, but the fact is I've never been afraid of change. In fact, I think it's
exciting. I love exotic places and people. I always sort of thought people who were afraid of change were crippled in a way.

RK: Certainly limiting.

WW: Yeah. But see, as change comes, and it gets safe then a lot of people say, "Oh yeah. I like this. This is good."

NB: I remember reading somewhere that when you began the water projects [Interruption], you were talking to somebody who was objecting to providing water to people who didn't have any, and said, you know, for seventeen years or whatever my family did it this way and whatnot, and it struck me, that same thing, about, I mean, who in their right mind would object to having water. But on the other hand, it's part of this tradition, and tradition's a double edged thing in some ways. It provides continuity and strength and cohesiveness on the one hand, but it also can be incredibly limiting and shortsighted on the other hand.

WW: Right. Definitely. The interesting thing is, no woman ever said to me, "Why do you think those poor people and rural people want water?" No urban woman, no country woman, no woman. It was always men who didn't have to boil the water, didn't have to carry it. This one guy said, "I used to carry water for my mother every day." I said, "Yeah, when you did that, the spring or stream you carried it from was crystal clear, safe to drink." I said, "You can't find one anymore like that." But it's because as a kid, carrying water, he had no way of knowing how hard his mother worked to keep the family going and their clothes clean.
Because we can't experience something we haven't experienced. But even he, see, he works for Farmers Home Administration, and that's the most hidebound bureaucracy that God, there's nothing in the communist system, there's nothing anywhere, that's more hidebound than the Farmers Home Administration bureaucracy. So I think they have a secret, subminimal test they give to people they hire [laughter], looking for people who just resist change as hard as they can. So basically, I really think that's what it was. He was resisting change.

NB: You were talking earlier, too, about that program that you all developed, and the notion of maximum participation and training and teaching people how to be effective at meetings, the local leaders and whatnot. I mean, that was a fundamental component of what you were doing. Sort of programmatically, what did you focus on first? And then how did you kind of evolve it into what it became?

WW: Well, we did two different kinds of training at the same time. The training that the university trainers, university associates, did was they were hired to train staff. That was much more in-depth in the early days because we did a lot of personal growth, team building, design skills. In fact, we started our own training, non-profit, which we still have, to train staff. A lot more in-depth. But we did a lot of--TAAP, now I'm talking TAAP--once, we had a training component for ten years or more, fifteen--Reagan just gutted all the good stuff out--we did training for the
local welfare department, to train their workers to be more sensitive to poor people. It was great, and as a result of that, the woman, who then was the assistant director of the one in the city, became the director, and when Reagan came in--she always had the right responses anyway, but she got a lot of skills she didn't have. She was one of the most articulate defenders of TAAP during the days when it looked like TAAP and all of us might go right down the tubes in '81-'82. The TAAP trainers got a contract, got paid to train, garbage workers in Roanoke County to improve their self-image, to help them. The guy in charge was just an unusual guy. I mean, you just can't imagine a guy who would pay money to hire these trainers. He thought he had the best damn bunch of garbage workers in the world, and he wanted to one, let them have some training to help them appreciate how good they were, but also to increase--because they had developed teams, you know, each truck had a team--to give them some more real skills on teamwork.

And then we was willing to put an incentive program in, which was unheard of. That if they finished at ten o'clock in the morning, they could go home, but get paid for a full eight hours. And so we did that kind of training. We trained other community action agency staff. We trained some church people. I'm trying to think what other institutions, oh, social services, and still are doing training of the Department of Corrections. See, Virginia Water Projects is just the first of four statewide non-profits that they've created. TAAP is an unusual, if not the best, certainly
one of the top CAP agencies in the country, especially for starting programs that go beyond the usual kind of stuff.

The second one was Virginia CARES, which is the Virginia Reentry Action something, I can never remember. But it's for people that are getting ready to come out of the state prison system. They get training inside. They get training outside. They get help with getting work. They get follow-up sessions. When they're in, they take their, arrange transportation for the families to come to visit. But they give them real skills on like how to deal with conflict without getting angry. Oh, and they're tough. I mean, Jesus, they're so tough. They don't let them con them about anything. Most of the people are women, black and white. Yeah, they just go right in there.

