

STAUGHTON AND ALICE LYND
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview

With
STAUGHTON AND ALICE LYND
By
DAN KERR AND CATHERINE MURPHY

THE LYND RESIDENCE
January 13, 2017

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NARRATOR: Alice and Staughton Lynd
DATE: January 13, 2017
INTERVIEWER: Catherine Murphy
PLACE: The Lynd Residence

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Alice Lynd 00:00:00

To set up day care for their workers.

Catherine Murphy 00:00:03

Oh, that's nice, that's wonderful.

Alice Lynd 00:00:04

Which The Amalgamated had in Chicago. So I worked for them there, and one of the things that I did was to learn to use the video camera and to film what the children were doing in the daycare center so that the parents could see what daycare was.

Catherine Murphy 00:00:25

That's wonderful.

Dan Kerr 00:00:26

Hmm,

Catherine Murphy 00:00:28

That's really wonderful.

Dan Kerr 00:00:30

That's interesting, so they didn't know. Daycare was such a new concept.

Alice Lynd 00:00:42

Oh, yes, and The Amalgamated was trying to promote it, and the OEO—the Office of Economic Opportunity—gave grants to 10 daycare facilities around the country to try to develop daycare in areas such as Chicago. So I was working in the Chicago region for The Amalgamated.

Dan Kerr 00:01:02

Okay, well, I—what, January 13th today? 2017.

Alice Lynd 00:01:07

It's Friday the 13th! [laughs]

Dan Kerr 00:01:11

Friday the 13th. This is our final session of the—of our time here, and so certainly at any point, if you want to, anyone wants to take this in any direction they see fit, I would defer to you. I only have one question on the agenda, or maybe two, but it has to do a little bit with this idea. Continuing on the questions Catherine was asking related to education, but really focusing in on the field of popular education in particular. Some of the work of Paulo Freire and Myles Horton, and if that had any kind of resonance for you at any point in your work.

Staughton Lynd 00:02:08

Well, I'm under the impression that I already told the camera a couple of Myles Horton stories, the one about the meeting at Ozone during the Depression, and the other at which he introduced Blacks and whites to one another by just reading them matter-of-factly in the order that they appeared, and then after a few days, how I asked how this newly formed interracial group was going to convey common sense to their colleagues. I do feel that Highlander went through certain well-defined phases, there was the labor phase prior to World War II, then there was the quitting of the CIO when it turned toward McCarthyism and the expulsion of communists or alleged communists, communist oath by all office holders. Then a civil rights phase, We Shall Overcome having been perfected in its present form as Highlander by Guy Carawan and others, and then a much less well-defined recent phase on strip mining and ecology generally. But that's not quite taking hold in the way that the first two had.

Catherine Murphy 00:04:19

What about working with migrant or immigrants and—

Staughton Lynd 00:04:24

An awareness, an awareness of an extraordinary number of Latin Americans in the middle of Appalachia. But again, I'm not sure how many Highlander staff really became fluent in Spanish, and I think the group has been for some years trying to find a new director. We knew—we know fairly well Jim Sessions, who was the director until a few years ago and his wife Fran Ansley. We got a Christmas greeting from them. But Highlander may have played its essential historical part, which was a very large, very significant one.

Alice Lynd 00:05:30

They've changed the name to Highlander Research and Education Center. At one point, oh, maybe more than 10 years ago probably, they gave us some sort of an award where we could stay in Myles Horton's house, and they would provide food and we could enter into things down at the main center to the extent that we wanted to as sort of a rest and relaxation place for people. They did it for once a year—I guess something like that. Other times that we were there, Gary Stevenson, who was an organizer for the—was it Teamsters at that time? The

overnight campaign and so forth to have organizers and people that they were trying to train as organizers meet there. And the thing that was so significant, and it's true, I have a Highlander t-shirt as well as the one I want to explain here. The rocking chair. It was this large circle of rocking chairs. Everybody had a rocking chair, but you are always part of one circle. Not with some people sitting behind others and so forth, but one very large circle with many, many rocking chairs. I brought out this shirt, which is a shirt that came from the school where our grandson goes in Guatemala. It's the only Waldorf School in Guatemala and it's very highly regarded for the quality of the education there. But it says on it in three different languages—well, the school teachers in three different languages, the predominant language being Spanish, also the indigenous language that's most common in that particular village—although not necessarily in an adjacent villages but in this particular village—and in English so that the children are learning to read first in Spanish, but when they have songs and so forth, they will sing in any one of the three languages. And this says, "education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire." I think that's a quotation from Freire. So, I just wanted you to see. El caracol, and that means—it's a kind of snail, right?

Staughton Lynd 00:08:20

Yes.

Alice Lynd 00:08:20

And they use that that image, they dance around the circle of the great big snail. They do all sorts of things that the children are engaged in growing food, and taking care of rabbits, and all sorts of artworks, and make things, and the reading and writing and math and so forth are part of the curriculum, but they're just working along with a lot of other things.

Dan Kerr 00:08:53

Do you feel your work is within that same—has been within that kind of same universe that they were working with, in terms of the kinds of objectives you were setting out to achieve?

