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Interview with Reverend Dr. Larry Greenfield

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Columbia College Chicago

TRANSCRIPTION
Interview with Larry Greenfield

LAUREN KOSTIUK: OK, so we are recording now. Can you state your first and last name?

LARRY GREENFIELD: I am Larry Greenfield.

LK: And I am Lauren Kostiuk and I will be interviewing you today. The date is April 29, 2015 and we are interviewing at the Columbia College Chicago Library. This interview is part of the Columbia College Chicago archives and Honors Oral History project: Chicago '68 that is part of the collaboration with the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago. So can you tell me how many years you have been an activist?

LG: How many years I have been an activist, oh—well probably since I was in college. I think I had been in college in '59, 1959. But it wasn't until I came to Chicago to do my graduate work at the University of Chicago, that I got more deliberately in maybe more systematically active so probably from 1963 on beginning in Chicago.

LK: Ok and then what type of organizations have you been involved with in your life—major organizations?

LG: There is a range of organizations, let me just do the contemporary, because that is what comes to mind. I was a founder of an organization that relates religion to sexuality called the Religious Institute of Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing. I chair the board of that organization and I have been involved with social justice issues and so I am involved with a member of the board of the community renewals society. I was one of the early members of an organization called Pradascinits (??) for the Common Good. All of these in some way probably relate religion to issues of personal morality, personal ethics, or social justice, or issues of peace in some way or an other. I chair with an organization called the Faith Cacaos of the Health Campaign for Better Health Care here in Illinois. So I am interested in health care. I chair for the Board of Trustees of the Baptist Logical Youth at the University of Chicago Illinois graduate school, which keeps me involved in in the academic world and I am on the visiting committee of that. I am the Vice Chair of the Council Parliament of the World's Religions, which means I am interested in some way how religions relate to one another. Let me think here—The Chicago coalition of Middle East policy, so I am interested in religion and public affairs, global affairs. Council of Religious in Metropolitan Chicago, again, interfaith—so that's is sort of the range, health care, I am very interested in issues of religion and science. But most of it I would say is trying to bring to bare the core elements, core teachings of religion, to issue whose transform, I would call it transformative personal ethics. That is I have been, I try to be involved in issues of reproductive health for women, rights for sexual minorities, so in that round of personal ethics as well as issues of social justice, particularly around issues of political justice. The rights of people to be involved as citizens—economic justice—of course gender and sexual justice. So with those kind of commitments, you can't act alone, you have to act with people. That means if you are going to have an

impact, you can do writing—which I try to keep up on—but in terms of actual, bring about change in public policy for example, you have to do it together with people and organizations. And sometimes there are long-standing existing organizations or other times there aren't those and you have to create them, and you don't do that by yourself either. You find like-minded and committed people to do that.

LK: Well, alright, can you also state the year you were born?

LG: 1941

LK: Alright, then the place you were born?

LG: Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

LK: OK and then were you raised there too?

LG: I was raised there and I went to college in the city, in the town in which I was born in and raised and didn't really get set free from South Dakota till I came to Chicago to do graduate work.

LK: Alright, then where was your Mother's and Father's place of birth?

LG: Say it again.

LK: Your mother's and father's place of birth?

LG: Place of birth. They were both born in South Dakota in little towns named Braiynt (??) and Little Lake (??) My dad was born in 1908 and my mother was born in 1911.

LK: Alright and then what was your favorite memory as a child?

LG: Probably, the church, it was very important to our family. My parents have tried to have children and failed for health reasons a number of times—still births, spontaneous abortions, miscarriages in other words—and they were told by their physician to not try again, they did. They disobeyed their physician. I am the result and so as religious people themselves, they were very grateful and they wanted me to be raised not just in a religious home, but in the context of a—because I was a only child—in a wider circle of religious people. So they became early in my life very involved with churches and so my fondest memories are as a child and as a teenagers involved in church activities, usually fun activities—trips, camping, being infatuated, falling in love about 25 times.

LK: (laughs) Who were you closest to in your family?