NB: Prison groups, they're a tough group. I mean, I've never met a more sort of self-righteous group. They're certain that they are right, and the reason they got in there is because other people somehow wronged them. They're a tough group to work with like that.

WW: Yeah. They've been very effective. Their recidivism rate is less than half the state norm. Those that have been in their program, compared to the others who haven't been, control groups, less than half, maybe far less than half. I haven't seen in any recent numbers, but used to be something like 70-some percent was the state norm, and theirs was 32 or something.

And then the next one is called Project Discovery. Nearly
all these like, Virginia CARES came out of Ted Edlec's mind and a woman named Lynn Atkins, largely. This third one, Project Discovery, came out of Cabbell's mind. Cabbell believes that the solution to all problems in the world is education of one form or another. Cabbell sees human ignorance as the enemy of the world. And that is a program for first time college-bound, actually minority first bound college. It was a response to Virginia's lack of ability or lack of action to get minorities enrolled in college. So it sold just like that to the State Board of Education, because they were under court order. And it works, it really works. They started out with high school sophomores. I think now they're working, starting with seventh graders. Beginning to enroll kids. Taking them to spend weekends on campuses. Taking them through the whole process of getting ready for the SAT's. Involving their families. What they found is the big barrier to most of these kids going to college is that the parents never thought it was possible financially.

RK: And then also a lot of them have no vision of that as a way of life.

WW: No, what it was like. Never been on a college campus. Nobody in the family had ever graduated from college, ever gone to college. That's a wildly successful program. It's been picked up by about five other states, and I think they're working in Hawaii to start one there. That's gotten the largest amount of money from state government of any of our programs. See, they created a
network. I don't know how many there are, nine or ten, twelve, through community action agencies, locally operated. And it's something easy for any politician to support. See, water is easy, we had good... Virginia CARES has had the hardest time because it's not, hasn't been easy to get politicians to support. Took longer, but they have good solid support. And the latest one is called CHIP, which is Comprehensive Health Improvement Program, something like that. And that's for kids, I've forgotten what ages, three to twelve or something like that, who's families are not poor enough to get on Medicaid. There's some cut-off limit, but who really have no access to health care. Families can't afford insurance, and many of those families have gotten all of their medical care from emergency rooms. So they wait until something got to emergency. That has tremendous support from the state health department. They've got like a multi-million dollar Kellogg grant to expand that statewide.

RK: Really out of this CAP here, you've really been able to expand all these things statewide. In some ways you've become a kind of a statewide community action.

WW: We are. That's what we're called. Each of the four are called statewide community action.

RK: But had their genesis here.

WW: Right. Right, and the contribution that Virginia... Probably the biggest contribution I made to that was that all those dining room table conversations about politics really paid
off. I discovered when I began to go talking to politicians about getting money for TAAP, I'd be scared to death the first few times. I thought, God, they don't even want to see me. How easy it was, you know, how easy it was to get support. So then when I became the director of the Water Project, we began working in Richmond. Oh God, I'd be so scared. They'd say, "Why, yes, of course we'll support that." And I organized the CAPS to, each CAP did a survey on what their local water access needs were, and then go to their member of the General Assembly, senate and delegate, take with them a nice little packet, and show them and tell them about where these people are, and ask them if they'll support the Virginia Water Project legislation, the seed fund. This was in '78, we started. What I discovered is that many of the CAP directors, especially rural, some urban, didn't even know who their members of the General Assembly were. They thought of themselves so on the outside, and their response to me was, "They won't even let me in their office." I said, "Try it." So we set up like a headquarters, an election headquarters, you know, big things up. They called in and reported in. We did everything we could. Sent them lists of names and telephone, you know, made it easy as we could for them, but they had to make the calls. They had to do the talking, and also to send some of their outreach workers. Because, see, I found outreach workers are the most depressing people because they're right in the line. Well, they just were overjoyed, [laughter], they said... You know, they'd
call me. They said, "Wilma, Senator So-and-So said he really thanked me for coming to see him. He didn't know these people were in his district and had this problem." So we were the first to really build a political network. That's what it was. But on the subject of water which is so non-threatening. We got money the first year we went, which was unheard of, to get new money the first year you go in Virginia. So that same methodology then, what we did was train the CAP directors and their staff, how to go to the General Assembly without being an enemy of the elected officials, but to inform them and to get their help on a problem in their district. And my God, it just worked like a charm. We got a group in North Carolina working on that now, that process now, Gloria Williams and ( ). But it's going for money for their North Carolina water project.