Alice Lynd 00:09:08

Yes, I mean the TCI work that we're doing, it's if not lighting a flame, you know, protecting it from the wind blowing it [laughs]

Dan Kerr 00:09:23

And did you have that sense, is that an evolving sense, or is that something that has gone back maybe even towards the time you were in Atlanta? Or, you said, I think, and I don't know if you were here, Staughton—I mean, Alice, I'm sorry—when Staughton was talking, he said that when you were in the Macedonia community that you had actually gone to Highlander to participate in a workshop on intentional communities?

Alice Lynd 00:09:52

He did, I did not.

Dan Kerr 00:09:54

Okay, and that was your first, initial interaction? But it didn't have much of an impression on you then, if I understood what you were saying.

Staughton Lynd 00:10:05

Well, I mean the intentional community movement was, I suspect more than anything else, former conscientious objectors trying to recapture the community they had experienced during the war, much as former soldiers, former civil rights workers. When you've been through an intense experience together, it's hard to let it go. It's hard to believe you can't just wish it into being again.

Alice Lynd 00:10:49

Well, what they said was that conscientious objection was saying, no. They wanted to demonstrate something affirmative, you know, to be creating something that was new and a positive expression of what they believed.

Dan Kerr 00:11:08

And that's similar to your present view on non-violence, about it being beyond just a kind of not participating in violence, but an embrace of empathy and—

Alice Lynd 00:11:22

Have you talked at all about things at Macedonia, such as not gossiping and so forth?

Staughton Lynd 00:11:29

No.

Alice Lynd 00:11:29

Well, one of the things that was a central pillar of Community Macedonia—and I think also the Society of Brothers, which succeeded them—is, if you have a problem, you don't gripe about it to the next person. You go up to that person and say, I'm sorry, maybe there's a misunderstanding or whatever, but I'm really troubled by what you did said, whatever it is, we need to work this out. And part of the rationale for that is, if you have a sense of, "well, that guy's always bouncing off the wall, and coming up with this and that crazy idea," and that person in a business meeting brings something up, you don't just think: it's his idea, nobody else needs to listen to it. There was the sense that if one person in the group had an uneasy feeling, we needed to listen to it. Maybe he was seeing something that the rest of us were missing. But if you already had it in for that person, you weren't going to hear it. You weren't going to evaluate it. You weren't going to take it in and really take it seriously. And that it is very destructive if you get gossiping going. And let me tell you, our granddaughter—she's now a senior in high school—in her junior year of high school, at the prom, they chose the prom queen and the prom king. Well, she was chosen for the prom queen and she explained it to me, that

she doesn't gossip so she doesn't have any enemies. And I thought: that's our granddaughter [laughs].

Dan Kerr 00:13:37

It seems that kind of shapes some of the things we're talking about in terms of work in prisons, where you need to really be kind of conscious in terms of what you say, from what you hear, and how you report it across lines of administration and prison. That being attentive to the forms of communication are kind of essential to that work?

Alice Lynd 00:14:06

Yes, and speaking behind people's backs is a good way to get things off on the wrong track, you know, to increase antagonism - "well, so and so told me such and such about her, better not trust her the next time." Just, you know, I mean those kinds of things can fester, can create all sorts of problems and misunderstandings, and he said, she said. I mean, I think that this concept of direct speaking is very important, and when we left Macedonia and went through this crisis of how do we live in the world again, I remember working in the Admissions Office at Columbia Medical School—where I was file clerk or some such thing, secretary—going to the dean's secretary, she was my supervisor, and wanting to bring things up. And I remember her saying, "Alice, people don't want to know what you think." And despite that, there were about four different occasions when I had the feeling, I may lose my job over this, but—and my family was dependent on it, Staughton was in graduate school. I went to the dean and I said, I'm troubled by the way we're reporting such and such, or whatever it was. And he would come back about half an hour later and say, "Alice, I've been thinking about what you said, I think you're right." So, I mean, I staked my job, our family's then-livelihood, on direct speaking, and kept my job until we moved to Atlanta.

Dan Kerr 00:16:14

It seems one of the core things we haven't really had a chance to talk about is how your relationship has shaped your work in all these different periods of time, it's kind of changed and transformed. Is there anything you can—

Alice Lynd 00:16:35

I just wanted to say one more thing. I remember, in connection with Workers Against Toxic Chemical Hazards we got to know a particular woman, and several years later she called and said, "Alice. I want to ask you what you think about this because I know you will tell me what you think," you know, not just come up with what I think you want me to say, you know, what you want to hear. But I will tell you, good or bad, what I think. And this has been very true in my correspondence with prisoners. A letter came yesterday or today from one, who had consulted me about a course of litigation that he wanted to pursue, and I told him why I didn't think it would fly, and he wrote back a very courteous letter thanking me. I mean, why should they—If they go to court, that four hundred dollar filing fee is taken out of their inmate accounts a few

dollars at a time for an indefinite, I mean, it takes forever to pay that off. So if they wanted to buy a new sweatshirt, they wouldn't have enough money to do it. You don't want them to be in that situation unless they've got something that's likely to fly. And if you can tell them why, you know, I can say this is just my opinion. I'm not the judge, I can't tell you for sure, but I don't think it's worth it for you to put yourself in that situation.