LG: Probably my mother. She was an unusual person, hard to be with for long periods of time because she was so demanding. But I think an inspiration to me in that she was self-sacrificial. Loved to be with babies, infants, and with older people, new visitations. And

then neither of my parents graduated from high school, so I think my mom, both my mom and my dad, wanted to be able to prove themselves that even though they were deprived of what other people had in terms of education—high school, college, and so on—that she could do something good in the world and so she really gave herself to others, to church, to other organizations. Her father had left the family of eight kids when she was a baby and so they grew up dirt poor and she was really dead-set against anything that had to do with alcohol because of her father's alcoholism. And that defined part of her life, trying to overcome I think what she felt had been an injustice to her own mother because of her father's alcoholism and desertion and so on.

LK: Ok.

LG: But the part of it is Lauren, was that she was very hard to be with because she was so demanding, she had so many expectations of you. You would say, 'Let up, give me a break mom.'

LK: (laughs) That is funny. In high school what were you interested in?

LG: I did a lot of different things in high school. I was an athlete—not a very good one—I played football, and ran track, I was always too short to play basketball but I play intermural (??). I am interested in music, so I played in the band, sang in choruses. I was on the debate team. So student government. If there was an opportunity, I took it.

LK: (laughs)

LG: I was involved in a lot of different things. There was something called "High Y" (??) which was the YMCA, which was right across from my high school and it provided those of us who weren't all that great as athletes, an opportunity—I think the other, let me go back to the question, may I?

LK: Yes, of course.

LG: Of who I was close to. My dad was a barber and owned a barber shop in Sioux Falls—(coughs) Excuse me—and very early on, he bought a shoe shine set of chairs and set it up and had me then work with him well he was cutting hair, I would shine people's shoes at 20 cents a shine. Which meant, well put it this way, I also delivered papers, but my dad delivered papers with me. So early in the morning, the first thing I did when I got up was, we had breakfast together and then we went off the sell papers at the veterans hospital and then he would take me to school and after school I would come down to his barbershop and I would shine shoes. And then when we were through working, he cutting hair and me shinning shoes, we would go to the Y together and he would take a shower and a hot steam bath, and I would swim in the pool. And then we would get dressed, go home together and have dinner together. So the beginning of my day and the end of my day was with my dad. And I think that is very unusual for kids to have much experience with a parent. Of course when I wasn't busy and no one wanted a shine, I would be sitting there talking to my dad. So I had a kind of charmed childhood.

LK: That is really interesting. That is nice. So my next question is, how did you relationship with religion throughout high school change if it even did?

LG: I think it was in high school that I relied less on memory, memorization, learning bible versus, singing children religious songs, and became more liberated. I was always in a situation where I was in leadership. So whether it was in my local Sunday school or Baptist youth fellowship, which was the organized youth expression in our church and__ (??) or camp. I would either be selected or I would run for office. So I was president of this and president of that. Which made me more attentive to what I had actually—I had to speak so I was more, I think more reflective in what I actually believed. I remember that it was, either late grade school or in high school, it was the beginning of my social activism as well because I was telling my Sunday school teachers or my youth leaders, "Okay we say we believe this, if we believe this then we outta put it into action in some way. And if we believe in equality, believe in everyone creating a name as your God, why do we treat people of different races differently?" So I think religion, my involvement in religion, also stirred one my intellectual life of being critical, of taking a second look, of questioning and inherited beliefs and finding new ways of expressing that. But it was also not just intellectual it was also active—if you say you are committed, if you are a person of faith, what does that mean, not in just terms of your personal life, but in terms of your social life. I forget what the question was now.

LK: It was really about how religion—but I think you answered it.

LG: OK.

LK: You did a good job. So my next question is how did the news or current events affect you during high school? How did you find out about stuff?

LG: Well in high school, maybe this has to do with my pension for wanting to be a leader or out in front, but I wanted to be the editor of the sports page for our high school newspaper, which is called the Orange and Black, for our school's colors. And I wanted to be a journalist. And someone else was chosen. And I was peeved. So I created my own newspaper and I did all of the staff and we published this newspaper, but in order to be competitive with the high school newspaper, the official newspaper, we announced we had scoops (laughs) on the high school event. It was something called the Sweetheart Dance and there was always eight—four males, four females—that were Sweetheart candidates and these were announced in the school paper on Thursday for the event that would happen on Saturday. We announce it at the beginning of the week that we knew who the Sweetheart candidates were going to be and who had been elected—The sweetheart of Valentine's Day. We had no idea. It was a pure bluff as a way of selling newspapers. (Laughs) We sold these things for a dime and of course the official newspaper just went crazy that we were going to scoop them. And so they went to the administration of the school and the out-bought our newspaper—we could not sell our newspaper. Which was a boom to us because then we were underground. We were an underground newspaper. We'd carry these things in our bags. It was called the word. We