RK: ( )

WW: We were lucky the first year. We had, Roanoke's senator was the number two guy on the senate finance committee, Bill Hopkins, and he was familiar, he knew me and knew about our project. In fact, he had done some legal work for some of the early water project, pro bono. We almost lost the money, and Cabbell called him and said, "Can Wilma come over and talk to you." On a Saturday afternoon, I went over and told him the problem. He's such a darling man. He said, "Well, Wilma,"--he headed up this commission called the Hopkins Commission to reform the management, the administration, and the major thing they
recommended was put in a computer system for the General Assembly, which they had done and that was the first year that it was operative. He said, "Well, Wilma,"--we were asking for $250,000--he said, "under normal circumstances, $250,000, I could have found that for you last year without any big problem, but, you know, they got me to do this study commission, and we recommended putting in these computers." And he said, "Before this year, the chairman and I were the only ones in the General Assembly at the end of the day who knew where the money was. Now, every son-of-a-bitch in the General Assembly knows where the money is so it's harder to find any unspoken for." [Laughter] He said, "But I think I can find you $100,000. Would that do this year?" I said, "That would do just fine." [Laughter] "Every son-of-a-bitch in the General Assembly."

RK: (               )

WW: But see, he had a great sense of humor about it. [Laughter]

NB: One of the questions that has emerged, I think in the group, this is, I guess, our third or fourth interview, that's emerged--Les Dunbar, for example, said it comes back to perhaps the lack of an overall spirit of good will for this sort of work. That in the nation we don't seem to somehow have the kind of collective compassion or whatever.

WW: It's the big heartbreak of my life.

NB: And he sort of said, you know, there's nothing wrong
with building a rural health clinic and it's good to treat people. There's nothing wrong with doing this project or that project. I think about my work overseas. There's a lot of good singular community development projects, but they've never formed a kind of aggregate to make any kind of fundamental or structural difference. Now, it sounds to me, looking at some of the numbers of families, that this, the genesis of it, there's beginning here of something. You've somehow been able to use water, which is a kind of a less threatening political issue, to do a bunch of... .

WW: It's more than less threatening. It induces guilt to be against it. [Laughter] See, I mean, one member of the House told me when I went to him for the first time, I didn't think, I couldn't even tell from his face if he was even listening to me. When I finished, I said, "Senator Cantrell, I hope you'll be able to support this legislation." He leaned across the desk. He's a little man, bald, shiny head, and he said, "Mrs. Warren, not only will I support your legislation, I'd be ashamed of myself if I didn't." It would be against people having safe drinking water. Go ahead.

NB: ( ) As you kind of look at what's worked about what you'd done somehow, because I think the question, I guess statistically, I mean, there's more poor people now in this country than there was thirty years ago.

WW: That's right.
NB: Can you sort of distill any lessons for the rest of us in some way, in terms of, what do we need to really make a significant difference in this country? We seem to be losing ground nationally.