Dan Kerr 00:18:22

It seems that direct speech is a part of accompaniment, because—

Alice Lynd 00:18:26

It is, it's taking the person seriously and giving them the best that you can bring to them rather than just saying what you think they want to hear. Now, you asked about our relationship. I remember when we were first married, Staughton would not go to bed at night until resolving whatever issue it was with me. I mean, he just had this, man, this was before Macedonia. You don't sleep on something like that. You resolve it, and then you go to sleep. Am I accurately remembering?

Staughton Lynd 00:19:12

I hope so.

Alice Lynd 00:19:13

Yeah, I do remember that in Chicago, before Macedonia.

Dan Kerr 00:19:20

And we understand somewhat that your work with the Freedom Schools, you did your work with the draft counseling. As I understand it, and tell me if I'm wrong, you came together on Rank and File, that was maybe your first kind of collaborative project?

Alice Lynd 00:19:38

Yes. Before that, we had done—

Dan Kerr 00:19:41

Deeply collaborative, I should say.

Alice Lynd 00:19:42

Yeah, we had the first edition of *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History*, he did all of the research, all of the selection of material, and I did all of the busy work while he was in Mississippi. That changed. I did rank-and-file with his encouragement.

Staughton Lynd 00:20:07

We Won't Go.

Alice Lynd 00:20:08

Excuse me. We Won't Go with his encouragement, and Rank and File, I did— There were some accounts that he basically worked on, and others that I basically worked on. But I don't remember, I'm sure that there would have been the kind of exchange that you described between your parents of, whichever one of us had done the first draft, the other one then went over it and made suggestions. As it has evolved. I think it's still true that about some things I have done the initial writing and formulation and research and know more about it than he does, and there are other things that's reversed. That's true of our latest book that's on moral injury. I did most of part one and he did most of part two, but he cut down, cut a lot out of the US section with regard to conscientious objection before even the first pamphlet came out. I contributed chunks of part two in the new book, where it was stuff that I had worked with for years and it was, you know, accessible to me. I think we have for some years now had the feeling that any project that we did together was likely to come out better than if either one did it alone. I mean, particularly our written products, but our—in some ways we're very, very different. But it was interesting, in the litigation about the Ohio State Penitentiary we had a third colleague, and in general Staughton and I would see things from one point of view and he would come at it from a totally different point of view, and we were a wonderful team. I was the detail person. Jules was the walking encyclopedia when it came to case law and came at the legal side of it with a very different point of view. And Staughton was this marvelous writer that could take some pedantic something that Jules had written and make it sing. But Jules and I worked together on the drafting of the complaint in the Ohio State Penitentiary case, and I remember Jewel saying to me, "if I can't understand it, you can't expect the judge to understand it," and having to, to rewrite it so that at least Jules could understand it [laughs]. What next?

Dan Kerr 00:23:32

I'm open, really. I think, I guess, maybe one— Okay one question, did you encounter Paul for shortly after it was published? Or, how did you encounter Freire's work?

Alice Lynd 00:23:52

I have never read much of it. I'm basically a non-reader. That is, when I was in fourth grade I suddenly realized, you know, all of these other kids are reading chapter after chapter and I haven't gotten through chapter one. I read out of necessity, not for pleasure. So if I don't have to read something, I'm not likely read it. So, but Staughton I think is an avid reader, and he's interested in so many things that I think that's a question for him.

Staughton Lynd 00:24:32

Well, I think I found Freire both in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed and in We Make the Road by Walking somewhat abstract as a writer. But,

concept-wise, there were things that immediately gripped me. If you were working as he did, with the children of landless farmers, who had to endure the experience of losing control of whatever land they had had and sleeping next to fertile farmland that an absentee owner wasn't using, then you might begin the literacy process with the word for land: tierra. This other quotation from Alice's shirt, I love. And just to be sure that it's understood, the thing you are not doing if you are a Freire-ian teacher is to take a predetermined content and pour it into the open mouth of the little bird who is assigned to your classroom. That's the original sin. And what you have to do instead is to find what makes that child's eyes suddenly light up. What you could describe and that's described in that little epigram as the lighting of a fire, or the—as I guess I more often think of it, I didn't light that fire, but I can get down on my knees and blow on it and try to keep it going.