would say, (whispers) “do you want the word?” “yeah,” slip them a dime and slip it in there. Actually, I have great memories of being called out of class because I was the editor and publisher of the newspaper, of the word, and it was the school principal. And the school principal said, “You understand Larry you cannot publish this paper and sell it.” And I remember I said to him—Mr. Ryan(??) I think his name was—“Ryan, have you read the first amendment?” I was taking a civics class. I have the right to free speech and you can’t deny me. And he said something like “try me” and I said, “We are. We are going to continue to publish this.” And he said, “Well you will be disciplined for it.”

LK: That’s funny. That is really cool. When you graduated from high school, what were some of your aspirations and what did you want to do?

LG: You know there was a minister in my church. He said—I had been reflected and thinking—and they said what do you want to do when you grow up and I said, “I think I want to be a philosopher.” And I mean I didn’t really know what that meant, but it sounded good. And Al Babcock (??) this minister said, “Larry you are not smart enough to be a philosopher.” And I said, “I’ll show you.” I mean I said that to myself. I will show you. So part of this interest in the intellect, in I would say, trying to be an intellectual, of being a thinker dates back (laughs) to this challenge of when I wasn’t smart enough to do this. So that was one thing. I knew I wanted to pursue it—education. It turned out, I probably made a bad choice, I went to the local Baptist College—I was a Baptist at this college. In one sense it was not a good choice. It was not rigorous. But in another way, it was a great choice in that I could do everything—play sports, be involved in speech and debate, play music. There was no dancing on the campus at this time at this school. So three of us created, did a company where we would rent out space for simple dances. So it was a place where that allowed me to do pretty much anything I wanted to do. I want to do a lot of different things. And so going to this college—then called Sioux Falls College, now called University of Sioux Falls—completely, it’s no university, it’s you know a little college, but they think they have to compete. Anyway, so what was the question?

LK: (laughs) No you answered it pretty good. So when did you know you wanted—I guess you already answered that too—Well, my next question, how did you meet your wife?

LG: I always had to work a bit when I was in college and so I got a job at the telephone company—part-time. Family was never wealthy I suppose—lower middle class in terms of income. And there was this new employee who had decided not to go to college, but she was really cute. And there was another guy in the office named Larry Green. A matter a fact, Larry Green went to the same church as I went to, the same high school I went to. So it was Larry Green and Larry Greenfield and we both ask her out. I asked her out, she thought I was Larry Green and said no. You don’t want me, you turn me down? and then she finally got clear that it was me so we went out and I think our first date was the McCoutal (??), a musical. And I was in my final year of college and I had to make some decision. I was interested in the kind of social justice issues and their was an opportunity to go to Hong Kong to be involved in kind of workers’ rights for people of

Hong Kong. So that was very intriguing to me, but there was also an enlgish professor that had a great influence from the University of Chicago who had come in the last years of my college years and he was just intellectually stimulating, a radical and so on. I was completely taken with him and he said, "You need to go to the University of Chicago. That is the place for you." And so there was this dilemma of whether I go to Hong Kong or that I go to Chicago. When I fell in love with my wife-to-be, I knew I couldn't take her with me to Hong Kong, but I could take her to Chicago—in fact she knew how to type, not a lot (laughs)—so I knew I was going to be writing papers. She had already started typing my papers in college. So we got married on August 31, 1963 and two days later we arrived in Chicago and poor, struggling—she took a job in the library and together we, I took a job—always working part-time—and that is how we started.

LK: Wow. Alright, so what made you want to stay at the University of Chicago after you were there for a little while or what were some memories you had while you were there?