WW: Well, I am by nature an optimist. There have been times in my life when I had some serious problems that I should be worrying about twenty-four hours a day, and I'd get distracted and forget to worry. I mean, I'm serious. I am an optimist. But I have to say to you, that until the millennium comes, and I don't say this out of a great religious belief in the Bible... I mean, I do believe but this is not coming out of a literal translation of the Bible. Just my experience tells me, we may never have a huge, 75% of the population, who are going to support this kind of program or things that are going to help low income people. I tell you, the '80s was a miserable decade for me, not just because we were in threat of losing our funding and everything that we believed in going down the tubes, but it was how stupid the American people were to respond the way they did to Ronald Reagan. To really believe we could have it all, and not have to pay for it, ever. How they wanted to believe that. And I think even now, most people don't realize [end of editing copy of tape]the cause and effect of where we are now. I really don't think they do. And I don't mean this in any, that I'm so much smarter than anybody. I mean, I viewed this with horror, horror. I've often thought that our work is like we have a telescope, and part of the
time I have to view the world with the little end here and see it magnified and see the whole global thing. The other part of me says that. . . .

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A
START OF TAPE 2, SIDE B

WW: But try to link people up, link people up, link people up who share a common cause as much as possible. But I've seen us get so optimistic and think, "Oh man, we've finally made it, you know. It's really going to happen." Well, the State of Virginia, God, we elected Doug Wilder, who, if we hadn't had this damn budget shortfall, our agency would have doubled our money. Instead, we've lost a hundred and some thousand dollars a year through things out of the good guys' control. It's almost as if there's this conspiracy [laughter] against good in the world. I mean, if you want to believe in the theory of good versus evil, the great battle. God knows, we witness it all the time. I think human greed is hard to beat. It's hard to beat [laughter]. And up here this great grandfatherly guy says, "You don't have to help the poor. You don't have to pay higher taxes. You can get rich. Come on, let's all go to pleasure island with Pinnocchio."

NB: Right. And then he gets some of the church and religious leaders back on the same. . . .

WW: That's right. And then let's have a couple of skirmishes that make us feel really great about our. . . .

RK: Prowess.

WW: Right. So I'm pretty cynical. I hate it. I don't like being cynical. I'm pretty cynical about -- and I don't let myself dwell on this. I mean, in this older middle-class woman beats the heart of a true, a true radical. I mean, if I could--I told
Norman Collins with the Ford Foundation, who was our angel, who took over the Mexico office, we were talking on the phone shortly before he went. We were talking about the problems, especially they had huge water problems, and I had just seen that 60 Minutes program on the border where GM has their plants right across the border and paying those women four dollars a day, something like that. Best money they ever had, but they still go back to the barrios at night. It's not enough money to get them out of the barrios to do those harnesses for the automobiles. I said, "Norm, if I were younger and knew what I know now, I'd go down there and organize a union among those women. That's what I'd do." So if you want to know what I think, I think it takes, I think there's a lot more radical behavior that has to take place. And really and truly, if I--see, I think the solution to the unemployment, to the moving of jobs to the developing countries, is not to buy American. It is to organize those people to demand fair payment for their services. So that it isn't going to benefit.

RK: Make any difference, right.

WW: Right.

RK: It's too bad that the American Labor Movement haven't understood that. They've supported the CIA for years, those little tin dictators from those little countries. Now, we just set them up. They impoverish the country. Now, the factories are going to just move down there, and whatever his name is complaining about it. Everything they've done for the last twenty
years, in terms of foreign policy, has just created the conditions for that.

WW: Oh absolutely, and I don't think it's an accident.

RK: No, no.