Alice Lynd 00:27:03

I was going to say something but I lost it. I was affected by the Montessori, Maria Montessori. And when I worked for The Amalgamated clothing workers in their daycare center, I remember a teacher who had had Montessori training who would give some attention to how a child learned. For example, if you're holding alphabetical cards, and you say this is an A, this is a B. You don't ask the child, which one is the A, which one is the B? You say which one is the B, which one is the A? Why? Because they're most likely to remember the last one mentioned, and therefore they will have more of a success in responding, and it would only be after they had gotten that that you might another time say, which is the A, which is the B. And, I mean, the detail with which learning things are worked out, so that a lot of them are self-learning. That is, in preparing materials for a Montessori kindergarten co-op—which where our youngest child was at the time—suppose the parents were making a puzzle. So you get a picture and put it on cardboard, and then turn it over, and put on it some addition facts—like two plus, two equals four or something like that—and then you turn it back over, and you—I may be confusing some things, but the idea is, when the puzzle is cut apart and you give the pieces to the child, the child has to match up so that the facts are correct. But then they can self check because they turn it over and see whether the picture works. So that they're self-correcting. They can tell if they've got it wrong because the picture doesn't line up, but if they have everything lined up, if they answered all the questions correctly, then they know. And if they need to, then they can make the correction, and this sort of self-correcting learning. I thought that was very interesting, that these things had been thought through as to how children themselves, almost when they're playing with the pieces can figure out: yeah, I did it, and it worked. Our little grandchild who goes to El Coracol, I don't know how many puzzles he made when he was visiting here last summer, very complicated puzzles. Or Lego—a prisoner sent him a Lego kit to make a helicopter. How he managed to get that Lego set, I don't know, but somebody brought it to us and said it was from him, and it was. But I think these kinds of things that engage children in succeeding in figuring out a problem, or succeeding in constructing

something. These are very important.

Alice Lynd 00:30:52

And with regard to something that Staughton was saying, if people asked me to make a presentation on something, I'm very hesitant to do it. How do I know what you want to know from me? I need to know, what's your question? Where are you going? You know, if it gets close enough to something that I know something about I'm more than glad to tell you, but just open-ended to give a speech on blah, blah, blah, blah, blah? I don't want to do that, because I don't know what the questions are in other people's minds.

Staughton Lynd 00:31:39

And I suppose that I have a feeling that there is a natural order of things, outside us and within us, and I'm still shocked when people self-consciously depart from that natural order of things. And perhaps that leads me to approach other people a little less deferentially than Alice. That is to say, my point of view is, surely it is self-evident to you as it is to me that such and such. Now, if that's the case, friend, I honestly don't see how you can contemplate so-and-so. and I said, I guess I'll believe that and practice it so long as I have breath to do so. It may not be true. Perhaps people are not united in that way by something underneath the different colors and shapes in which we appear in the world. But I'm afraid I may be encouragable and unteachable in any direction other than that. And, if that be so, if people left to themselves naturally becomes neighborly, comradely, how we manage to create such chasms between ourselves and other human beings is a great mystery to me. And I think it's very important. And a particular problem for the movement for social change in this country, that we allow ourselves so much to become partisans of a single issue, or even a singular group. No matter how much in need or how justified in their opposition that group may be, to me the great joy of being a human being is discovering invisible bridges between oneself and others. And Alice and I frequently say, "well, at least we're part of a community of two," meaning our marriage. And we both have reason to recognize that, you know, Marriage is a kind of discipline, it's a self discipline.

Alice Lynd 00:36:03

One makes choices for one thing rather than another if it means you can do it, we can do it together. Let me put it that way. I might well have become a biologist rather than a nursery school teacher. Our son became a biologist, so. I do think that one—or, that we tend to make certain choices. We decided that we would both go into law, as it being something that we might more likely be able to do together, and it certainly has been. But anybody who knew me for the first fifty years or so of my life would never have thought that I would become a lawyer. I mean, you know, I used to make things with my hands, I wasn't into intellectual stuff.

Staughton Lynd 00:37:04

One of the signal experiences for me was the US steel suit, because—how to say it? We had a perfectly legitimate legal theory, but it wasn't compelling in the sense that nothing else could be argued, but only our legal theory encompassed the well-being of many, many people who were affected by whether the steel mills and the Mahoning continued—in the Mahoning Valley continued to operate or not. And I had taken up labor law and come to Youngstown with the self admonition as "Staughton, cool your jets." As a speaker about the war to other persons like yourself—that is, students—you could take these intuitive flights and there was likely to be a response. That's why I was so effective as a speaker. And I said to myself, "now that's not going to be true in Youngstown. You do what you can Staughton, but don't imagine yourself at the head of any parades any longer." And then there came the US steel [unclear], Where US steel announced that it was going to close the mill at a certain date, which happened to be just before the judge had said he thought he might like to have a hearing, a trial in Youngstown and US steel said, "well, your honor that's going to be after we close the mill." And, I may have the details not altogether in order, but my recollection is that several of my colleagues said, "well, that's it Staughton," and somehow the feeling manifested itself: no, we can't let that be it. Who do they think they are? Did they think they can tell the judge that his desire to have a hearing is irrelevant because they, a private corporation, a money-making business, have decided otherwise? And so our whole presentation had a kind of preparatory, appealing, zeitgeist spirit.