LG: Well Chicago allowed me, like I said the college I went to gave me a lot of opportunities to do activities, pursue things I was interested in, but it really wasn't a very good school. It wasn't demanding. That is unfair in certain ways, but it didn't give me the kind of education I was after. So when I came to University of Chicago, they had a program where before you could complete your first graduate degree you had to pass which was called comprehensive examinations in seven subjects—which was biblical studies or more broadly understood, how you read a text, textual studies, history of the west, theology and philosophy of religion, religion in society, so religion in social justice, religion in personality, religion in sociology, history of religion—what am I missing— oh yeah history in literature. So, basically what I got to do was to take my undergraduate education over again in preparing for these examines and that was really fun because it expanded my horizons of reading text, reading thinkers, that I hadn't been introduced to in college. I realized this was the place for me. I wanted in to be there and I did three graduate degrees there. And then towards the end of it, I was looking for a job and a new dean came in and my major professor said, "I got this student named Larry Greenfield who is good at a number of things, but he is looking for a job and I'd like him to stay around here." So the new dean said__(??) this senior professor spoken well of you and why don't you work a summer for me. I worked a summer for the dean and he said, "You're not bad." So he said, "Here are three opportunities. All three of them were to join the faculty—the faculty that I had so admired. One was to work in the area of publication development and one of them had to do with looking ahead to being dean of students at the school and that's the one I chose. So I went from being a graduate student right into being an administrator dean and a member of the faculty. The University of Chicago was kind of formative place that I really enjoyed—besides that I managed the coffee shop.

LK: (laughs) That's cool. Alright, well what kind of things did you do—It says you were Director of Baptist Graduate Students center—so what kind of things did you do then?

LG: This was an attempt to bring graduate students together at the university from across different fields to live together community(??), eat together, study together, and often

times converse together on issues of the day — some of that was informal around meal time—really hot arguments—and other times it was more formal, but it was a subsidized way of helping students with their expenses and it provided very inexpensive housing and food. But it was almost also an attempt to create a climate of intellectual discussion that was tinged—more then tinged; it was infused by questions of faith of religion. So that was two years. That was very stimulating again. And it was an organization that also had a lot of interest in religion in art, particularly plastic (??) or painting (??) arts, but it initiated on my part to continuing interest in what building an art collection of our own and the interest in visiting galleries, developing a relationship with artist.

LK: How active in politics were you during this time?

LG: Fairly active, yes. I mean rememeber here, you will have these memories out of your own. You remember the 1960s so well right? When were you born?

LK: (laughs) 1995.

LG: (laughs) Right, right. Well you probably know something about the 1960s.

LK: Yes, yes. I read a lot about it.

LG: The quiet ‘50s kind of a standardization, very unusual period in terms of American history and American religion—everybody was going to church, churches were growing, building new buildings, and so on—probably the most unusual decade in American religious history even though subsequent that everyone would measure anything that followed against this 1950s. But it was a very orderly society. We as a nation were lead by a former general, Eisenhower, and then the ‘60s came. And all of that was put into question—the kind of order that had been taken for granite, was put into question—probably more then anything else I can remember was in college that this was the beginning of the civil rights movement. And the challenge to many of us was where were we going to stand on issues of race and where can we challenge our own school, our own community, our own town—on issues of race. I remember very clearly how the kind of invitation to say are you going to be a part of this movement or are you going to sit on the sidelines and many of us wanted to say we think—many of us out of our own religious faith, in some ways—by involvement in…(??) I was one of the winners of the national orditoriy(??) contests held in Carbondale(??), Illinois—but debating, being a debater forced you to deal with public issues because the question up for debate was often a policy, public policy issue. So that whole experience of being involved in speech and—oh I haven’t said anything about drama. I love plays. I write plays—But the debate part of it, and increasingly back in those early years of 1960, the issue race became the challenged to say, “you got this document Paul, ‘People are created equal,’ but there is these mass inequalities.” Say equal opportunity—people denied that on the basis of their color, or their immigrant status or something like that. So, by 1963 when I came to Chicago, I was already kind of posturing myself—posturing sounds negative—positioning myself as an individual who wanted to be on kind of on the edge on intellectual issues, but also on social issues.

LK: OK. So what worldwide event affected you the most in 1968?