WW: I mean, I think that's how we got Ronald Reagan. I think he was groomed by that crowd. I think George Bush is just right out of it. So, I realized some time ago I'm not a Norma Rae, and I might not be again. Like if I were that age now, I'm not sure I have the courage, you know, to just walk off and leave everything I have for. . . . But I think we're going to need some more Norma Raes and some people who are willing, in the developing countries. Norman Cogs, I think he was a little shocked, he said, "Wow." I said, "I'm serious." He said, "Well, you have a point." I said, "I'm not kidding you. I think economic justice, you know, paying workers, is probably the single most important thing." But it's the only way I see to get at it. But in the meantime, I'm looking at the telescope the other way, I live in Virginia. I live in the South. I do believe that I can't control, I'm not God, I can't control the future. Let's say, what we've done to help Ivanhoe or any of these other communities, we've helped them get their water. Unless they ask us back in for anything else, we don't, you know, it's theirs. We are facilitators, catalysts. We give them a little money. We help them, point their noses into other places for resources. But what we've seen is that in many of those communities other development
occurs, driven by those same leaders who rose up. So I think for rural--God, don't even get me started on rural economic development. Two failures, I see of the War on Poverty, and social scientists and, you know, that whole genre of people, the anti-poverty. One is, except for a handful of CDCs and some others, I don't think anybody really knows what's going to bring about long-lasting, sustainable jobs that pay a decent living in rural areas. Being put on that Center for Rural Development board in Virginia is what's really excites me because that's where... I was on this advisory committee. You know the Aspen Institute, DeWitt John, they got a big grant from the Ford Foundation to do the state's role in rural economic development, and I was on that advisory committee. That really opened my eyes.

I think a lot of that thinking fits in with, the process they're talking about is the process we've used. That intermediaries like us are truly intermediaries. I mean, we don't go in and do for, but we do link people up. We link them to resources. Link them to other people. But there's still, I keep saying, we've said to the staff, we have these discussions, I said to DeWitt, "But you do all that. At least we know with the water and waste water, we've talking about either a well, a package plant, a water system. We know what the product is." The trouble with rural economic development is nobody's spent enough time saying, "What are the products? What do we have to sell?" And think that's what the people themselves have to do. So I see our role as
getting rural communities to really spend some time looking at what is the product. If we want jobs here, what do we have to sell? I think if we don't do that, if we let rural communities die by attrition. . . . Well, one politician in Virginia said it. It didn't say this. But he said it more strongly than I would have said it. He said that in fifteen years if we don't figure out some way to bring jobs to rural Virginia west of Roanoke, it's going to be a welfare state. That's over dramatic, but by far the biggest chunks of money are going to come from the federal, they're going to be subsidy monies in every way.

RK: Won't be any alternative.

WW: So that's one big issue I don't think that's been. . . . And those programs that have succeeded, others haven't seen them enough. I think if one thing out of this, what you all are doing, is not only to write it down and have the history, but, God, if you could get PEW or somebody to give you, as a follow-up money, to pay to take people around to those that you see really work. You know, traveling money for people. And the other thing is, and I did see this--I've said it for years and nobody's really paid any attention--in the early years of TAAP, and this is how to prevent children having children. In the early days of TAAP, this strange man and woman came to our office from the Midwest. He looked like a little professor. He was going around the country talking to agencies like us, trying to get Planned Parenthood, what is now called Planned Parenthood, organizations going. Well,
Bristo said, "This is wonderful." That was part of our job. We started all these other, like Legal Older Americans, were started by CAPS. Lots and lots of programs. The CDC's were largely created by CAPS. So this little man said, I mean, he was very surreptitious, like he's a spy. We thought this is crazy. Well, Bristo said, "There's some people I want you to talk to." So he did. So this little group of people said, yeah, we'd try to get one started. They gave us some money from the fed. And my God, the phone calls started coming in. It was probably the most radical thing we tried to do from the Bible belt people and from the Roman Catholic Church, and man, they were hot. That CAP was going to teach childbirth prevention. But anyway, this little group that spun off, they were dedicated and they got started. But my God, the same people have dogged them all these years. But to me that's the biggest failure, and now you add age to that and drugs.

RK: You spoke about your role as a facilitator, one of the things that we're trying to facilitate, in addition to showing people what works and what doesn't work, and trying to facilitate some kind of communication to a younger generation of people, whether it's our students or a larger group of people. One of the things we're trying to recapture and somehow transmit is a sense of responsibility and an excitement and mission to younger people who are....

WW: Well, you've got to go to Ivanhoe when the students are
there. You know about Maxine's college program. She had to turn away, I've forgotten, several hundred students for the spring break. Colleges all over the country have heard about Ivanhoe. Those kids are just calling her, banging on the door. So now what's she's doing, that's our fifth statewide, is this--I don't know what they're going to call it.