00:40:30

And one of the things that the judge did in the period before the trial, he ordered that it be held in Youngstown. And that meant that we'd be closer to Pittsburgh, and that meant that we could subpoena the chief executive officers of US steel, but it also meant that this drama was going to be a holy drama played out in front of the human beings most affected by it. And I think I mentioned previously, that Ramsey Clark, the former United States Attorney General had associated himself with the case. And he and I had obtained the court's intervention and initial injunction forbidding US steel to close the plant before trial. When we went up to Cleveland and Mr. Clark, about six-foot-six, spoke earlier and told the judge that to understand this matter we had to start with the Railroad Strike of 1877, and after an hour or so he'd gotten up to the steel strike of 1919 and it fell to me to try to explain how what was before the judge was an elaboration of this pattern. That went sufficiently well, that we got the injunction, the trial was going to be in Youngstown, they weren't allowed to close the operation before the trial. And so we presented our case, the president of the local union most affected, a Puerto Rican, was on the witness stand all day long. He and I, working together. And then all of the witnesses had spoken, and the next day would be time for closing remarks, and I stayed up all night preparing mine. And as it turned out, when I got up to speak the next morning, the judge had already written his decision before closing remarks from either party, but I didn't know that. Nor do I remember what I said, but I remember, I

remember trying to evoke that natural order of things of which I spoke. People work together at a particular calling, an entire community depends on that activity, young people graduate from high school, go to the military, come home, their uncle gets them a job in the mill. Generations of the same family live near one another, families eat together two or three times a week, this is how it was in this Eastern European community.

00:44:58

And, you know, the spirit of the Lord descended on me, and I was able to put that into words fairly well. and it was such an odd experience, because as I say, I had told myself "now Staughton, you're not going to be—your well known natural eloquence is in fact a socially conditioned eloquence that only appeals to people, like yourself. So, you know, display a little humility, brother." But I realized that I was speaking for a whole valley, and when I came back to the council table there were six local unions that were plaintiffs in the lawsuit, in addition to many individuals, churches, so on. And when I came back to the council table, I realized - well what do you know? These are steel workers, I didn't grow up with them, what in the world am I doing? But I did speak for them. And I could just, I mean, you could have cut it with a knife.

Alice Lynd 00:46:41

I had the experience also that we were a voice for the voiceless. The people could hear us when they couldn't hear the people whom were most affected.

Staughton Lynd 00:47:00

Yeah, with prisoners—of course as Alice said earlier today I think—the mere fact of responding, of replying to a letter, of showing up to an appointment, of acting out the fact that you were part of the same world with with people—

Alice Lynd 00:47:26

A sure way to undermine trust of a prisoner is to say you'll do something and not do it. And you know, if I tell them I'll let you know, I'll look this up, I'll whatever, I do it. I make sure I do it, and I build relationships of trust with these men.

Staughton Lynd 00:47:48

I don't know if you're familiar with the British film about the life of Gandhi, but there's this scene earlier in it. There's a scene early in the film where Gandhi has been leading the fight in South Africa, which of course was his first theater of struggle against the passes. That people like himself, despite his barristers clothing, an East Indian person of dark-skin, people had to use—such persons had to have passes to go from A to B. And when they went, they had to sit in a certain railroad car. Not a different railroad car. And Gandhi, I think initially not so much because he shared the life experience of working class East Indians in South

Africa, but with a certain sense of "don't, you realize, I graduated from such-and-such university of Great Britain, you see that this collar represents? What do you think you're doing?" One of the first protests that he, I suppose I have to use the word organized, had to do with burning these passes. And Alice's favorite description of what we're doing in the world is drawn from a scene where Gandhi has been clubbed to the ground by British soldiers watching this. And he reaches out a hand, picks up one more pass, and puts it in the flames. I never had any natural brothers, and although I loved my sister we were quite different. I was the older, I was the son king, the first child, and a male. But the experience of brotherhood or common humanity is just the breath of life for me. And for you.

Alice Lynd 00:51:01

Well, I'm much more of a— I grew up without close relationships outside the family, and I'm much more of a recluse who occasionally goes out and contacts other people, but I'm happy to be alone a lot of the time. He can't stand being alone for very long [laughs].

Catherine Murphy 00:51:34

But yet you were so much wanting to live in community, So how—what's the interplay between feeling sort of like a recluse and wanting to live in the intentional community?

Alice Lynd 00:51:47

Well, I think one of the best experiences I had in high school was being part of a madrigal group where there were four of us on a part, and the very gifted music teacher who was directing us would ask us to listen to the other parts, and to be aware of when our part was the one that should be coming out most strongly and when we should be backing off so that somebody else's part was more leading. And within the part, to blend our voices with the other voices who were singing, and in rehearsal she would sometimes ask for one soprano, one alto, one tenor, and one bass, just four of us to sing it at one time, and to get that experience of being part of a group. And I love that kind of relating, not in a way that I had to articulate as an individual person, but where I was part of a group process, and I think I have loved that ever since. That is, I would much rather be part of a small singing group than play the piano, where it's just me having to figure out how to relate the different things that are going on under my fingers. That kind of relationship with other people is extremely important, and to be able to have a living relationship where it's not just a personal relationship, it's not just that we love each other, but that we're trying—we have a common purpose in life, that we're trying to live a good life in relation to other people. Where other people are heard, where other people are respected, where other people are regarded as contributors to a whole. Our daughter Martha does some kinds of things with weavers in Guatemala, and one of the things that they have done is to take a ball of yarn, and I might throw it to Catherine, Catherine throw it to Staughton, Staughton throw it to Dan, Dan throw it to me, I throw it to somebody else. You make this web. What happens if

one person drops the yarn? All of the tension goes out of the web and what you have is just a pile of yarn. But as long as each person holds the yarn, then you are making this, you're constructing something that nobody individually has envisioned before, but it's a new something that you're creating together by you doing your part. Your part is to hold the yarn before you throw it, so that there will be enough tension from the previous person for that thread to maintain its part in the whole web.

Staughton Lynd 00:55:09

When we were living at Macedonia, we were living amongst persons who had grown up with various degrees of explicitness as Christians. And to let you know how ignorant of all this I was, I had come across in the University of Chicago Library—

Alice Lynd 00:55:37

Isn't this before Macedonia?

Staughton Lynd 00:55:38

Yeah.

Alice Lynd 00:55:39

Yeah.

Staughton Lynd 00:55:44

A passion play that had been produced in medieval England, in the city of York. And I looked at this thing and I thought - what was it about the city of York that they could produce this extraordinary drama, people appearing before the throne of God and being dispensed judgment, depending on how they cared for other human beings during their lives. And I thought - I'm going to really have to research York. It took me about a week to realize this wasn't the city of York, this was the 25th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. And having encountered Christianity so little, I was especially drawn at Macedonia to Buddhism. And a couple of characters came through the community who were from the west coast and followers of Alan Watts, and talked about the Laughing Buddha, who wasn't grim and a sourpuss Like Jesus of Nazareth.

Alice Lynd 00:57:25

He wasn't a sourpuss.

Staughton Lynd 00:57:27

Well you tell me how many jokes he told [laughs].

Alice Lynd 00:57:30

Wouldn't have to tell jokes, you can tell stories and engage people [Alice and Staughton laugh]

Staughton Lynd 00:57:37

In any event, I somehow—this is really incredible—made away from our community in the Hills, where we didn't have a telephone, where we were on several miles of dirt road before we even hit an asphalt surface, I

made my way to the public library in Atlanta and I came out with these two books, I think two books, of Buddhist parables. I'm trying to think of the name of the editor of the book.

Alice Lynd 00:58:23
Sousuke?

Staughton Lynd 00:58:25
No, no, it was a Tibetan. But I'm—boy, I was into it. And there came a certain—I would get up at 5:00 no matter when the evening meeting had ended, and I would put on my knit hat, keeping it down over one ear so I wouldn't freeze to death but up over the other ear so I could hear the cowbells, figure out where the critters were. And, I would address them gently but kicking their behinds, and they would get up, and I can't really say that I drove them to the barn, they knew perfectly well where the barn was, but I would trail along behind. And if it was a certain season of the year—I think more winter than summer—at that time of day the sun would come up, and we—our community was almost a thousand acres nestled among hills, so that you could see the sun come up over the ridge of hills. And as it did so and various parts of the world came into view, everything I could see was part of a world that we were creating together. Indescribable feeling. And one particular winter morning, after the milking, the cows were showing me how to get back to their pasture. I was trailing along behind, and I suddenly stopped. And I looked down, and I saw on the path that I almost stepped on a calf that just been born. And it was the nearest I came to experiencing Satori, a Buddhist moment of enlightenment. But I fear that, despite my great attraction to many things in the Old and New Testaments, my feeling that through those persons there came into the world certain really new notions of forgiveness, and empathy, and compassion, and solidarity. I think I'm still essentially, well, I describe myself as a Christian and ethics in a Buddhist in metaphysics.

Alice Lynd 01:01:55
And a Marxist in something or other else [laughing].

Staughton Lynd 01:01:59
A Marxist, accompanying Romero, did you say?

Alice Lynd 01:02:04
How would you say it? I think you've said from a historical point of view, yes. But in a predictive vision of a new society, no. How would you say it?

Staughton Lynd 01:02:19
Well, I guess I would say that making money off of other human beings and letting money decide the value of anything, are just inexpressibly sinful in my eyes. Money stands at the opposite extreme of the experiences of fellowship, and comradeship, and brotherliness, and sisterliness. And money just isn't a part of what you see when the sun comes up over the ridge of hills. Nor is it—I don't think there are many

moments of enlightenment associated with the color of the piece of paper over which you almost stumbled. And I take such joy in the fact of family, because it seems self-evident to me that although in many ways my parents did not practice closeness with their own parents, with my grandparents. Still, as Alice and I have passed through the world, I think sitting here today I can say that we are part of a circle of brothers and sisters, and a blessed circle of love with our three children, with our seven grandchildren, with number of great grandchildren—I really have a thing going with Barbara's eldest who's about six years old, we draw pictures for each other. And so, if you are fortunate enough to have that experience, in the small world of family, in those relationships which God or nature has given us which for the most part we didn't choose but which simply happened. So that we have all sorts of brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law that we have to find a way to get along with, no matter whether we would have chosen that relationship or not. We are given family. We must pass through that and live in that with a degree of peacefulness, and dignity, and joy in one another, or how can we pretend to shape the ethos of the entire world?

01:06:27

On the other hand, If we're fortunate enough to be blessed with a family that itself is a receptor of love and mutual support, seems that it should be relatively easy to take the next step and with the people with whom we were jammed. With the Cubans in Catherine's film, the wonderful lady who—she kind of has the Staughton role in the film, pulling everything together into statements about - if you had the opportunity to do so-and-so and you're given that at a very early age, why, the world is all before you. And it somehow seems it should be easy for people to sort themselves out and create a fabric without significant blemish together. But it isn't. They make life hard for each other. Or perhaps I should say, we, we human beings make life hard for each other. I'm so exasperated with folk in the movement. There's been some particularly raucous meeting, people have called each other names, we once used a man who was deep into the embroils of Trotskyism and went to a convention where he and his friends hung out a banner which said "shit, let's split" [laughs]. How that comes into the world and infects our—I just—it's beyond me.

Alice Lynd 01:09:00

Well, and then we have a friend who spoke of the political party in which people treated each other as well as they treated outsiders. Now, as much as that was a pretty extraordinary thing [laughing].

Staughton Lynd 01:09:16

Alice, and I are just two childlike, innocent lambs. It's taking the image too far to say in a world of wolves, but I think we just hold up our little candle and it is enough. There's some passage in Genesis which I've had difficulty retrieving, but—and I'll get all the names wrong, so I won't call the names—but the father becomes aware of his long-lost son and he says, "it is enough. I have seen my son," I think it's Joseph, "before I

died." And I think Alice and I do a fairly good job of not driving each other crazy with our various anxieties. Between us we must own all the anxieties in the world, she has her set and I have my set but—

Alice Lynd 01:10:54

I think other people have it a lot worse.

Staughton Lynd 01:10:56

Really? I guess so, must be, that's quite a discovery. But basically, I think what we feel is it is enough, and if we haven't managed to make over the whole world outside us, in the spirit of the man who said of his murderers that they knew not what they were doing. Hopefully, we're in, within shouting distance of that spirit. Once in awhile it descends on us.

Alice Lynd 01:11:48

It's strange that one of the images that comes to my mind hearing you speak is an incident about— when we lived on the Spelman College campus. Oh, that's fine. That's great. When we were living on the Spelman College campus, right across the street from the campus were homes where there might be one house with 10 people living in it, Black families with children. And a couple of years ago, Barbara was taking— our eldest child—was taking a continuing education course here in the Youngstown area.

Staughton Lynd 01:12:37

Required by the church.

Alice Lynd 01:12:40

Well, and required I think also for her teaching certificate, for the Catholic teaching certificate. So, she called and said, "Ma I need to be prepared to make a presentation on civil rights in the '60s. Do you still have a copy of that picture?" Of herself and her brother along with some of the children from across the street. And she said, "and Lee and I were the only one wearing shoes." The only ones wearing shoes. And I did have the picture, and she took it to the class, and they passed it around. But that little child who—I mean generally things happen now, and then she forgets it because she's onto another thing—she remembered that picture. And when it came time for her to make a presentation, she went back to her own childhood and asked me to let her borrow that photograph.

Staughton Lynd 01:13:56

So the mystery of the glue, what is it that holds people together? What is it that breaks down separation and division? I just, I cannot believe that it's a formal religious creed because the world is not of one creed, it's not going to be of one creed, and anyone who puts his or her whole life behind that hope is going to be disappointed. We're different, and yet the essential Macedonian proposition was that beneath the language of different creeds and outlooks on the world, there was something in common. There was an experience that all human beings share. And that

was pretty easy for me to affirm because I had come through this school system where we believed that the place where men meet to seek the highest is Holy Ground.

Alice Lynd 01:15:25

And I would come at it more from the Quaker precept of there is an inner light in every person, or what they say is that of God in every person.

Staughton Lynd 01:15:40

[unclear] they also speak of the inner light.

Alice Lynd 01:15:43

Yes, and, since for you and me both there's a lot of ambiguity with regard to the use of the word God and what that means, I think—I don't know whether I mentioned it on tape or not—but the the idea that John Dominic Crossan was saying, that for some people, I mean, all of these religions are just a metaphor, a way of trying to to get at what is really there, and that there are many different paths, or as Staughton was saying, many trails up the mountain. And the important thing is to try to pierce that veil and touch something that may be unseen, unheard, but you have to believe it's there. And just think, when we were children radio was just coming in. How did, how is it possible, you cannot see those sound waves when you look outside but somehow they're there. Now it's people storing documents in the cloud. The number of things that we rely on where we can't see but we have learned that it's there, people don't stop and think about that. It's interesting how, I have a certain degree of what you might call mental telepathy in relation most particularly with Martha, and I'm likely to know when she's having a hard time. But there are also times when, if I'm not hearing from her, I'll just sort of do what I call tune in, and she seems to indicate that I'm right on with it. And so I will tell her, well, you know, my radio told me you were doing okay, or whatever it was [laughs], we don't— but we have this little joke about tuning in and our radio [laughs].

Catherine Murphy 01:18:08

This card is almost full and it's going to bump to the other card, and then I also am aware that it's quarter to four.

Alice Lynd 01:18:18

Are there more things that you want to explore?

Dan Kerr 01:18:22

Well, I think at this point the best thing to do would be to ask for any kinds of, real kinds of closing comments that you'd like to leave, leave the this larger experience with that. Are there any other questions you'd like to answer? I know we've been doing some of that, but...

Alice Lynd 01:18:48

My biggest disappointment is that we haven't heard enough from the two of you. That is, what would your responses be? Such that we could say, you know, be in a discussion where we were building something

together.

Dan Kerr 01:19:04

Yeah, I know on the family stuff, and—

Alice Lynd 01:19:11

The what do you think question [laughs].

Staughton Lynd 01:19:15

Let's see if we can do something about that, not by having a discussion here and now but agreeing to kind of exchange products of our work together. I mean, I can tell you that a few sentences from Dan's paper to a rather thirsty wanderer in the desert. Was very important to me. He really nailed the difference between oral history as a potential university archive, as an appendix or footnote to the historical narrative, and in contrast that oral history as the indispensable clue to what it was all about. I think that's of great importance to all of us. Similarly—

Catherine Murphy 01:20:30

Excuse me, one second. Can you switch this back to A? I can't get it to go to the disk A, because that is, B is what we just recorded. So we can actually, there are the ones from this morning that were already downloaded. So I sort of— When you gave it to me a little bit ago and you said, so we could also— the thing is, if we want to keep recording—

Dan Kerr 01:20:58

Got it. Hold on.

Catherine Murphy 01:21:03

With the time, the 4:00.

01:21:14

I'll go back to— yeah. Then we'll go to A, then I'm going to turn it back off...

Dan Kerr 01:21:19

As much as this thing causes headaches, it does seem to actually provoke a lot of—well, I'm not going to say it provokes conversation—but having this crazy contraption in the middle like that huge reel-to-reel thing that you set out on the table, maybe he has some value.

Alice Lynd 01:21:39

Well, I wanted to say that I felt your description of what we think about accompaniment was very precise, and much appreciated.

Dan Kerr 01:21:56

And it's one I think that spoke to me, your thoughts that you developed, and answered, and resonated with questions that I had certainly been thinking about. And so, you know, I think that is in part why I feel like I understood what you were saying when you were talking about accompaniment. And I do think this way in which people draw upon

thinking, and reflecting upon personal experiences about— kind of a fundamental part about building dialogue and community, and it's not just about the past. It's also about the present, and personal transformation, and larger social transformation. I do think—

Alice Lynd 01:22:59

It's an instrument.

Dan Kerr 01:23:00

It is an instrument, and I think it's one that helps us start, as you've said, with where you are at. That's— You can't just fill the empty vessel, because that vessel is not empty to begin with.

Alice Lynd 01:23:17

And you don't have to study for seven years to begin.

Dan Kerr 01:23:21

Yeah.

Alice Lynd 01:23:21

Maybe begin where you are, Or when and where you've been.

Dan Kerr 01:23:25

And how else could you?

Alice Lynd 01:23:27

Yeah. And what from where you've been is, if not determinative, an indication as to where you might want to go next.

Dan Kerr 01:23:40

But it is that mutuality, that tossing of the ball of yarn that allows us to move beyond that, and we think that, and reflect, like as I toss it to you and I feel that tension pulling on me, that pushes me to rethink that, and think through. So as I'm listening to you, I'm thinking of my own personal relations, my relationship to my sister, my parents, and my wife, and my daughter, and at the same time I'm thinking through where, what am I going to do when I get back to Washington DC? Where, what will it be? You know, so all these thoughts are spiraling in my mind like that snail spiral [laughs].

Alice Lynd 01:24:27

Well, what if, as you held the yarn and tossed the ball to the next person, you said one word? What would come out of a group of 12 women sitting in a circle? You know, who knows what word would occur to Catherine, or what...

Catherine Murphy 01:24:49

I've just been really moved also these days, and it's how I've felt every time I've come here to spend time with the two of you, at this beautiful example of a life long commitment to many things. I might say, you know,

to a life of struggle.

Alice Lynd 01:25:15

I wouldn't want that term [laughs].

Catherine Murphy 01:25:16

I think— I know, I resisted that term the first time around, that's why I chose commitment. But I guess I mean just sort of being in there, and actively engaged, and trying to work on the issues that you care about, and trying to work it out, and trying to help us all move forward. And that, you know, requires—I'm not sure what exactly that requires—but it's like you didn't get—I don't mean to say you didn't get discouraged, you shared with us many moments when you were really discouraged and in pain and you know—but you kept going, you both kept going and kept going together, and there's something we need to know, something about what it takes to stay on this path for the long haul. And, so it's really beautiful just to hear you, to be here with you, and listen to you, and share with you. Sharing that, reflecting on it. Because it's also a life, you've also had a life of study, you've had a life of sharing what you are learning. And to try to always be building the circle and keep this faith in the circle is very much needed.

Alice Lynd 01:27:06

To bring people into the circle rather than having them out on the margins and sort of, maybe I'm here and maybe I'm not.

Dan Kerr 01:27:16

And in some ways, I mean, that is—the bad word for that would be organizing, but—whatever the kind of creation of that circle is kind of at the core of the work to some extent, at the center. You know, and I love this idea of—and I hadn't really put it—but really kind of looking at the painfulness, and the sorrow, and the shame as— not avoiding it but attending to it

Alice Lynd 01:27:58

A clue to what one really cares about, how one really wants to live, and to try to give people the courage to close that gap between where they feel they are and where they feel they should be.

Staughton Lynd 01:28:22

So I guess what would give me a modicum of joy is if we could find a way to make space in this room for the chaise longue in the other. [Group laughs]