LG: In 1968, well it was the death of King. Devastating. (Clears throat) King had been in Chicago—if Eisenhower was the kind of model—the gentle model for the nation—Richard Daley, the mayor, first mayor, was the expression of it locally. And he ran a very ordered city, but it was a very repressive city. His order was achieved by having a police force that much like what we are experiencing today in some ways, it used excessive force. Daley controlled the politicians out of the minority communities so there was congressman Dawson (??) on the South Side that was in the pocket of Richard Daley. Some African American politicians, would even follow a guy named Ralph Malcalf (??), even from the South Side, would deviate from that. All I am saying Lauren, when King—I mean all of us were committed to the issue of race—had deep respect for King because he was not only affective, but he was using a style of non-violence to achieve ends in the South that we though were noble. Then he came north, he came to Chicago, '66, and Daley outmaneuvered him at every point. And it was really a significant—I think we—It was failure of the civil rights movement. Daley outmaneuvered King. So there was already stirring a kind of discontent in Chicago about Daley's rule and the way in which any inequality or injustice was perpetuated by a machine, a political machine that controlled everything. So it's a kind of context for one—the other issue of course was Vietnam and early on in the 60s, I think a certain kind of ambiguity—We know this isn't right, this war, this Vietnamese war, yet we feel a kind of inherited, lingering legacy of patriotism, can we really oppose a war when people we went to high school with—my cousin, killed in Vietnam—could I protest the war? But increasingly there was a realization that we were immersed in a war that couldn't be won—and that it was an unjust war. And surprisingly, King took it on. It was someone who, not only fighting the battle in terms of civil rights, but was now risking his leadership role in the civil rights movement, in order to take on President Johnson on the war in Vietnam—so absolutely. Even though he was defeated in Chicago, a figure who demanded respect and admiration and a kind of discipleship, but then killed—murdered, assassinated. Probably—I remember that night—just how devastating it was—to think that someone who provided so much leadership and so much inspiration could be laid low, killed. And then to see the reaction, particularly in ghettos and African American communities of just absolute frustration of rioting. So that was—Lauren, I guess what I am saying is everything was starting to come undone after the 1950s orderly, now beginning to be questioned and now the questioning being challenged by the right saying we won't allow this flowering of freedom, equality, justice. And then I was never a great fan of Robert Kennedy, but later in that year, Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angels and then that was all preparation for what happened in August here at the convention.

LK: Yes, so getting to a little more about August, so why don't you tell me your story about the Democratic Convention? Where did it all start?

LG: It started with a phone call from someone at the divinity schools that said that the university generally, that they had a call from the publisher or the editor-in-chief of the Atlantic Monthly, a main-line magazine, saying they were going to have a team come out

to the convention, but they needed someone who knew Chicago who could serve as a driver and as a guide for them during the convention and so one of the people they called was me and I said, “yes, I would love to.” So the team from New York, Atlantic Monthly, editors, writers and so on, came out and I meet them and we agreed I would (coughs) do this job. But the good thing about it is, I got to carry the press credentials, the same press credentials as they had. Which meant I could go inside the convention anytime I wanted to in the ampatheatre (??), which is where the convention was held—never could be on the floor of the convention, but I could always be on the balconies and observe it anytime—I mean I always had to be available for what they wanted to do, but if they were on the floor doing interviews or writing, I was free to watch. So watched a lot of the convention and I watched the other people who were watching the convention so—Warren Batty (??), Shirley McClan (??), all these hilacazons(??) all these film stars were there. I was sitting next them you know. So that was kind of fun, but it also meant that the press credentials meant that I could go anywhere down here at the Conrad Hilton for example and Grant Park. I could cross police lines, go in the hotel, go virtually anywhere. So when things go hot, I tried to be wise and not get clubbed. And there were some journalist who were beat up by the cops, police, but I managed to not get hit over the head or anything. So I witnessed a lot of the convention itself, and then equally important, witnessing all that went on in terms of Grant Park and the Hilton, up and down Michigan Avenue.

LK: Do you have a really distinct memory that you can remember of something—even like—how about in the convention while you were in there, do you remember something?

LG: I just remembered Richard Daley, typical trying to shout down people and keep—memory may be blurred, I can’t say I remember the moment that Richard Daley shouted at Abraham Ribercuf (??) or something like that. Maybe I saw it on T.V. when I got home at night—but I had the feeling I had been in that space and I say how Daley behaved. So I could picture. The issue with Robert Kennedy’s death and Hubert Humphrey, who I had admired before but would serve as Vice President under Lyndon Johnson and a compromise character because of his association with Johnson—I mean for all of his—There was a part of Hubert Humphrey, senator for Minnesota, one of my neighboring states, formally…(??), that I found a really noble figure. He was a champion. He was someone was devoted and it got expressed in his voice and his gestures, excited on issues for justice, but then that part of the Lyndon Johnson program, agenda was so inteping(??) of Hubert Humphrey. But then there was this Vietnam thing and Humphrey allowed himself to be compromised probably had to as Vice President. So when Lyndon Johnson declared that he would not run and would not accept a nomination for his party to be reelected, I think a number of his felt that Humphrey could have distanced himself from Johnson on the war at that point, but he chose not to. So you had Humphrey, who you wanted to support because he would advance the domestic agendas that were dear to us, but also was endorsing and was leading the party and its platform and in its commitment to the war. So here was Humphrey and then Eugene McCarthy, Humphrey’s colleague, senator colleague from Minnesota, who was anti-war. So you had this clear distinction, my own senator, George McGovern (??), who was kind of in the background at that time, who gain prominence in 1972, at the ’72 convention, So there was a way in

which everyone thought it was this distinction between the democratic nominee, Humphrey—I think he had something like a 1,000 votes, a 1,000 delegates supporting him going into the convention—and Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy, maybe together total something like 800 delegates. So there was a sense in which things, the dye was not yet cast. So there seemed to be a lot at stake. I think there was some confusion on our part in what happened on the streets here—that is a different memory now—was much more confused and unorganized then we were lead to believed or allowed ourselves to believe in. There was something called the—I forget what it was called…(??)—Mobilization against the war in Vietnam, which was really serious peace activist. But they seemed to be in collaboration with the Yippies,…(??). And you almost had this sense that they were organizing what was happening on the streets, turned out later, we didn't understand that at the time, but there was no leadership. Things were happening spontaneously. And they were being seen together and I think it was, that was even made more firm, that opinion made more firm when they wee tried in the court here, the eight, additional nine but Bobby Seal(??) had a separate trail—that it looked like this was an organized demonstration movement. I think there has been enough written and analyzed to say that wasn't the case at all. What sparked this was spontaneous—that is not altogether true. There had been both on the Yippies part and in terms of the mobilization committee, a lot of planning ahead of time, but Daley had, we learned later that Daley had spies. So the city and the administration knew what they were facing. Does that get at your question?

LK: Yes, no of course. If you don't mind, I just need to change the battery. Alright so I am going to pause. (Changes battery to video camera.) Start recording that again and this again. So we are back to 1968. Do you have a very distinct memory from being in the riots, like when you were outside, not in the convention?

LG: Yes, I do. Let me take a saherotis (??) way on this. When Obama was elected in 2008, I left home when the election results came in. I got on a bus, came down, drove threw South Side on the bus and realized these were the very same areas there were rioting in '66 and so on, and in '68 when King was killed. It kind of moved me to tears thinking about the change of the death of King and the election of Obama. And then it got down to Grant Park and witnessed the celebration of Obama's election. And I remember writing about being on the same ground those 40 years—yeah 40 year—about how different it was watching kids getting beat up by police in '68 and then this celebration of the first African American president in 2008. It was quite moving for me personally because I was standing on the same dirt, same blades of grass—maybe they weren't the same blades of grass—the same area. It was—Michigan Avenue was not only an area of, not rioting, but demonstrations and so on, but it was an area for spontaneous conversations. I remember I was walking out of the Hilton and low-and-behold on the corner of Michigan and—what would be the street next to, behind Harrison?—

LK: Harrison? Balbo?

LG: Here was Steds Terkly(??) and Stala Linski (??) engaged in a discussion about what was going on. So it's that kind of stuff. That memory is pretty clear in my mind. I almost

said to myself, “Larry don’t let yourself forget this moment.” In the mist of all this chaos in the convention center, and here on the corner of Michigan and Grant Park, here are two great social figures engaged in a serious discussion. It’s wonderful.

LK: When you went home that night and you would watch the news, what would you think because you were there? I mean id you go home and turn on your T.V. and watch it?

LG: I don’t have very good memories of that. My wife was scared stiff that something was going to happen to me. We had a young child at the time and she thought I ought not to do this. So it was recounting what was happening kind of personally watching it. It was a kind of rerun of what I had seen all day.

LK: Why did you still want to do it if your wife was saying not to?

LG: I just felt like this was important, this was an opportunity to watch history in the making. And I don’t have any regrets what’s so ever about doing it.

LK: Lets see what other questions I may have. You kind of described the chaos in the convention. Were you there when they announced the nominee?

LG: Yes.
LK: You were? What was that like? Were people going crazy?

LG: It was very divided. I mean it was a very divided convention. I think in terms of the regular Democratic Party, there was a kind of sense of relief that we had, that they had fought off—I think it is important to recognize the democrat party had been with war. That there was a whole kind of mantra about the democrats get us into war and the republicans get us out of war. FDR, John Kennedy, and now Vietnam and yet it was this party that was now divided into a pro-war stance uniformly, but part of the party__(??) of that history of engaging in global conflict for noble purposes and a significant component of that party, that democratic party, now kind of reversing itself on it’s public image of the party that was—I don’t want to say pro-war—but willing to—I’ll put it this way—non-isolationist, the democratic Party being a non-isolationist party. Now the convention itself represented a divide, a fundamental divide, in the Democratic Party in terms of its foreign affairs. Its been a party that was divided North and South on issues of race, and of course George Walls (??) was a part of this in ’68 and breaking away from the Democratic Party. IN a sense, the party was breaking up and you were witnessing this on the floor of the convention. But that was a phenomenon that had to do with an annuity(??) that was called the Democratic Party. Outside, over here, five miles away, Grant Park, you saw a different kind of fragmentation going on. You saw Yippies, who were kind of libertarian, and then you had the anti-war movement. These were—They had some very visible figures, but you saw ordinary citizens out there—young, young for the most part. But it was a different kind of fragmentation; it was cultural—social and cultural. I am not being very articulate here. You saw the fragmentation of a political organization within the Ampatheathre (??) and you saw the fragmentation of American

culture and American society on the streets of Michigan Avenue and Grant Park. That was a pretty indelible memory that something was happening here that is radically different from what I had experienced as a young person, as a child and as a college student and so on. So back to your question, this was far too important to miss. You didn't want to miss this, because—it did in enduring consequences for American society and for the Democratic Party.

LK: Did you know anyone, any friends who took part in the protest or anything?

LG: Well I think there were some people I recognized, no close friends. There were some University of Chicago students that I recognized. I wasn't close enough to anyone to check in on people on the streets or anything.

LK: Alright, I am kind of going to go into the reflection section and ask a few of those questions, but my first question is how did the events in 1968 change you as a person?

LG: I think it probably radicalized me. It was the point at which—I had always been ambiguous on the war. I am ashamed to say I think '68 convention clarified to me, in a sense the American imperialism had peaked and even though victorious and even with an ambiguous outcome with the Korean conflict, now we were seeing America in its imperialistic mood—its globally out reach radically challenged. And from that point on there was a kind of suspicion in many of us, and in certainly me anytime—I mean it was a way of always questioning American motives. Not always native and not always—You never took for granite that foreign policy initiatives of the country were pure. That there were other motives operating other powers, other influences, other consequences being sought that needed to be examined. I think there was a similar way as far as domestic that it became radicalized. I don't know if this is exactly the case, but I think there were many of us that were committed to non-violence and see what happened here, at least made us question whether non-violence worked in every stance.

LK: What are you most proud of from 1968?

LG: Well, I suppose there is a certain proud in simply what the society endured. That is found ways—There was a way in which it was—I was proud that we, people like myself and people who agreed with me, but also the nation at large. I am proud of that. That it no longer lived in a kind of idealized world, that we reached a kind of political maturity(??) as a nation finally. We moved out of adolescence or our childhood and became more realistic—a greater capacity for tough criticism. I think that is the best word—That we became a nation much more capable of looking at ourselves critically and making our decisions on the basis of that capacity of criticism. That would be the biggest gain I think.

LK: So what was the most regrettable consequence of the convention you would say?

LG: Richard Nixon. You don't know what it meant for Humphrey—Humphrey to win and to be on his own without, under the thumb of Lyndon Johnson on the war. I think I want to believe that Humphrey had, would've had, the capacity to maneuver us out of the

war. He certainly was a champion on civil liberties, civil rights, so I think we would've been a very different nation under the presidency of Hubert Humphrey. At the same time, you look back on Nixon for all evil, negativity about it, he did achieve an opening to china that changed the world in ways that I don't think a democrat could have done. So it's always a mixed bag historically, but I think on—I think on another issue, of women's rights and abortion rights, I think Hubret Humphrey could've held the country together in a better way after Roe V. Wade (??). But I think we went through a period, another period of national depression when we experienced the downfall of Richard Nixon. It made us ashamed of ourselves in a way that some of us had been ashamed of ourselves in losing..(??) that had characterized most of us beforehand.

LK: what would you say would be the most positive outcome of the convention?

LG: Within the Democratic party it broke it open almost immediately. There was ways in which there was reform in the choosing of delegates. Much less back-room selection of candidates—a more open, a more primary, more caucuses that has its limitations as well like knowledge. But the Democratic Party became much more democratic you know. Democracy reached the Democratic Party finally. Nationally, I don't think we ever overcome the fragmentation that began there. It had its forerunners, I don't mean to say that everything wasn't the creation of fragmentation that there had been great conflicts around race. There were already great conflicts around war, about American imperialism about a free-market economic system, all that was pre-curser to the convention. But it seems to me it was climatic, decisive coming together of those forces that forever changed the country and in that sense changed the world.

LK: Looking back—well I guess I already asked you that too. What progression have you seen sense these events?

LG: Progression in what?

LK: Well progression in, lets say race and everything that you encountered in 1968 compared to now. Do you see any comparison possibly?

LG: Well there has obviously been great strides and yet, there is a way in which the original sins of America on issues of race, the inability of our founders in writing a constitution for example, that couldn't even in its constitution live up to its claims on issues of equality. So progress, not uniform progress. I think for the first—not for the first time, I think Carter was a different, was a—I am think now it terms of foreign affairs, much more cautious in terms, I think the current president is maintaining against great pressure. Put it this way, I think the possibility of a president portraying America's place in the world as non-aggressive or as—how do I say this positively?—as being a force for peace without conflict, if diplomacy, so on. It was one of the results.

LK: Do you—Well how did the year 1968 influence your faith and your actions?

LG: Well, it deepened. How important my own Christian faith, what it demanded of me not only personally but in terms of citizenship. That there were teachings, radical teachings, in the faith when looked at critically that is looked at analytically, that questioned one of the basis for a citizen to have the capacity to criticize the nation's leaders. What I haven't said much about is the issues of economic justice and what I think—why don't I go back to Lyndon Johnson—on his positive side, the seeds he sewed in terms of economic justice, in a sense got overwhelmed by the anti-war movement. What was the question?

LK: It's just really how did 1968 influence your faith and your actions? You said it deepened.

LG: Go back. I will just repeat what I said. It made clear to me that a Christian had special responsibilities in terms of her/his citizenship on issues of justice and peace.

LK: What parallels do you see between society in '68 and society now?

LG: Well Baltimore, Ferguson, we still haven't wrestled with—we haven't wrestled successfully with the issue of race. We are in a period of great economic inequality, which was the case then. I mean we made great strides on the issues of poverty I think, despite what critics say. But we have fallen back into a idiotically kind of fault position that favors a free-market economy that by almost definition, creates inequality rather then overcomes it and a kind of satisfaction, a kind of willingness to let be, that that is just the way things are. That is basically it.

LK: How do you continue to be an activist today?

LG: Well, I think, I hope I am more affective. That it isn't just try an old action and so on—more reflective about what can be accomplished and the means to use it as I think there are ways in which a democratic policy (??) used affectively, I mean poled(??) affectively can bring about constructive change. I think that is basically.

LK: Can you please state why you wanted to do this interview today?

LG: Well, I though it would be fun.

LK: I hope it was.

LG: Just to recognize how important 1968 was in my own life and so I didn't do a lot of cramming beforehand for this oral examination, but I did spend some time thinking. I was on a plane from Salt Lake City to Chicago the other night and I was thinking about this interview and how important 1968 was in my life and how grateful I am that you invited me to do this so I can get clearer about that.

LK: Alright, well is there anything I didn't ask you that you feel is important to this topic that you want to make sure to include?

LG: Can’t think of it. I think you have been very good.

LK: Awesome. Well, we are done.

LG: Good.