NB: I'd like to see that. We've got a summer internship program. There's been about 50 students every summer for about eight or nine weeks to work with AIDS patients, the homeless in New York, migrants in Florida, poor kids in Washington. I just met with a group of them last night actually.

WW: I see hope. Now, the one place I don't feel pessimistic, I really feel optimist about this emerging generation of kids. Big change, we see a big change. I don't know where it's coming from.

NB: What we confront, and I don't know again because I haven't taught except in the late '80s, what we confront, and perhaps it's a bequeathment of the '80s, is that it's not an era that rewards compassion. It's an era that almost shames compassion in some ways, and the voices they contend with are out of their own families, but also out of the community, as you're not being practical. Some parents actually will argue with their kids. Don't spend your summer here and whatnot. What we find is once they go do that, sort of put their hands on the wound, so to speak, their lives are changed. They cannot be the same in some
ways.

WW: And they will go against their families.

NB: Yeah, in some cases they will and in some cases they ( )

WW: Now, many of them that are doing that, I don't think necessarily are going to stay in anti-poverty work, but they are forever changed. See, we've had lots of interns, Virginia Tech especially. Like that Water for Tomorrow, we had two of the brightest young people who were working on that, who are just incredible. They were both from, one was from northern Virginia, both urban kids. They've forever changed about their viewpoint of rural communities, rural people.

NB: Yeah, our base line hope, I think is that. . . .

WW: Absolutely.

NB: Through the experiences, at least when they go on and do whatever they do, they can't vote for these politicians who will wipe out these programs, and then on Saturday go down and work in the soup kitchen and feel ( ) and throw a dollar towards the homeless or whatever. That somehow as citizens they may be changed.

WW: Well, there's an indication--I've read about. I haven't seen a whole lot of it yet with my eyes--that that Yuppie generation is also appalling. Here they are forty something, and they've looked around and said, "Is this all there is?" And then a significant number have also, who went through the great '80s
and made all this easy money, now the recession or depression has really hurt them. So I think that is happening. But I think there's nothing more important to do than to expose high school, but especially college age kids, on a personal, living in the community basis, both urban and rural, there is no question about it. I've seen it happen over, I mean. And at TAAP over the years, see, we've had lots of college, see, we've got an abundance of colleges. Virginia and North Carolina probably have more colleges per capita than any state. I've never known a youngster that wasn't changed. That didn't say, didn't say it like this, but what they say is, "I never felt so alive. This is worth dying for. This is life. This is life." And I know they don't ever forget it.

RK: I think what we need to do though, one of the things that we've run up against in teaching is that we also have to impart some very practical and very particular lessons. So that it's not just a matter of developing some compassion, but we actually move forward and focus them. Because they sometimes can't, they develop this compassion and get into this kind of "thousand points of light" mentality. As long as I feel good about, you know, go work in the soup kitchen or this, that, or the other.

WW: Which can be a cop-out.

RK: Then I'm okay. I'm doing my role.

WW: And don't see that it's all tied to a political.
RK: Yeah, they're got to start looking at kind of the structural changes and understanding the impediments.

WW: Right. What Maxine does, and I'm sure she's not the only place that does this, every night--they have physical tasks in the day time. She doesn't let them take but one bath a week.

RK: [Laughter]

WW: She rents outhouses. They cannot flush a stool while they're there. She makes them experience, and she said she thought the first group would just rebel and go home. Well, God, letter after letter, kids have said, "The most important thing I learned was what it feels like to go without water." But at night, after they've worked all day, she has a set curriculum of things they discuss and talk about, like the oppression of women, the oppression of Appalachian people. I don't remember what all, but every night there's something there.

RK: We haven't gotten all the information for her yet.

WW: Well, she's on the wing all the time. And see, she's gotten some national awards, and so she's getting known nationally. She's having a hard time turning down things. She wasn't going to participate in this, and she saw my name on the list, and she said, well, she'd do it because she gets a lot of... I don't get this many.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW