American Friends Service Committee

AFSC ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS SERIES #600

Ten interviews with people whose volunteer efforts assisted in relief work with Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip - 1948 to 1951

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AFSC ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #601
Narrator: PAUL JOHNSON (PJ)
Interviewer: Joan Lowe (JL)
September 19th, 1992

JL: This is Joan Lowe. Today is September 19th, 1992. I'm interviewing Paul Johnson for the American Friends Service Committee Oral History Project, and we're going to be talking about the work with refugees in the Gaza Strip in the years 1949 and 1950.

Paul, if you would state your full name and your place and date of birth?

PJ: Paul B. Johnson. Duluth, Minnesota, August 13th, 1909.

JL: Okay. Tell me something about Duluth. Is that a small town or is that a college town, or..?

PJ: I can't tell you a thing! It's a big town built on the side of a hill. But that I get through hearsay. I never lived there.

JL: Oh, you didn't live there, you were just born there.

PJ: My father was an engineer in a small place on Iron Range, about 30 miles away. I suppose Duluth was the first hospital mother could find.

JL: So you actually grew up...

PJ: Dad was an engineer and we went with him.. Arizona, New York, Illinois, Missouri, you name it.

JL: You moved around a lot.

PJ: Yeah. I had gone to 14 schools by the time I finished high school.

JL: Did you mother have work of any sort?

PJ: No, in 1909 women weren't working much. She was trained as a teacher. She was a Phi Beta from the University of Wisconsin, and she taught one year. But then she got married and that was it. You can't teach moving around the way we did.

JL: Sounds like it, unless you're teaching your own kids.

PJ: She couldn't do that. She was Phi Beta in mathematics and when I came along, first son, she couldn't help me do square root!

JL: Oh dear. [chuckle] How many brothers and sisters did you have?>

PJ: Two brothers, younger. One six years younger and one nine.

JL: What kind of religious upbringing did you have?

PJ: This was a peculiar problem because Dad's family were Quakers and had been for three hundred years, I presume, since there were Quakers in Scotland in 1694. My mother's family were Unitarians, but really sort of lapsed. They paid their dues but they didn't go to church much. Furthermore, moving as much as we did there was no way of establishing any firm church relation. They sent us to Sunday school wherever we were and whatever denomination was near us to get to, but it wasn't a sincere proposition. It was my father's mother, my paternal grandmother, who was a big influence in my life. I don't think she effected my brothers so much because she died while they were young. She was a Quaker and she was a great, great influence in my life. If something happened that was unwise I'm sure she said to herself, "Well, we can get around that" just as she did one day when I spilled a bottle of ink on one of her lace doilies and nearly drove poor Mother up the wall. Grandma said, "Neeeever mind, Helen, never mind. It's just a *thing*." That's the kind of atmosphere we were in with her.

JL: And she was in one place, I take it.

PJ: Yes, she lived in Sioux, Wisconsin 60 years, I guess.

JL: So would you characterize it, then, as a Christian upbringing with a Quaker influence? You didn't really have First Day School instruction..

PJ: It was a Quaker influence but I don't think it could qualify as a Christian influence because we went from here to there and up and down. That's about all.

JL: You would have been about 10 years old when the United States started getting involved in the First World War.

PJ: Yes, and Dad was out of work at the time and he joined the Army as Constructing Quartermaster for Base Hospitals in New York. He carried this job out and then resigned. He was a Captain in the Construction Corp., whatever that is. 20 years later I asked him, "Dad, why did you join the Army?" He thought about it and said, "Well, you kids had to eat." And since he was out of work that was a [inaudible]. There's a long history of Quaker involvement or Quaker refusal to be involved in wars. My great great grandfather was jailed.

JL: Your great great grandfather?

PJ: Yes, in about 1812. The quotation that comes down through the family history is that he, unfortunately, referred to the British there as brothers. It wasn't very popular. Then at the

time of the Mexican War there was another one, the next generation. He had the unfortunate name of Demsy Jones but it wasn't spelled like the Pugents. It didn't have a P in it. He was, I think, not really round the bend, but not very dependable. He had dreams about the great ocean of light overcoming the ocean of darkness.

JL: A visionary in the family!

PJ: He was in trouble during the Mexican War for this.

JL: I can imagine.

PJ: So I was properly out of that kind of box when I got into trouble in the Second World War.

JL: Did you go to college?

PJ: Yes, Jean and I both went to Antioch.

JL: Was that before or after the war?

PJ: From '26 to '32.

JL: So tell me about that. You went to Antioch?

PJ: This was an immense influence in both our lives. Arthur Morgan was one of the greatest men we've ever known. I had extended studies under a Brahman, a professor of sociology in international affairs, Manmatha Nath Chatterjee. He also was an energy but I kind of thing teaching was more important and he spent almost all of his life as a professor. He influenced us, me especially, much as Arthur Morgan had done. Morgan was president at that point. That was a great institution. It was bringing new life into the university education. We had a wonderful six years.

JL: So this was in Yellow Springs, Ohio? And you graduated from Antioch in 1932.

PJ: It was during that time, those later years of study at Antioch, that I first got acquainted with Clarence Pickett and Rufus Jones. It was not anything related to the college, particularly, but they and Arthur Morgan knew each other. That influence maximized.

JL: Were you involved at all in any of the things that were going on with the Service Committee in those early years? The Depression years?

PJ: Not very much. I went down to the Tennessee Valley Authority as a staff member of a department of cooperative activities. At that time there was a workcamp in Tennessee and I knew and had relationships with that. My work down there was with cooperative organizations sponsored by the TVA and members of another organization called the Tennessee Valley Associated Cooperatives, which was one of the long fingers of Mrs.

Roosevelt. I grew to know her and became an officer of that corporation of which Clarence Pickett was a member of the board. So all these things sort of came together in the late '30s.

JL: I think there was a lot of overlap with the Quaker activities and the New Deal activities.

PJ: Yes. Clarence was a wonderful person.

JL: Would you say that.. is that where you heard of the Service Committee? Through Clarence Pickett? Or were you pretty much aware of it anyway?

PJ: Well, I was aware of it from the times in college when I met Clarence Pickett and Rufus Jones, but it really came together at the time we were at the TVA . I ran this cooperative for several years. It was a handicraft cooperative and our mission was to find ways to broaden the development of handicrafts in the mountains based upon the skills that were already there. We tried to beef up the business aspect of their marketing, opened a store in New York and a store in Chicago, and a couple of stores at the TVA dams.

JL: That's very interesting. I hadn't heard anything about that.

PJ: Ernest Morgan, who's here with us and who was in Gaza, is Arthur Morgan's eldest son.

JL: How long did you stay with the cooperative?

PJ: About three years, I think. Along came a couple of entrepreneurs from Knoxville who wanted to start a system of recreation centers on the TVA lakes at a modest level. That interested me very much, so I joined them, the Pickwick Company and was manager of their first established _______, their only establishment, actually, at Pickwick dam in western Tennessee. That went on, again, for a couple of years of development and then the war came along.

Then the Service Committee began taking first place in my mind. We decided, Jean and I...

JL: For what reason? Was that because of what was happening politically>

PJ: Yes, it seemed like not a very happy situation to be on the side lines, so to speak. How old was I then? 33. I was old enough that I didn't expect to be drafted, but there were a lot of interesting things the Service Committee was doing. So we left that and became, first with the Committee, I was director of a CO camp in Cooperstown, New York.

JL: Oh were you? As an AFSC employee you were doing this?

PJ: Yes. I think my salary was $75 a month. I think most of us who worked for the Committee in those days were about below what the private soldiers were getting, plus we had family that had to be taken care of. When the draft situation began to get to me we had some wonderful characters in that camp but they weren't applied to very good use. We had a scientist Ph.D. who was out with everybody cutting trees. It didn't seem to make sense. There were others who had skills that would have been useful to the nation, but here they were cutting trees. So I couldn't stand that any more. I was the first director to walk out. So they sent us to Mexico. We were in the workcamp in the state of Vera Cruz.

JL: The AFSC sent you to Mexico and the US Selective Service allowed you to do that as alternative service?

PJ: No. I have to go back. In Tennessee when I was managing this Pickwick Company, the appearance that the company wanted us to make to the public was that we would do anything we could for community. I was working like the devil getting this little company organized when along comes the registration. I made the big boo-boo of my life. I was probably the only person in ten miles who could read and write and I agreed to be a registrar. I agreed to register people for this. It didn't sink in right away what a ridiculous thing I'd done in doing that. So I made it quite clear from that point on that I wasn't having any part of it.

JL: You're talking about a military registrar?

PJ: Yes. And I made it clear to the local draft board that I wasn't interested and would not obey, even though I was registered. They didn't care. They didn't want to draft me at that point, and I got lost in the shuffle. Then after the CPS camp, and during our stay in Mexico, the draft board suddenly woke up and sent a totally innocuous document called "The Industrial Registration". They wanted a count of everybody in the United States who could do anything and be trained for anything. Well, I suppose it would have been simple enough to fill out and send it back, but I had said I wouldn't so I didn't. I did send it back, but I told them ...

JL: Didn't fill it out.

PJ: Right. They probably would have gone down the procedures from that point, but it didn't seem to be safe or sensible to stay in Mexico with this thing hanging. So we came back. Then I spent more than a year before further demands came. Finally demand two, have a

physical exam -- the regular routine -- and I refused that. Well that was the end of that. I was tried in Jackson, Tennessee as a draft dodger which annoyed them a bit. [I was] sent to U.S. Federal Prison in Texarkana, Texas. A three year term.

JL: Did you meet up with any other Friends?

PJ: Oh yes, Arles Brooks was there. He's a name that you may know. James Ball.

JL: Jim Bristol?

PJ: No, he wasn't in Texarkana. I forget where he was. And there was one other, there were four of us. We were joined at some point by a Texas cowboy who had no more notion what a conscientious objector was but who had simply said to the government, "You've got your war, go on with it. I'm not having anything to do with it." [chuckles] So there were five of us at that point. I only served little over a year.

JL: At that point you had a pretty well conceived notion in your mind about what it meant to be a conscientious objector?

PJ: Oh yes, I had no doubt.

JL: Were you a Friend at that point?

PJ: No, I lived in Tennessee where there was no Meeting. Interestingly enough, my father had always shaken his head and said, "You are a birthright Friend." But he had not been an active Friend. He was a member in his youth in an Indiana Meeting but he had never shown any interest in Friends. So I chose not to argue the point. Jean and I joined Friends in Ridgewood, New Jersey during the time before I went to prison.

JL: So you had some Meeting support?

PJ: Well, yes. It was an interesting Meeting. Small but serious.

JL: How about your family? Did they support your stand?

PJ: My father's family, being of Quaker background, understood what was going on and did. My mother's family were furious. Some of them never did come around. Mother did and that was a help. It didn't cause an immediate rupture in family relations but a couple of mother's sisters were vigorously opposed right up until the time they died.

JL: When you got out of prison....?

PJ: The Service Committee was making an experiment, or trying to. I had refused to be paroled to a hospital, saying it wasn't my line of work. I said, "I will be paroled if you want to send me to anything that I would normally have been doing." What was normal for me

was working for the Service Committee. So the administration in Philadelphia worked real hard to get one or two cases where COs were paroled to the Committee in hopes that that could then become the general pattern. The Committee could use our services. It worked for me and never worked for anybody else. They sent me on parole for two years to be Executive Secretary of the Seattle Office of the Committee, a new office. And so I served on parole for two years, long enough to receive the Japanese as they came back from the relocation camps. It was one of our major jobs.

JL: That's very interesting. Now I understand one of the problems at that time was that the AFSC was not permitted to request someone to their service and therefore the government wouldn't be able to say, "You can go to the AFSC" because they required a request. So a lot of people did miss out that way. Some people did get through.

PJ: Well, the Service Committee hoped that since I got by with it they could change all that, and it didn't.

JL: The reason I asked whether or not you were doing your alternative service in Vera Cruz is because there were.. I know of at least one person who was retroactively granted service for a workcamp.

PJ: I feel sure that some of our boys down there were probably, in a sense, in the blindness of their draft boards to be allowed quietly to do this.

JL: When was the first time that you heard about the work in Gaza?

PJ: I had gone from Seattle to Pasadena as Executive Secretary and had been there from..

JL: Oh, I missed Pasadena [laughs].

PJ: From '46 to '48. All of a sudden the Service Committee said, "Will you go to Gaza?" I didn't know anything, I think, about Gaza except as a staff member. Not directly related to the program.

JL: Why do you think they selected you in particular?

PJ: Well, I think they were scraping the bottom of the barrel!

JL: [laughs]

PJ: It was absurd! Emmett Gulley and his partner whose name I can't remember were two senior, elderly Quakers from Philadelphia. They served the first term. And then Charlie Reed was sent out. I don't know for how long Charlie was there. I came in December of ' 49.

JL: You suffered an illness right before coming?

PJ: Yes, I had some sort of a virus that left something the doctor called "sibilant râles" some chest difficulty. They sent me to the desert for three weeks or a month to get rid of those. Maybe that's why Charlie was there too long. Maybe he waited for me.

JL: Well, it looked to me from the correspondence that they had started talking way back maybe even in September, but certainly in October, about the possibility of you coming out. And I guess you were ready to come by November and then got sick in December and wasn't able to make it out until the very end. Did you have any training or orientation to the Middle East and what was going on?

PJ: Not very much. Jean just pointed out a book that we read with great profit. Edmond Taylor's Richer By Asia which was all about to get into a different culture, learning to understand and appreciate it. We had that book and studied that. I presume there were some other materials as well, but it was such a rushed and such a mixed up situation for a month or two that I guess I got shortcutted.

JL: How did you go? By plane or boat?

PJ: By plane. We flew to Paris. I first met Charlie Read in Paris, actually. It was one of those times when...

JL: And then you probably went into Cairo?

PJ: Yes, we went into Cairo then went up by train.

JL: What were your first impressions? Do you recall?

PJ: We arrived in the dark. The train just sort of stopped in the dark and a massive muscle of people. Suddenly somebody grabbed me and said, "Here we go." I think it was Holtz. So we had arrived. It's pretty overwhelming. We were so busy getting acquainted with the administrative job that I didn't bother too much with..

JL: When you say "we", did Jean come with you at this point?

PJ: Yes, she was assigned to do the registry, the refugee registry business because her predecessor really wanted to get going.

JL: So you're in Gaza and you got there at night. You woke up the next morning and what did you find before you?

PJ: First thing, of course, was to get acquainted with the operation as it was going on. I spent a day in the rations center dealing out flour to refugees. I was taken over to the CMS

hospital run by a religious group, the only hospital in Gaza except for what the project had. And I went to the milk station and got acquainted with all the people. Really, it's kind of a fog.

JL: You pretty much just..

PJ: Just dropped in.

JL: Okay. One of the things that I read about your arrival -- and not about you but about the situation in Gaza at that time -- was that in terms of personnel, personnel morale was probably at an all time low. There were a lot of concerns.. I guess there was an Executive Committee that had started prior to your getting there. There were feelings that they were making decisions and that the top staff were simply a rubber stamp on those decisions. There wasn't as much cohesiveness, I guess is what I'm saying, among the general camp leaders and Quaker staff as there had been in the past. Then here you came into the middle of this and I'm wondering if you remember any of the issues that you had to deal with.

PJ: I remember that it seemed to me, as I went to do my first staff meeting, that that meeting of the whole team had to be the center of this thing. I made positive efforts to be sure that everybody who had anything to say or think should be a full part of that. It was a crisis in the making. They assigned somebody to the milk job at one of the camps who was allergic to milk. All kinds of trouble. But at that point there were a number of people due to go home. Some wanted to and some didn't. I made it my early effort to get well enough acquainted to them either to give them what they wanted, if possible, or to ease the pain of what they didn't want. I also settled with the budgets, which the UN demanded. Not that I made them up myself. It was a very constant group of finance people, but they had to be taken to Beirut and explained to Beirut and fought for. All these kinds of things.

JL: Do you remember anything about riots going on among the refugees in the camps?

PJ: Oh sure. There were always riots. They weren't always serious. There's the story I told this morning about taking...

JL: I wasn't there, so you'll have to repeat it.

PJ: I had taken a member of the UN Commission that was responsible for the whole agency around to show him the camps. He was a military man, either French or Belgium, I've forgotten which. He and I got into the back of the old red car, the old red Ford which was the director's car, and were driven into a camp where we were promptly surrounded by a

vast number of refugees shouting and screaming and shaking their fists, rocking the car back and forth to the detriment of the health of my companion. People stared inside of the car and grimaced as they shook the car, hateful. On my side, two of the boys I knew in the camp were smiling as they shook the car.

JL: [laughter]

PJ: It was clear that it wasn't serious, but they were trying to scare this big chief. And they succeeded. There were riots in especially some of the Bedouin camps,.

JL: Oh is that right? Why would that be?

PJ: I don't know whether they felt they were discriminated against or whether they were a little feistier than people from the villages. I was present one day when a riot [broke out] at a camp operated by one of our Swiss members. It was a couple who had been at a Swiss workcamp for years as leaders. There was a tendency on the part of the Bedouins to bring their swords into the distribution building and she wouldn't stand for it. She turfed them out. She said, "I'll keep your sword for you" and the sheik didn't want this. She'd say, "If you want to keep it you'll have to go out and you can come back in if you don't bring it." And she made it stick. It had all the appearance of a serious riot and it might have been so if it hadn't been for her ability to calm people. She was great and so was her husband. T hey threw rocks at the place and a couple of them, when they came in, revealed that they had weapons and made efforts to scare us. That, in fact, was the day I first saw a distribution center. None of the Quakers were frightened, but they'd had enough of it. I'm sure the Bedouins knew that it would be disadvantageous to their long term status if they got too excited.

JL: How did you feel the distributions were going at that point? Did you feel that the centers were working efficiently?

PJ: Yes. I think that was before an effort was made to remove the ineligible ration cards. Lots of people had two, three, half a dozen cards.

JL: I think that there were several times that was done. Were you there when they did one of the ration cuts?

PJ: Yes. This fellow, Holtz, and the others who'd been there long enough to understand the situation well did some remarkable pieces of work. Then the number of rations was being reduced by the UN Something had to be done.

JL: Al Holtz was really the top.

PJ: He was the center of the thing. All the active men on the staff were concerned with this and considered what they could do. They offered bribes, they tricked, they did all kinds of things. Don't say I said that, but they did They found out things they weren't supposed to know and they really had to do this because there simply would not be enough food. It was a risk.

JL: Do you feel that at any time anyone was denied rations because of the cuts? I mean in reality, didn't get fed because of it.

PJ: Oh no, no, no.

JL: They just reduced surplus.

PJ: If they found somebody who had three ration cards they made them give up two of them, but they were still getting what any other family was getting,. They weren't ruthless. If there had been anything ruthless there would have been meaningful riots that were dangerous situations.

JL: There is a person that I read a report on and I don't recognize him. Apparently he was camp staff: ________ Sadah was his name.

PJ: We had a thousand refugees on the payroll.

JL: I don't know that he was actually a refugee. He seemed to have had -- well, he wrote a report for the Service Committee to Colin Bell, so it seems to me like maybe he had one of the more responsible positions in the camp. At any rate, he talks about where he sees the function of the Service Committee being there from the point of view of being a local person, I assume. One of the things he says is that the Quakers are there to be a Christian presence. Did you feel when you came there that there was a distinctive Christian presence, first of all? And the second part of that question is: Do you think there was a distinctive Quaker presence and that it was aside from something other groups could offer? Was there something unique to the Quakers?

PJ: Yes. There certainly was an emphasis on the part of Quakers to be A Christian presence. Some of the Palestinians would make a distinction between Christian and Muslim. That was another distinction in our minds, but I can see it might have caused him to say we were a Christian presence. I think it was a Quaker presence, and that was a matter of behavior, not a matter of texts or written beliefs or preachings.

JL: Can you give me some examples of how that would have played out? If I were to look at this... For example, there was also a lot of talk when they were talking about extension. People were saying, "Any agency would be doing the same thing. We're not unique. There's nothing particularly Quaker about this operation, the Red Cross could take it over and do the same thing." What is it that made this one particularly Quaker?

PJ: The simplest illustration was that we were probably 50 Quakers at any time doing work that eight Red Cross staff were doing second hand. They didn't identify with people. They lived separately in guarded houses. I was in them a couple of times. We lived as close as we could live and still remain active at the level of local folks. I will say we were stingy with our own food. We were open and present and among the people all the time. If we sent a staff member and a Palestinian assistant out to a milk station or a feeding place there you were. There were 10,000 refugees who were getting rations that day. We weren't working through somebody else's hands. We were working as best we could through our own and I think that's what constitutes a Quaker presence.

JL: Do you think that had any kind of an impact on the area, way of life? Obviously they got fed and their life was held together.

PJ: Well, obviously they saw my wife down through the soup. In the daytime you'd buy some film but you'd never find other agents out in that kind of situation. We were really a part of poor and nasty life. Did you hear Nancy Nye this morning?

JL: No, I didn't. I had an interview this morning.

PJ: She spoke to us for perhaps 15 minutes, emphasizing just this point.

JL: An interesting story and one I'm wondering if other people might have experienced: Al Holtz was telling me that he went back later, about '67, and had met with some of the people who had been in the refugee camps. They were having some kind of.. they had gone up through the UN and now they were having some kind of -- don't quote me on the date, it might not have been that long after but it was several years after.

PJ: Well, it could have been that long because he worked in Beirut for several years.

JL: That's right he did. He said that this group of people who had been in the camps with the Service Committee, where the Service Committee work was, had a meeting. He said the first thing they did was have a minute of silence before the meeting. He said he had never, never seen that in any other group. He felt that was really an impact they had made.

Maybe they didn't carry that into any other area of life, but at least at that meeting they had a moment of reflection.

PJ: Of course, the Gaza team was not the first Quaker influence. There were two Quaker schools in Ramallah for a hundred years. Some of the people up there may very well have contributed to this basic feeling. On a project later, when I was in Jordan working in some villages, we were run out. The political situation was a rock and we just fell to pieces. The British tried to get the Jordanians to join something called the Baghdad Pact, which was a group trying to protect themselves against Iraq. We were ______ out of our project completely. The government chose to try to punish the rioters and they punished the rioters by finding out from which villages they came, and the automatically punishing the village because they didn't know the individual. This is, of course, an old trick, the British colonial business. We had to get out but our staff reconvened in Amman and we talked it over. They wanted us to intervene with the villagers, with the government so they would not be punished. I said, "We can't really do that, but if you'll rebuild the buildings you destroyed we will provide the materials." We wanted them to sign as representatives of the village to do this. One fellow spoke up and said, "We're signing but the Quakers aren't." Another said, "The Quakers don't have to sign, what they say, they will do." That was my top experience.

JL: That's great.

[Side A ends, Side B begins]

JL: I wanted to talk a little bit about the transition from the Service Committee work into the UN work. You were really there for the transition period.

PJ: Yes, we'd been employed for four months.

JL: When you got there in January, was part of your role to assist in a smooth transition into UN work? Did you know at that point?

PJ: I didn't know it. I was there indefinitely. I didn't know how long it would be. Never did know.

JL: What was your first knowledge of the fact that it was going to become UN work, that we were no longer..

PJ: Well, the UN had insisted that staff be reduced. When they were so insistent may have been April of 1950.

JL: April 30th is when it stopped being AFSC. May 1st was the first day of UN work.

PJ: Well, for a month or so before that I was under the weight of reducing the staff by a considerable amount. A lot of it was probably foreigners who were sent home. We then had to be sure that the Palestinians who had been assistants to those staff members could be upgraded to actually UN employment situations. Now how long that took place I really have no idea.,

JL: But there were some staff people, you mentioned, that wanted to stay on, some AFSC staff people that wanted to stay on?

PJ: This was more.. I think I was referring to a period before that when we were trying to reduce staff. There were some people who were not really happy and not doing the best. It was better to let them go home. They had to be eased.

JL: What other kinds of things did you need to do to start the transition to the UN work? Did the operations change in any way?

PJ: There remained five or six of us, more if you counted nurses, certainly. We simply had to be sure that the ones that left were replaced by competent staff. That really is all. There were nasty messes with the budget. We kept having to go to Beirut and argue with people.

JL: So you didn't just wake up at some point in the spring and find yourself a UN employee and find policies and changed, procedures had changed. None of that?

PJ: Nothing had changed at that point. At the time Meyer was sent out to Beirut. A. J. Meyer. At that time he came with a full training from the UN I don't recall I changed anything except that infernal budget.

JL: He was sent up as your assistant?

PJ: My successor. He was there for how long I don't know, but I left the 1st of August and he came two days before that and simply took over. He brought other new men, staff. But he brought, certainly, new ways in which the operation had to conform to UN standards rather than to Quaker practical ways of doing things.

JL: During the transition period there were some questions about how much was going to be turned over to the UN At one point there was a sort of struggle around schools. Some of the staff really felt that the schools that were started by the Quakers should remain Quaker schools, that there be someone there who was from the Service Committee or a Friend because they felt that the schools would not be what we would think of as education. They

would become propaganda centers, this sort of thing. Do you recall any of the controversy around the schools?

PJ: No, not a thing.

JL: Do you have any feelings about whether or not that might be the case?

PJ: Well, it certainly would depend who was running the schools. If it was a UN agency...

JL: I think they were talking about turning them over to a local group.

PJ: Well, they certainly would have reverted to a different style of teaching. That's interesting. I wish you could talk to Joseph Kachadourian about that. He remained on the job after all of the reductions were carried out and he probably knows much more about what went on than I do. He's the most dignified looking man in the outfit.

JL: Oh yes. He was Al's assistant.

PJ: Yep.

JL: There were also reports at the time after the UN took over from some of the people who stayed on. I guess the UN was sending people to report on the operations and they were coming back with reports saying "The Quakers have formed their own little group there and they're not willing to give it up." I forget what the word was that they used. It was amusing though. At any rate, did you get any indications at all from the UN that your Quaker operations needed to become more non-sectarian.

PJ: No. Nothing like that. By that time A. J. was on the job.

JL: In terms of the relationships between the refugees and AFSC staff, I understand that most of the people there didn't speak Arabic.

PJ: Most of us didn't.

JL: I'm wondering if there were any friendships that you saw develop among refugees and staff, or if there was a hierarchical relationship. What kind of relationships did they have with the people beyond just being, "We're giving you food."

PJ: Again, if you talk to Holtz you'll learn a lot more than I can tell. There were relationships.

JL: Friendship relationships that you saw?

PJ: Yes. _________ and Joseph _______ and you would see Musaf ______ if he weren't too sick to be here. They're prime, outstanding evidences of mutual respect and affection which lasted all these years.

JL: Were you at all involved in any of the medical?

PJ: Well as a director that was part of it.

JL: One of the people -- and this was an early report -- has written that the traditions and customs of the people in the area made it very difficult for them to cooperate in regards to health and sanitation and that this was a constant struggle within the camps, to make sure that people followed certain procedures to keep the camp clean, to keep their health up.

PJ: I wish you could talk to Vern Ping.

JL: We will, we will.

PJ: He revealed a lot in this morning's session about this that I didn't know. I was well directed by circumstances and by people there who knew more than I did. I have no qualms about admitting that to begin with. You'll get a lot better information from Holtz and Ping, Kachadourian and Alan Horton than you will from me.

JL: Did you take part in the negotiations at the UN about how the transition was going to take place?

PJ: Whatever took place in Beirut I was part of.

JL: How did that go? Do you remember those meetings?

PJ: I don't remember any problem except that it was very difficult for us to cut down so fast and so far. I suppose there were some among us who felt we couldn't, that the Palestinians couldn't handle it. What the result may have been after we left... There were times when it was very difficult to be sure that fairness and honesty were dominant. I think there were great possibilities for flaggeling. Some of it worked. Simple and innocent.. for instance, when milk was given out to everybody a lot of people didn't like milk and didn't want it and they sold it to the local market. A couple of eager beavers set up yogurt making systems and cheese too. They made yogurt and sold it on the market.

JL: So you think some of your relief was contributing to an underground economy?

PJ: Wasn't underground! It was sold on the street all over the place. Somebody was eating the product, it wasn't a waste. It was a little around the corner, or under the table you might say, but somebody was getting the benefit. It's like the weaving project or the sale of ration boxes and bags.

JL: Right, that was interesting. Tins.

PJ: It was immense.

JL: But that was actually the Quaker economy in a lot of respects. The tins were distributed.

PJ: That wouldn't be a good description. They sold stuff and used the money to fill in the beginning of the education program.

JL: It was of some benefit to Quaker service, that's true. Are you saying then that the UN operation stopped some of that or there was concern that it was going to stop?

PJ: No, I'm not saying that. I don't know what the UN operation did,.

JL: You were there for six months of it, is that right?

PJ: I don't think anything changed during the time I was there. The UN influence surely came with A.J. Meyer. I was part of the local team and my job included fighting for what we wanted to do in Beirut. The Beirut UN was under James Keehan's direction. He knew these Quakers were doing a good job and he never put down regulations that caused us trouble. Some regulations did come from an office that calls itself indispensable in the counting of people. They sent us all kinds of great big papers to record all aspects of people. This was pretty stupid.

JL: Like a census?

PJ: They wanted to know how many of this, how many of that, how many children there were in the average family, things like that. To us it didn't mean anything.

JL: Did you do it anyway?

PJ: I think people managed to get by and do what was necessary, but without enthusiasm. I remember several very hot letters from a certain Frenchman who was in charge of that stuff in Beirut.

JL: Staff morale stayed pretty much the same?

PJ: There were, as we cut down, some people who inevitably had to be told "You've got to go home" and they didn't want to. There were some problems but it wasn't serious.

JL: Who made the decision at the point that the UN took over? Who made that decision about staffing? Was that still you who made that decision and did they allow you to oversee that still? When the UN took over in the end of April or May were you still making staff decisions at that point?

PJ: Yes.

JL: And you continued to do that all the way into August?

PJ: Simply, "You can have ten." I had to figure out who would be most important.

JL: Are there any people, refugees, other than the two you've mentioned who particularly stand out for some reason in your mind in the time period that you were there?

PJ: It was 42 years ago. I'm sure there were. There was a whole _______ of these very competent, hard working, responsible [people]. No fol-di-rol with them. They were strict. Most of them had been associates of team members for a long time. There were rumors of a great black market in cloth. I don't know whether it was true, but again, if..

JL: Are you thinking through our weaving project?

PJ: Yeah. Bernie Claus over here,,

JL: I didn't hear anything about that,

PJ: I can illustrate it as a method by which they managed to find ways to cut the ration list. If somebody died it would never be reported, of course, because with his name already on the ration list, after he died they still could collect rations from him. At one point some brilliant character discovered that when someone died if you offered his family a winding sheet, a shroud, when he came in to collect the shroud you could work one number quickly,

JL: You'd know he died. [laughs]

PJ: Yes. Now that isn't trickery. And I think that went on for a long time.

JL: I had actually read that there were guards stationed at the cemeteries at one point. Now, I don't know if that was when you were there, but at one point they had put guards at the cemetery so that people couldn't sneak the bodies in. They would have to...

PJ: I hadn't heard that.

JL: Yeah, there's a couple of interesting stories in cutting ration lists. That was one of the things that they did. Another was requiring midwives at the births. Having midwives.

PJ: Assurance that there was a birth to add to the list.

JL: Exactly. This person who wrote this report about the cemetery also says that she's ashamed to say some of the methods that they went through to cut the lists. But my sense is that most people, while they felt uncomfortable -- or worried is I guess more the word -- they felt worried that they might be taking food from somebody who really needed it, most really understood that it was the necessary thing to do.

PJ: Of course, there was a wide variety of people on the team. There were people who were terribly upset and were so sympathetic with the refugees that it was difficult for them to admit the circumstances were forceful and something had to be done. I remember at least

two, both of whom are dead so I won't quote their names even, but they were thoroughly upset. On the other hand, the men who were doing this cutting, Holtz and others, were practical, hard driving people and they knew it had to be done. I don't think they were intentionally rough or rude or anything else, but there it was and they were charged with doing it. Did this person indicate any of the specific things that worried her?

JL: Let me see.. "The muktars and sheiks were directed by the military authorities under threat of jail sentence to cut the lists of refugees." They were directed by the military. This is, by the way, entitled "Measures Employed by the American Friends Service Committee to Reduce the Lists."

PJ: Have you checked that with Holtz?

JL: I have had an interview with him, actually, but I'm not going to tell you what he said until I hear you, [chuckles]

PJ: Of course not, but he would no more about that. He and Alan Horton would know about that.

JL: Alan Horton was involved in that as well?

PJ: He and Holtz were very closely associated. Alan is an Arabist, by the way. He would know more about what was important to the Arabs and Palestinians than most of the rest of us.

JL: I guess the sheiks and muktars had lots of extra ration cards at some point and so they took some back from them.

PJ: I know there were some, and some of those were obtained by the sheiks and muktars fraudulently to begin with, or by forcing some of their people to lie to get second or more ration cards.

JL: Here's one. "New born infants received rations when the heads of family can report two false ones." So they only would add a newborn baby if the family could take off or find two false registrations.

PJ: Again, that's the kind of thing these boys knew about and I didn't. I was rather separated from these things. Nobody ever said that to me.

JL: At one point there was an evaluative report written by Emmett Gulley, so it was way before your time there, but one of the things he did say was that they were having a really terrible time with the local staff and that there was one point -- I think it was only six months into

the project -- they had already let go over 100 people because their concepts of honesty didn't adhere with the Quaker way of doing things.

PJ: I don't know as that's true.

JL: Was that your experience?

PJ: No, I never had that experience. But knowing what's important in their society and how different it is from what's important in our society... It may be what we thought was dishonesty was not so ________. Your family and your clan are much more important than any broader concept. Behind all of them is the Koran which the Muslim continued, particularly, to cite as a control. It doesn't even say things the way we say things. They're very different. Until you're there long enough to really feel these differences... If somebody steals your pocketbook that's dishonest, but when somebody contrives a little bit to get an extra ration when his family's already starving, you do it because the family is much more important than any other concept. We had the same problem in Jordan.

JL: The other half of my question, then, would be do you think perhaps there wasn't enough staff orientation to be sensitive to the local customs and mores and that kind of stuff?

PJ: If people were delivered to Gaza the way I was, with no orientation, then yes! Some of the people, like Alan Horton, are Arabists. They would understand. I had to learn the hard way.

JL: When you said that when you got there there were some people who were terribly unhappy and needed to go home...

PJ: I suppose that is a reflection of the fact that morale was very low. If you assign a person who can't stand the sight of milk to run a milk center you're beat before you start.

JL: Why do you think it was, though, that morale was so low? You didn't have any information ahead of time saying, "We've had administrative problems," or "we've had staff problems here."

PJ: People were sent out without orientation and in an emergency that's understandable. I wouldn't go weeping through the next 40 years because that happened. There is a thing that.. Did you ever know Julia Branson? She was a great gal. At one point when they were getting ready to set up this team, one of the officers in the Service Committee which I won't name, sent her a list of people they wanted to send to Gaza. She looked at it and she looked up at who'd given her the list and said, "They're unloading on you!" Some people

were unquestionably unloaded. I presume a wide discussion of this matter wouldn't do the Quaker cause any good, and I don't know who they were, but I do know some people didn't fit in with the team as well as others did, which is just the way it was.

JL: When A. J. came in August and you left, was there any arrangement made for him to oriented in the field? Were you able to take him around and show him the operation?

PJ: That sort of thing, in a very superficial way. I can't remember at this point that there was any real overlap between me and A.J.

JL: Did he seem to feel like he ________?

PJ: I've never seen A. J. since that day. He died nine years ago.

JL: I think that's what she said. Well, is there anything you feel you need to say about the project that I may have missed? I have to say, there really isn't a lot in the record from March on. From the time things were turned over to the UN we didn't get many of the materials,

PJ: We were too busy to make the reports?

JL: No, I think you made the reports to the UN and so they didn't end up in the Quaker archives. We don't have personal letters, which I assume people are holding themselves.

PJ: And you don't have access to UN archives I suppose.

JL: Well, I'm sure we could have access to them but we didn't have the funds for that in this project. Is there anything important you think I might have missed?

PJ: I can't think of anything. 42 years, you know. This is too much. You should have done this in 1960.

JL: Yeah, I agree. Well, I appreciate your taking the time to talk to me.

End of Interview

AFSC ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #602
Narrator: JOSINA VREEDE BURGER
Interviewer: Paula Goldberg

[note: Heavy accent made transcription extremely difficult]

G: My name is Paula Goldberg. I'm interviewing Josina Vreede Burger at the 4-H in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Today is September 20th, 1992. The purpose of the interview is the Oral History Project of the AFSC Gaza Reunion.

Can you just restate your full name, date of birth and place of birth?

B: My name is Josina Burger, my husband's name Vreede. Date of Birth, 21st of May, 1910. Place of birth in the Netherlands. It's a village because my father was a Frenchman.

G: Can you just tell me a little bit about where you grew up and your family?

B: I grew up in a village in a ____ family. There were 10 children, and I am number 8. It was a very blessed life. There was lots of food and a very quiet life. But not all the children were at home, usually, because my brothers were at boarding schools. There were no good schools in the village more than the grammer schools. We never had any more than four or five children at home except for vacations. They were happy days, those days with my parents. My eldest sister was also in a boarding school. When I was about 9 years old my parents moved to a village spaced between _____________ University. We were there two years when my father and the family moved to Fleeseland, that's in the north. The school was a secondary school. Also very nice, but too quiet a village. I didn't like it too much. After six years ___________ and my parents moved to the south of __________. These are mostly built recently, at least not so much earlier than 30 or 40 years.

G: Why did your family keep moving around?

B: Clergymen usually do. Now I had _______ was already _________ civil engineer and we had to move around also to various stations, a lot of ______ and also clergyman. Another problem was what we call ________. I'm not quite sure what it is in English. ____building huge bridges. In old days -- well, sometimes it still happens -- they make land out of sea. All of this, of course, ________.

G: How was the religion of your ________ brought into the family, how did it effect your family?

B: Oh, my father was not from a very religious family. _______ people in Notre Dame and other places in the harbor with the ships. When he was studying he studied in ___________ and he had a class of students. None of them were very religious. So one day they started talking about religion and he said, "Well, nobody knows it. I ______ theology and I can tell you anything." Once he started he got very interested. The family didn't like it. He had a very good future in Harvard, but ___________, income. He was proud. All his children had to study. I didn't go to ask their help, but still we had a good life. A very rich life.

G: Were you very close, as a family, with your brothers and sisters?

B: Yes. We were supposed to go to church and Sunday school. On the other hand life was very free. We had dance lessons. We were very free thinking. ________ he was so much older, he's not alive anymore. But I understand, he had other _______ for business than I had. And because religion was new to him.. he was atheistic. ___________ the church. I think that this is very _______ but this is an exception, because I think many of the Protestant churches, especially ones I hear coming from the fundamentalists, I think that's something terrible. I don't think we have that sort of thing, not so much as here.

G: Where did you end up studying? Did you go to a university?

B: ________ to the next station, and then it took half an hour to get to the town where the school was. We had to walk so we had to get there very early. So I had some difficulties, and it was very hard then. In those days you didn't have television. We really had, most evenings, we were working late on our homework. Then I had family __________. I said, "I don't think I've studied _______. Once we went with our parents to south Germany or something. Very nice, but we didn't have _________. We had lots of family and nieces and nephews and cousins.

G: Is this when you decided to go to Gaza?

B: No, I always thought I would be a doctor or a nurse, and I hoped to know more about people's health and what to do about it. Then I thought, "I'll be a nurse" because it was, at that time, a _________. Family _________. Then there was this group of girls who became nurses and I thought that school would be shorter than if I have to study medicine. The doctors at that time took six or seven years.

G: Where did you go traveling?

B: That's when I had finished my nursing education. Before I started nursing school I went to England ____________. Of course, I would have some exercise in language. But also for about four or five months I was with family. We always had to do three languages, French, German and English. I didn't like the language that much. [inaudible -- too soft] Once I made a very small effort to get a job there, but I didn't succeed straight away so then I left altogether and said, "No more German". In London where I had work, I knew a nurse who was from a very high family in Vienna. So in Vienna I worked for some time. It was good practice for German. German wasn't so very interesting.

G: What was your first experience with Quakers? Where did you first hear about them?

B: Come in touch with the Quakers? Oh, much later. I'd been working with ______ displaced persons. It's like the refugees, in Germany. After two years I said, I got engaged to a doctor.

G: This was after the war?

B: Just after the war.

G: You went down to Germany or you were in Germany already?

B: No I went after the war.

G: Did you go down specifically to work with this program?

B: Oh yes, because also in the war we couldn't move, we ________. After five years we did our best to get out of the country as soon as possible just to do something else. Then I saw _________. So I was there for two years, about, in camps of Jewish refugees. _________

G: So which area did you work in, which camp?

B: Where, in Germany? A combination. We had one headquarters in Beirit, not Beirut. Then we had a huge camp... also at the castle with children, orphans.

G: What did you do for the people there? What was your assignment?

B: I had an office. You'd look at people's health, if something was needed __________. ________ to a doctor and then they left. So I was home again and I got a telephone from the Quakers. That's when I met them for the first time.

G: You got a telephone call from the Quakers?

B: Yes, from Geneva.

G: Why did they call you?

B: To ask if I would go to the Middle East.

G: Who recommended your name? How did they hear about you?

B: __________ recommended me. I didn't know they had my name because when I left it seems that my name was somewhere registered as a nurse who had been working with the refugees. Then the Quakers needed nurses for the first lot of people going there, so they had asked _________ if they knew of any nurses that might be able to come. They gave them my address so I got several letters, and then the telephone.

G: What did you think about it?

B: I thought, "That's a strange ______." A few days before I got this call they had in the paper a little article like that. A journalist had been in the desert somewhere and he had seen all kinds of people. He said they are probably Palestinians who were in a very bad situation because they were chased out of their country. I _________ everything was done for the displaced persons, and I thought I should do something about it. Two days later I got this telephone. Also, thinking of everything is predicted.. but it was just rather curious.

G: Nice coincidence. Did you ever have an impression of the Quakers?

B: Yes, because I think my father had been to England as a student and he had been visiting Quakers, he told us. He talked about the silences they had and he said, "Well, I think in a way I agree with them, but I think I would miss out on music after a while." That's all I knew about them. So when _______ said, "We don't have enough, probably, Quaker nurses and we're asking if other people who want to work with us if they're not against our principles." I said, "I don't know what your principles are." He said, "Well, we don't like war." _______ He laughed and he didn't ask anything else. I thought it was rather nice.

G: What time was this then?

B: December, 1948.

G: So this is just the beginning.

B: Yes, it was just starting. Then I had to have all kinds of shots, of course.

G: You said at this time you were engaged. Were you married?

B: No, I was engaged before, but that didn't... that was a Brazilian doctor who worked in Germany. That was finished.

G: So you really had to decide for yourself if you were going. What were some thoughts going through your head about if you should go or not go?

B: _______ said, "That was a terrible insult. ______ should have stayed i Germany." I _______ work in a Dutch hospital and they had problem with people. They asked me if I could _____. "Oh yes, of course. Straight away."

G: How did your family react?

B: All right. Oh yes.

G: They were supportive of you going?

B: The other sister got engaged when she was 18 to a missionary. They married when she was 20 and they went to Indonesia. She came from boarding school. It ________ but I know it was a very difficult point for them. The younger you were in a big family the less they bother with you.

G: How old were you at the time?

B: 39 already. But still, ___________ always feels so much younger. He has something to say about it. So he was the only ______ one, especially as he was very supported himself. I quarreled with him several about it. Of course I didn't let him decide what I was going to do.

G: What were some of your motivations for wanting to go?

B: I liked to work to help people. That was it. I wanted to help. Also, of course, in the beginning when I went to these hospitals in England and in Vienna I did it also for traveling and getting to know the country. I also, later when you could travel as much as you liked, it's nicer to work in a country. You get to know much better, the country, than when you go as a tourist. It depends, of course.

G: So being in Holland you weren't able to go and have an orientation. You just went from Holland straight to Gaza?

B: Whaqt?

G: When you went to Gaza you went straight to Gaza, you didn't go to Philadelphia and have an orientation?

B: Oh, no.

G: Were you given any Quaker orientation or any orientation to the area?

B: I knew only one thing. There was an office in Cairo. ________ didn't even know where I was going. I had to have a VISA so I went to the office in the Egyptian office, and they said, "Well, you must have your VISA." There was a man who was helping me and he said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Well, I don't know." "What are you going to do?" "I'm

going to work with refugees." "Oh," he said, "You're probably going to Gaza." He was a Palestinian and he was one of the first to get a job in another country.

G: So going down there, did you fly?

B: Yes, from Geneva to Cairo.

G: When you arrived in Cairo what did you think?

B: I came to the office in the winter. These countries aren't most agreeable in winter because they are not prepared to protect you against cold. The old planes are not so pleasant, you know _________ so I had to wait about two days before we went to Gaza. We had also one or two other people who were going.

G: Who were they, the two other people?

B: It was Corrine Hardesty, journalist, and the other I don't know.

G: Not part of the project?

B: Yes. From the project, yes, oh yes. There were lots of formalities.

G: Did you stay at somebody's house when you were there in Cairo?

B: I think we stayed in the house of the office there.

G: I know that Betty and Kelly lived there.

B: But they were not there yet. They were in Gaza. We went with a Turk in their only car. You don't go with one car. So when we left we came to ________, a town in Egypt near the Suez canal. We had to cross the Suez Canal. We slept because we needed the whole day because the whether wasn't so good for Gaza. That hotel was very dark and cold. Corrine and I had a room together and we said, "Oh, this is terrible," but we had, with our luggage, hot water bottles. So we asked the hotel and said, "we are going to Gaza early and could you make us a hot water bottle." They looked at each other and said, "You ________ hot water bottles." We came back to our bed and on top they were ice cold because they had been laying in there for one or two hours. Then we went to bed and said, "Well, we'll get warm" but we didn't. So all our clothes we had taken off, and we put them on again, even our coats. In the morning at 7:00 or earlier they called us, "Wake up, we are leaving in half an hour. You'll just have time to dress." We said, "That's all right" and we slept again. Then after half an hour they opened the door and said, "We're going. You're still sleeping? You have to dress!" We said, "We are already" and stepped out of our bed completely dressed.

We went through the desert and there was a sand storm. It was awful. Sometimes you couldn't even see the road. It was as high as that, the sand. So we had to dig a way to get through with the car.

G: What were you thinking when you had to do all this?

B: It was an adventure. But I don't like the cold, that's all. When we got to Gaza it was dark already. Betty received us and said, "Oh, you're cold. There is a bath here." I said, "Oh, lovely" and I went into the bathroom. There was this much water. (laughs) But they'd been there already one or two weeks so they thought already it was beautiful. (laughs)

G: What were the conditions when you first got there other than the cold? What were the conditions of the camps?

B: The camps I found interesting. They didn't have transportation and the doctor of the medical office and the team, Peterson, was a day late because he was talking of the _______ organizations and was out of supplies and was looking for doctors to work. So we had three nurses; Dora, Lucy and I. We wanted to start working, but we didn't know anything and didn't have anything to work with. Then the ________ of the camps said, "Why don't you go to the officer in Gaza and ask him if he could suggest what you could do." So we did and he said, "Go each to a different camp and maybe you can think about what you could do there." The Gaza doctors went, all of them, to a camp one hour or so.. so that's what they told us. So we had to try to get transportation. It was very difficult. We had to try to get a lift to _________ and he took me to Neuserat in front of what he called the _______ office. That was a building left over, an army building, from the English army.

G: I had heard that Neuserat was an old English prison.

B: Yes.

G: Were you able to see that?

B: Of course I wanted to know what they had. I said, "Is there a clinic here?" This is a building where hundreds of people are shouting, so he made a way for me through the door. I tried to see what was necessary and wanted, but I said "I'll do that later" because he didn't understand. Then I came to one big room with a dirty floor, broken windows, ice cold wind blowing through, no furniture, some boxes where you could sit. In the corner was a boy giving DDT to the people. Nowadays you wouldn't do that. Another one was giving anti-typhoid shots, and one was treating eyes. No doctor. But the one boy spoke English and he

said, "Doctor will come today because he hasn't been in two days." When the doctor came people came in slowly, one behind the other, but that was a mistake. We tried to push them to where they had to go because there were so many. They had hardly time to talk to the doctor. Well, the doctor didn't have anything to work with except five bottles with solutions; one for _____, one for _____, things like that. After half an hour the doctor had seen 75 patients. He was exhausted. He said, "I can't stand it anymore. I'm going home and I'll be back tomorrow" and he left.

G: This is just when you got there? As it was being set up?

B: There was nothing yet.

G: Where was the doctor from?

B: The doctor was from Gaza, they were doctors from the town. They didn't know what to do with the situation. They were a town of 60,000 and there were 200,000 people without anything coming in. What can you do? That's why we came, to try to do a little more.

G: How big of a team did you come with, medical team?

B: There were only there three nurses in the beginning and Doctor Peterson. That was all. We had nothing to work with.

G: You didn't have any supplies?

B: No, [inaudible] solution. We did everything to put it in. People had to bring an empty tin or something.

G: Was the UN helping get you supplies?

B: That's why we came, and that's also [inaudible] supplies. But they did get the people, yes. So that's why we had to create a _____ in Gaza strip. _________ they were also camps. Gaza was only for the ________.

G: How long did it take to set up a little clinic even?

B: First you have to have a building. It was also leftover a little building from the Army which was filled up with corn or something. Well, those people, of course, it wasn't their property so they could be ordered to leave it. I'm sad to say we had to do that and look for something else. Of course this man promised, but he didn't do it. Finally the Egyptian officer said, "Well, if you don't have it tomorrow I'll put you in the prison." So that's what he did. Then we got a key and we started cleaning the building when we got the supplies.

Then Cornelia Trimble came with the _______ and she needed also a little building for her _________. This building was too small for a clinic anyway so we had to move to another one, using this as a ________. Finally I had _______ and that became a very nice clinic.

B: This was a clinic for the whole area or were there different clinics at each camp?

G: For the camp, for 20,000 people. But then we had slowly.. the international nurses came in for the Quaker team and each camp -- there were eight camps I think -- they had one Quaker nurse and one doctor coming from Lebanon or Egypt to work with us. There were some local nurses also from Egypt. It lasted sometime before we had enough because you needed a lot. Then there were male nurses, men who had been working with the British Army. And they were quite good also. Well, anyway..

G: How big was the staff with all the nurses you worked with, some other international nurses, the Quakers, some British nurses, and also you had local nurses and doctors.

B: Yes, but the Quaker nurses were the leaders, clearly. ______ They could order the supplies and so on. They had a doctor from Lebanon, Syria or somewhere. They had some local nurses. Course we needed ________ at all, but they had Red Cross nurses, they had local nurses.

G: How do you think the refugees and the local residents perceived your team coming in?

B: In the beginning they were used to being treated badly and had a terrible life. The Egyptian army had helped them a little with food, but nobody knew ________. The food that was coming in ________, they had old tents from the army that they gave to the people, but those tents weren't so good. There was a huge storm one day and they were all blown away, these tents. ________ terribly wet and ice cold, and there were sick people and babies. Everything was just terrible. Then a Finnish nurse [inaudible] and I was going to show her the tents. She didn't understand English. When we came to the camp, these people were very angry and came to her...

G: Who was angry?

B: Angry.

G: Who?

B: The people in the camps.

G: Why were they angry?

B: They had no place to go in the cold. Then I thought ________ I couldn't get away from the crowd so I got out of the jeep and talked to them. _________ spoke some English. So I said, "I think it's terrible. I think we want to help you but at the moment what can I do? You just think I can ask the people in Gaza to get you more rations or something like that, but you know I can't do that." The family that _________ some time [inaudible]. So I said, "This is terrible. Something has to be done. What can we do?" They said, "I promise that I will get something for you." So finally we didn't have much anyway. Finally we said, _________ kerosene, something to make a little fire. That was all they brought, but it was something in any case. Of course when summer started the trouble was less. But it was a very difficult time.

G: What were some of the initial medical problems you had to deal with?

B: You were not here yesterday?

G: No.

B: The same story they asked me for, the medical organization at the camp. [coughs] What was the question?

G: Some of the medical problems.

B: Some of the medical problems. The worst was TB. They all _________ little children and everything. In tents there were 40 people living in them. We tried to get these tents in one corner of the camp in any case. TB. We were rapidly getting worse with TB. We had to do something about it. Later on there was a team who came in to give shots. In Gaza there was a small barrack full of people. It was some miles from the camp. So we said we must do something about it. An Egyptian army doctor, a TB specialist said, "Well, I think we best organize a TB hospital. It wasn't usual that he would mix into our program, of course. But he talked to me and said, "Well, if you will try to start this plan I will work for you. I'll get commission from the army to be there. I think it's terrible _____ people who are." So I talked to _______ and he said, "Oh no, no, no. We can't start that. We don't have a budget for that." And we have already talked about it so much that he had already promises from Egypt that they would have built or rebuilt something to serve as a hospital. Egypt had given two nurses. One of our nurses, Mrs. Luther, said she wanted to work there too. We didn't get money, nothing, but there were many people who wanted to help. We had to ask people to go into food rations because we had nobody for food.

[Tape 1, Side A ends, Side B begins.]

G: This is a day later and we're continuing the interview. I was trying to find a part on the tape yesterday where you had mentioned about a TB specialist coming down. These specialists came down from where?

B: From the army. He was an army doctor and the Egyptian army was in Gaza. The doctors in that army didn't have much to do and got really very bored. They were very happy if they could help us, and it was very nice. This man, the TB specialist, had nothing to do in the army and was very much interested in doing some work. He started with this plan and helped us to talk to me a lot about it. Finally we had a very nice plan together. At first they didn't want to hear about it. They said, "We have no budget for that and you don't get anything from us, and you are not even allowed to start this." But then he had already gotten from Egypt so much help. He got money to fix a building. He got two nurses. And he got permission to work as a specialist there instead of being in the army, because he was an army doctor.

G: The Egyptian army doctors were doing nothing? How come there weren't more volunteers to your units?

B: Well, you know an army has regulations. If they're soldiers they can't just walk off and do something else.

G: Wouldn't this be part of their duty? Their soldiers here, but they're also...

B: Well, I can't judge. But I know in the army you're not supposed to. He got permission and got the help.

G: Did any other army doctors come and help? Nurses?

B: Yes.

G: I was reading also in some of the notes that there were two hospitals in the area?

B: Three hospitals. There was one very good surgeon. It was an English missionary hospital and he was a missionary. Gaza was quite Muslim. But the people liked him very much. He was a very good surgeon and it was a very good hospital. I liked it very much because I hadn't worked or met Muslims at all. But we know from our missions in Indonesia, they always said, "Oh, Muslims, you can't go over and do what you want to do." It was the same in Gaza. Only one man was converted but he was probably without family and had a nice income as a door keeper. People laughed about it, that he was converted. But nobody else.

I think this doctor had been there 30 years. People said, "He's such a nice man, only he's a bit impolite if he talks about religion and says 'your Mohammed was a big liar.'" He hasn't converted anyone but one person.

G: Did you work with these other hospitals?

B: No, I didn't work with the hospitals at all. They had their own people mostly, English nurses. We saw them because we had our patients there. There was a little Red Cross, but I don't know the other hospitals. They were small and primitive. Two little..

G: I wondered if they gave you any assistance in terms of their doctors or supplies.

B: Yes, we gave them supplies. We helped with supplies.

G: If they helped you!

B: They didn't help us much. They had enough to do already for people in Gaza. They were crowded of course. The population was 10 times larger.

G: If you had any serious cases in your clinic, would you send them up to the hospitals?

B: The first day I was in the camp and saw these hundreds of patients, and the doctor came for a half an hour, there was a Bedouin who had a big boy of 14 or 16. A very sickly boy. I said to the doctor, "I think he ought to be in the hospital right away." The doctor said, "Don't think about it. The hospital is overloaded. It's impossible."

G: How did the Gazan doctors on staff receive your team?

B: Very nicely. There was a good relationship with the doctors. Saturday we had here a doctor ___________. He had his own practice there. His brother worked in one of our camps. The other doctors, I knew one from Iraq, and his wife too. But they had regular work in Gaza so they didn't have much time. He worked in the camps sometimes for an hour or half an hour. Later on we brought our own doctors from Lebanon, from Syria, from Egypt also. I was at a time a rotating nurse and had to work for nurses everywhere.

G: You must have seen a lot of cases go in and out of the hospital. I was wondering, as time progressed, what were some of the medical cases you saw?

B: There was lots of _______ things like that from the cold. We did not have real serious epidemics except for the TB I told you about yesterday. We had a group coming from _______. A group of Palestinians who were coming out of Israel and there were two cases of typhus. Typhus is very serious, more so than typhoid even. We were afraid, of course, because it could become epidemic, but it did not happen. After this we got about 20 cases in

the camps of typhus. That's not many. That's not an epidemic. Then we had regularly some typhoid cases. But also not an epidemic. I'm very glad because the situation was good for epidemics. Not enough water, no hygiene at all. Then later we had a little more sanitation installations, latrines in the camps. But that lasted a long time. For all these people, I don't think we ever reached that.. We were really happy when we had one latrine for 300 people! [chuckles]

G: Was there a strong effort to prevent?

B: Yes, we had one team from one of the Scandinavian countries and they gave shots for TB and maybe something else.

G: Were there any educational...?

B: Health education? In the clinics we organized those. There were little courses for mothers. Also, we didn't have clothes for babies. It was very sad. Then we bought a little material and we taught them to make baby clothes. We did have some nurse midwives. They were mostly from Lebanon. There were five.. We had five camps and a little clinic room with six beds, about, for the maternity cases.

G: Did the doctors and nurses work with the midwives?

B: Well, there always had been local midwives, of course. Not enough for all these people. There were local midwives dressed in beautiful embroidered clothes and faces covered with coins. So it was a bit strange. They didn't have much education. So there were local midwives in the camp and there were these nurse [midwives] in these camps who supervised the local midwives. They couldn't do everything anyway and you couldn't take the work away from those people. This worked. People weren't, in any case, used to having much control as we would have here. It was quite an important...

G: I was talking to someone who told me this story where a riot broke out and everyone pulled out their knives. Everybody seemed to be carrying a knife.

B: Yes?

G: That was just part of their custom and culture. Do you remember seeing knife wounds a lot?

B: No. In the beginning we had a case where Kelly Peckham worked. [inaudible] One day the food.. I don't remember what it was. It was a very bad _____ because in Egypt so many people _________ Food was deteriorating in the heat and people, of course, don't want it like that and got very angry. They started shouting and throwing stones. Then there was an

Egyptian officer, a very nice boy, really. He pushed us into a quanset hut _______. We waited five minutes, perhaps, and he said, "Well, I talked to them." He went out without taking his weapons or anything. I thought this was very brave. He just went and talked to them and they quieted down. He was wonderful, just very good. You couldn't be angry with those people. They were so terribly unhappy. There was something they were talking yesterday about when they came in a camp in winter and there was a storm. There was a Finnish nurse and I took her out to show her the camps. It was raining and cold and stormy. We went in _____ camp and there was only mud, and wet, and rain. All the tents had blown down. There were old people sick, babies, laying in the mud. It was so terrible. Then this man came to our car and screamed and was very angry. I said, "What can we do?" So then I thought I'd just try to talk to them. There were some who could speak English and understand it. I started talking and said, "We couldn't do anything about it. If there was something I would do I would do it. If you let us go now we'll try to see what we can do." We came to Gaza and the team was having lunch. I said, "Something has to be done. I promised the people we'd do something." People said, no. They felt useless and powerless, really. I said to the director, "Tell me something I can tell the people." He said, "What can we do? We can offer them a little more kerosene perhaps." Later on, of course, we got better tents. It was the first tents they had that were old Egyptian army tents and they weren't any good any more. Very soon also there was a project to build little houses. The stones were easy to build there. They were used to that. They were just mud dried in the sun. So later ____ these houses. They were not very nice, but much better than the tents.

G: One of the things I wanted to ask you.. You went as a single woman. How do you think that was perceived by the group you were going to and the refugees? Here you are, a single woman from Holland coming there? Was it a strange concept for them?

D: No, they had been used to English occupation and met the English people. Also, ______ with the Gaza people. The people in the camp were often simple, small farmers and not very educated. But they had an approach, even if they couldn't treat you right... I remember the first days when we didn't have a clinic I used to walk through the camp and look at what was going on, try to understand a little. It was also rainy and cold. There was an old man sitting in front of the house where he stayed that was an old prison cell. In the cell there was so much water. He had a piece of paper and he had put on it a stone, and he knelt behind it for

breakfast. He had a piece of bread and two dates. He very nicely put it there and was going to have it there. Then the sun came and he was sitting there. I passed and I felt so really ashamed that we had such a good life. So I said, "Good morning." Those were the first words I learned. He looked up and said, "Oh, a thousand mornings to you!" I felt so touched, so nice. This smile. You see this man in such miserable condition, I thought he would be angry. But no. Later on I was married about 13 or 14 years after I'd left Gaza. Peter and I went on vacation in Egypt. There's a lot of difficulties but we got permission to visit Gaza for four days. SO when we went we met a Norwegian officer and he was to take us around the camps and show us something. It was _________. Then he showed us this school [inaudible]. Very nice school with cattle and chickens, poultry. The officer introduced us to the director who said he had people from Gaza. He was very formal. He said, "Oh yes, I knew something, what do you want to know?" I said, "I hoped to see the difference between the time now and when I'd been in Gaza working." He said, "Oh, _____. " He got up and started a speech so full of praise for the time that the Quakers were working there. It was nice but a little embarrassing.

G: Do you feel that you were treated any differently being single than the married women were treated?

B: From the general population or in the team?

G: Either.

B: I remember in the team that there was a Swiss couple there. The Quakers were talking about everything in the evenings in meeting. They said they found that they were sometimes left out. I said, "Oh I don't think I noticed that. I think we shouldn't talk about things like that. There are more important things there." Sometimes I thought maybe it's like that, but it didn't bother me very much.

G: How about from the refugees?

B: From the refugees it was _______. They had had difficulties with England, of course, and we had an English nurse and she didn't have any difficulties with the people. The Arabs are very peaceful people, very contrary to what we are told in western countries. I must say, they're terribly anti-Arab, anti-Palestinian. That's really one of the worst things I now read. I have been trying to do what I could to change that, but it's difficult. It's a little better now.

G: How about the attitudes of the Palestinian men.

B: They were nice and friendly. I only had most pleasant friendships.

G: So it wasn't a hardship going over single. How about any social events? Do you remember any?

B: Oh yeah!

G: I've heard there were a lot.

B: In the beginning we were tired and didn't want to have too many parties. But sometimes it was.. well the ________ had a very nice house and they invited people quite often. This was very interesting because I got to know the whole family. For some years I haven't heard from them but lately I have reunited with the Sheffy (?) family. They invited people. The first time I met a Palestinian family they had a big house with many rooms, but then one big room is where they received us. At the same time, the men and the women and the brothers of the family, two doctors and a civil engineer [inaudible]. Egyptian officers came also. They were also invited. That was wonderful. A next room was for the father of the family. He had his Gaza friends and people he knew, but they didn't connect. They had their own door even. We didn't enter the same door even. The mother had another part of the house with her daughters in law and her own daughter. I never met the father of the family after being there many times. I spoke to the mother but not to the father. He had been a very important man, a member of the Supreme Muslim Consul. That was very high ranked. But he was a very good Muslim also. He kept these rooms. But his sons were in the _____ of course.

G: Did you go to any weddings?

B: Well that wasn't so easy, but later on we had different houses and I had a house with a boy Mustafa looking after us. He was a very good cook and very nice boy. He said he was going to get married. So we said, "What do you want for your wedding as a present?" He said, "I have to pay for the wedding and I don't have much money yet, so if you would give a bit of money." So that's what we did. Then he invited us to the wedding and a man in the team. They're very curious but they hadn't seen a thing. [inaudible] They were in a separate home, all the men. They didn't see anyone in the house. Helen was there, and Myra. We were in a small group, three or four, and were coming into a nice place with trees and shore. And there was the door of the house where the boy was sitting. This boy had never seen his wife yet who he was going to marry. So there was some dancing and music. Not much

eating. It was a poor people. They had hundreds of guests sitting there. We got a cup of tea, but nobody else. (laughs) And then the girl came. She had to dance also, and she was so shy that she could hardly stand up. They had to help her dance. Then Mustafa came and you know, they were so shy to look at each other. He was something.

G: How old were they?

B: Oh, she was quite young. She was about 18 or 19, and he was somewhat older. I'm not sure, maybe 24 or 25. But the funny thing is we asked before, and no, he didn't know his fiancé yet, but he said he thought she was a nice girl and she could read and write and she could teach him. Later, 13 years later, we didn't meet him. Then he got a post as a policeman. Now again I heard that he was a very good cook and was setting out dinners. So he probably has a good life. I'm afraid of going back. It's so sad at the moment, such a bad situation. These Israeli settlements are too bad. I would feel so powerless and helpless going there, what can I do?

G: Have you ever gone back?

D: With my husband, as I told you, 13 years after I worked there. We have visited Gaza with the Norwegian officer.

G: This was about 1980?

D: No, 1964! Thirteen years. I left in '51.

G: Oh 13 years. I thought you were saying 30. Did you take any vacations from Gaza? Did you ever go outside of Gaza?

D: ________ took us to the beach and we had lunch together. That was very nice. Pete, my husband, was sitting between the two girls who didn't know anything about this Gaza time. I hadn't known them before. I was sitting between the two men I had known all these years. So we had a very nice time. I had been at the house of Mustafa and his wife. Where we were staying, this lady we knew from before. We sometimes played bridge. Also she worked there.

G: When you returned in 1964, was it still under Egyptian occupation?

B: I don't quite know. I don't think so. No. I don't think it was. But even when the Egyptian occupation was there we were very friendly with the Egyptians, and the Gaza people also I think. They invited us sometimes.

G: Did you see any changes from the '50s to the 60s in terms of now it was relatively a free place. Was the situation different?

B: The point is, of course, that Israel had occupied Gaza. I don't know exactly when the Suez crisis was. England and France wanted to take the Suez Canal back after all these years as their property because there was a rule that they would have to give it up about three or four years later anyway. The Egyptians said now they had to do _______ and it really needs repairs and everything and the English wouldn't do anything about it. So they said, we take it over now. Nassau was there then and he wanted to do something brave for his people. England and France and Israel started sending armies. Then Eisenhower -- and I've admired him always for that -- he said, "This is nonsense what you're doing and you're going back at once." And they did. That was one good thing. I wish other presidents of America had been just the same. Then I don't know how long, I think it was a very short time, Israel occupied Gaza. When they went away they stole everything. That's what the director of the school told us. Everything was much better. I think the whole area did quite well. UNRWA had really improved it. They had received gifts for schools. Housing had improved a little. People had made some little ____ on their houses.

G: The infrastructure, water systems, sewage systems?

B: Well the system has always been difficult. It was so near to the ______ and the water supply of Gaza had been on the other side. It was terrible because lots of people had lost their land and also water supply. Even when I was there I remember that _______ had no water. I remember that we only had water for food. I saved in the evening a cup of to clean my teeth. It was terrible. If you didn't have a bath you could go to the sea, but...

G: You were there until pretty much the end of the program.

B: After the Quaker program I stayed on.

G: How was the transition?

B: It was a change, of course, and a lot of people left.

G: Was the transition a smooth one?

B: No, I talked Saturday that I've always appreciated very much that the Quakers decided to give more responsibility to the local people as helpers. UNRWA wouldn't have as much personnel as we had at first, and the Red Cross had in the other countries. The Red Cross was doing the same work we were doing as paid workers. So they said, "I know we'll take

over with less people but toward the end of this time _______" That's silly, really. So the Quakers had slowly decreased the international team and increased the local personnel who were very responsible, good people. They could do it. In Gaza the change went very easy. Some Quakers stayed on a short time with UNRWA. I'd say not more than a year. Most of them left. The Quaker team was already much smaller.

G: Did you notice any change in attitude or just the way things worked under UNRWA?

B: Yes, maybe more formal. They gave all their time. They probably had our working hours, I don't know. I'm meeting one of the nurses I'd met before. She was in Syria with the Red Cross and she was staying on with UNRWA. Most of them had to go because there were too many. I had met some other nurses. The nurses who had to go, there were about three others, they were very sorry and said they would have liked to stay. So I said, "Why don't you come to work in Gaza." I could take on nurses I needed. I said, "If you were willing to come not on an UNRWA salary but on a local salary as a local nurse..." But they had to do it so they came to Gaza as a nurse.

G: Do you think that was a big change? As a Quaker staff you were basically voluntary. How did that change the relationship that you had with other workers and with refugees now that you were being paid?

B: That didn't change. I hardly remember the change to UNRWA. We had one chief nurse. She stayed in Beirut. The director they had I didn't like very much. The funny thing is I met him recently and we had lunch. Talking over the time long ago, most of the people you didn't like, they have changed. They are less critical or less ______.

G: Did you feel that each group, like the milk distribution, the medical team, the railroad unloaders, did they all work together? Was there as much cooperation, was there as much unity?

B: Yes, the cooperation was good with us. We were together in the evening for meetings, always. In the beginning that was terribly tiring. We worked seven days a week, and the evenings. The nurses were worse off. They worked all day, then came to the meetings in the evenings. They came home for evening meals and rest and were told that so and so was sick and would we look after them. So the nurses had a double job. People there, medical people all worked like that in the beginning. Then it was decided that we would have a free day a week, so...

G: So some of the meetings were good.

B: Then we still had to have a nurse's meeting about duties at the houses. Each house had a little cupboard for medicine and supplies.

G: Were there ever any problems that you remember between the different groups?

B: Not as a group. There are always personal. But there was amazingly little if you think about the situation in which we worked. I know that I met, here, Peter _____. He was in transportation. I don't know if he was there in the beginning. I don't think so. I had quarrels with him quite a lot. Then he came here and I said, "I've seen that boy!" I didn't like him at all. For a short time _____ two of the Dutch nurses. "Oh you were [inaudible], you've saved my life, you've treated me very good." "I don't think you had anything wrong." "Yes, yes, I had something seriously wrong. Everybody said I wouldn't have survived if you hadn't treated me well."

G: Do you remember any other stories?

B: Well, the Johnsons are Quakers for life. They've stayed with us quite a lot and worked in Geneva and ________. So we saw them [inaudible -- too soft]. But they were staying there the last half year in Gaza. Then they left. On their last day they forgot to call to say "you are leaving"..

[Tape 1, Side B ends]

[Tape 2, Side A begins]

G: This is tape 2 of the interview with Josina Vreede-Berger.

B: So I go on with the situation with the team?

G: If there are any more stories, yes.

B: Well, there are people here, I know their names. Many I recognize but often I have to look twice. And there are a lot of remembrances coming back.

G: Did you know of any relationships between the staff and the locals?

B: Yes, we had very good friendships.

G: Was there any kind of relationships that were more than friendships?

B: Well, there was this painter and a Dutch nurse. I didn't like that. I thought he was good for nothing. But this girl, she was a ______ girl and had been educated in a boarding school with nuns, very strict. So I complained much about him. You see? I'd forgotten that. That

was one relationship. The Hortons, they got married later. They were in the Middle East. I think they were in ______ at the time. It wasn't mentioned here because that was _______.

G: Just some concluding questions I've got. What kind of contribution did you make to the project, or for the people's lives?

B: You had your work. You didn't think about a contribution you made. It was just things you had to do and you would do half of what you wanted to do. I it was my duty afterwards to make people understand that the news they got about the Middle East was mostly wrong. They don't take that very well. I wrote to newspapers, I have given lectures. So many think the Palestinians, they know about it. Of course the ________ knew about it because they had contact ______.

G: What kind of impact did it have on your life?

B: There was a time that I regret having been there because I feel I can't do enough to change this miserable situation, the way they are treated, the way America doesn't do anything because they want to have Israel, even if Israel is a robbing country of everything of those people. They don't know anything about it. If another country does it they make a lot of noise and send armies in. It's just terrible, and I still think so. I have friends that when I meet them 27 years ago they say, "Maybe you were right. I never thought about it." ______ That's not it. I can talk to Israelis just the same. Many Jews, not Israelis especially, are against that state of Israel. I know many. I have taken some letters. I haven't used them now.

G: Are you against that Israel should be a state as well?

B: There are many who..

G: I'm saying, do you feel that?

B: Of course I don't feel that. I don't mind. They ____ for themselves. But Palestine was there. The people were there. The Jews who came to live there were welcomed. Minority it was in the beginning. They said, "Oh, this is now our land because the UN has said so." Well, they hadn't.. it was different, but in any case they decided that they were to be a state "and you people better go out." They wanted their own state. It could have been a very peaceful solution, but they wanted the Palestinians out. Now they say no, that they never said so and the Palestinians didn't have to leave. They left on their own and things like that. That's just nonsense. I have many books from Jews who know the whole situation.

________ had been living there a long time before the state and he said, "I have to live in this, but I have to live as a friend of the Arabs and not as..."

G: Who?

B: He was very sharp. His friend who worked with him had to leave Israel because they tried to kill him.

G: Do you see any hope for these persons?

B: At a moment I'm afraid not. They don't have to.. it's maybe too difficult to save those people who've been living there and who do not have their state. They have got so much money and then [inaudible] that they make the country bloom. They've got millions and millions to do all this and the Palestinians have worked that land in a good way and never gotten a cent of help. Israel has never been able to pay for the _____ people. If America would be poor -- I don't hope that would happen -- but if they just could not help Israel then it's lost. At this point already it's wrong, of course.

ENDO OF INTERVIEW

AFSC ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #604
NARRATOR: ALWIN HOLTZ
Interviewer: Joan Lowe
DATE: September 19, 1992

JL: This is Joan Lowe for the American Friends Service Committee Oral History Project. Today is September 19, 1992, and I am interviewing Alwin Holtz on the refugee work in Gaza from 1948 to 1951.

Okay, Al, if you'll just start by giving your full name and your date and place of birth.

AH: I'm Alwin Holtz, and I was born in Brooklyn, October 19, 1918.

JL: Okay, and what was Brooklyn like at that time?

AH: You want to have fun, don't you? Brooklyn was like it is exactly now. I went back to Brooklyn after I had left it at a very early age and the neighborhood was almost exactly the same, an Italian-Norwegian neighborhood.

JL: Italian-Norwegian neighborhood? Interesting.

AH: Yes, strange, huh? Right in the middle of the whole thing was a Norwegian Lutheran church. (chuckling)

JL: Okay, what kind of work did your parents do? Did you live with both your parents?

AH: My mother was a *hausfrau* and a very good one, a great cook, and my father worked for the railroad. He was a railroad detective for a while and finally wound up as a shipping officer in a British steamship line. And do I have any background for being what I am? None whatsoever. My parents were lovely and charming and marvelous people, and I went exactly in a different direction than they ever went. (chuckling)

JL: What kind of religious background did you have?

AH: I was born a Lutheran, and it wasn't too long before I had a to-do with a Lutheran minister who started to berate me for what was my forming pacifism. We had a knockdown, drag-out, and that was the last time I was in a Lutheran church. (chuckling)

JL: Well, that's interesting.

AH: Yes, it turned out he was a chaplain in the National Guard, and he thought it was terrible that I thought that I was supposed to do "Thou shalt not kill." You're not going to do that; you will fight for your country. And I said, "Like hell I will."

JL: Do you have any idea where you started getting those kinds of ideas?

AH: Yes, I know exactly where I got them. At a very tender age--and this is always strange, too--the Hearst papers. My father was a devout Hearst paper man. He bought the Daily Mirror in the morning and he bought the Journal in the evening and read them from cover to cover. They ran a series, like in the Parade Sunday supplements now, tearing the First World War apart--you know, all the nonsense with the Belgian babies on the ends of bayonets, things like that, and wrote horror stories. Of course, this was after the war was well over and that sort of impressed me.

Then I started to read War and Peace, and a book that impressed me very, very much was a Dalton Trumbo book, Johnny, Get Your Gun. And little by little, I began to form this idea that war was plain nonsense. You're dragging somebody else's coals out of the fire. It didn't make any sense to me at all. And while I wouldn't say in my community I was representative of what would turn out to be a strong pacifist, this was churning in me as always.

So the government, which interferes with my life occasionally, and I fight back, made me make up my mind when they had a draft and thought they ought to draft me. And I made poetry when they said, "Go," and I said, "No." (chuckling) So we went around in circles for two years.

JL: Did your father serve in the First World War?

AH: No, he didn't. My father was like . . . what's his name? [Presidential candidate Bill] Clinton. He was looking for a way out, and so he had me. I was his excuse not to fight in the war. He was by no means a pacifist, but he was a good con man. He wasn't about to fight in any wars if he didn't have to.

JL: What did your family feel about your pacifist feelings?

AH: Oh, they were torn up about the whole thing, I think. I never really had too much trouble. It never bothered me much what people thought. There was a lot of chatter in the community, and my parents I guess took the worst part of it. I always found that out whenever I went home. They adjusted to it because they had no alternative.

My father, of course, thought I should have been clever and gone into the FBI, or found some other way rather than to do this drastic thing. That everybody was going to look at me and say, "That dirty ol' slackard," kind of nonsense. But then, I was by no means

disowned. (chuckling) And yes, my father used to send me cigarettes and my mother used to send me goodies, just like I was one of the boys overseas. (chuckling)

JL: Doing your duty. So I'm taking it then that you went into CPS?

AH: Yes, I did indeed.

JL: Okay, did you do that . . .

AH: They insisted.

JL: Did you have a connection with Friends when you did that?

AH: None whatsoever.

JL: Okay, so you went into CPS on your own?

AH: I had [no connection with Friends] and I had none with the War Resisters League or the Fellowship of Reconciliation. I was a regular run-around-town boy. (chuckling)

JL: Okay, can you sort of briefly tell me what your CPS experience was, what kind of work you did?

AH: Yes, if you want to ask that, it's a long one.

JL: Yes, well, I don't want the whole story. (chuckling)

AH: I could go on that better than Gaza.

JL: I know, I know, everyone could.

AH: My CPS experience was . . . I'm one of the few, I guess, that thought it was a good experience. I was fortunate in a lot of ways. I was drafted after a two-year fight. I mean, I had the usual song and dance with the local draft board and the headlines that read, "First Draft Dodger in Jersey," and "Boy Draft Dodger Refuses to Wear Uniform," and we went around in circles. They even had the FBI in on it. I think the FBI told them I was taking a legitimate stand.

By that time, I had learned that there was such a thing as 4-E, work of national importance under civilian direction. One of the board chairmen snapped at me one day, "Well, what do you want?" Every time they called me up I wouldn't go. And I said, "I want work of national importance under civilian direction!" They didn't know what I was talking about. (chuckling) That's what I wanted. "I'm not running away from anything. I'll do my time, but not in the army. That's it!" They were so glad to get rid of me, they got me a drawing room on a train out of Newark, New Jersey, for Marion, North

Carolina. And the whole [draft] board stayed home the day I left. "Y-a-a-y! There goes Holtz!"

JL: A vacation, right? (chuckling)

AH: Yes, and I arrived in Marion, North Carolina, early in the morning after a nice breakfast and got off the train, and it was the opening day of Buck Creek Camp. Tom Jones was there, took one look at me in my porkpie hat and apple-green zoot suit and said, "Well, you know, we're going to pay attention here and see about these people that are not exactly [sincere]," that kind of nonsense, and I resented that. Then I got on a truck and I stood in front of the truck and I said, "Is anybody here a Quaker?" And Kelly Peckham said kind of testily, "I'm a Quaker." And that was my first . . .

JL: Oh, interesting. So you did know about the Friends then? You knew that they were conscientious objectors?

AH: By that time, I had known that I was going to a Friends camp and I had learned what Friends thought. I had never met one of them.

JL: So Kelly was the first person you met?

AH: Kelly was the first one. And we had a reconciliation . . . Do you know Kelly?

JL: Yes.

AH: We had a reconciliation a year or so ago, and [went over] our whole history . . . I found out that he was really my oldest Friend, capital F and small F. I mean, I was at his wedding, he attended my whatever I did when I got married, and we went out to Gaza together. I came around the world when I left Gaza and stopped and spent some time with Kelly and Betty. The only thing that kept us separated was 3,000 miles; I located on the East Coast and he located on the West Coast.

JL: Okay. Well, when you went into CPS then, you stayed how many years?

AH: I stayed four years and three months.

JL: Oh, the full four years.

AH: And I did the whole gamut. I wound up as assistant director and director, and then finally on the executive committee in Philadelphia at the end of the war and took charge of getting everybody back home, the discharges. My experience was a good one in CPS. I know a lot of people had trouble; I never had any trouble. And because I was in the administration, I traveled back and forth and did a lot of things and represented the camp,

and I never had a cross word. In fact, at home when I saw my parents, they would tell me what the neighbors were saying. But if I met the neighbors, they'd just say hello. (chuckling) But nobody really gave me a bad time or ignored me or attacked me about the whole thing.

JL: When did you first hear about the Gaza work?

AH: Well, I had kind of a reputation in CPS. At the end of CPS I worked in the Service Committee offices for a year.

JL: Which offices?

AH: Philadelphia.

JL: In Philadelphia?

AH: 20 South Twelfth Street. Well, of course, during the war, when I was in the office, I was in charge of the camp reports that had to go in every month for CPS. And I wrote a handbook, a manual, so everybody knew how to fill out these foolish papers. When it was all over, the Service Committee asked me to stay on, and I didn't have any particular thing in mind, except I knew I wasn't going back to Jersey. I mean, "Now I'm loose. I'm going to take off." And they asked me to stay on and wanted me to be office manager for the new personnel office they were starting, which was basically Elmore Jackson and Lou Schneider. Elmore moved on to other things and Lou Schneider was there, but I set up that office and I ran that for a year or so.

During that interim, I'd had friends who were philosophically friendly with me. We decided that the thing to do was to go out and start our own . . . what we said was community. The young now call it a commune, like they invented it. We just had a small community--that's the thing to do. Go out there and do everything for yourself, you don't pay any attention to the world. [But] we weren't in sackcloth and ashes; we took advantage of all of the good things that were in the world, electricity, hair dryers and laundry machines and ironers and blenders and everything. We had everything peachy.

JL: Where was this?

AH: Well, first we got a house out in Aubury Park, next to Harold Evans, (chuckling) which was kind of classy, but it was a big house and nine of us moved in there and lived for a year. Everybody had jobs at the Service Committee, and we knew we weren't going to do that forever.

One of the members' father had a farm in Loveland, Ohio, which was just between Cincinnati and Wilmington College. His father was a county agent and the farm had been run down during the war. He couldn't get anybody to do it and he was busy running everybody else's farm. So we decided, okay, we'll go out there. So we made arrangements with the old man and we took a big house, again, which we renovated and filled with all the goodies in the world, the object being we would do everything for ourselves and not step on anybody's neck and rise up with ambition. And we did everything ourselves.

JL: So you weren't planning on working at this time?

AH: No, no, no, when you start these things, you've got to say you're dedicated. I was, I believed in it. I had helped form the . . . the philosophy of those of us who were in CPS, talked about it a lot, you know: How do you live in this stupid world that's so predatory and everybody is on everybody's neck? And I was all for weaving our own cloth. We thought about starting a business. That was the angle. We'd start some kind of business, some small business that we could run ourselves, do all the work ourselves, and market the thing, and just get a comfortable living, that's all. Nobody wanted a yacht or a Mercedes, just to live comfortably and peacefully and don't pick on anybody and resisting anybody picking on you. That went very well.

Actually, the Service Committee had set up a fund for just this kind of thing for CO's coming out and looking for a way . . . like, oh, the veterans' benefits, they thought of some way they could help. Three of us borrowed $10,000--I think we were the first ones--from this Service Committee fund, and that gave us $30,000, which was a good base for what we needed. Well, we ran that and started out going for the best farm around, and in the county, we were going for the state, and I started to get skeptical when I thought we were going nationally with the best farm. (chuckling)

We started out with some scrubby cows and a couple of pigs and wound up with forty thoroughbred pigs and twenty milk cows and 500 chickens, and then 1,000 chickens, and we could almost live on the money we made. But an interesting story that you might like, we discovered that you got a premium for milk that was over 3.5. So we threw in a couple of Jersey cows, which are heavy on cream, and so we'd always get a premium price for our milk, which a co-op picked up every day. Things were going just peachy.

Then we found out with the eggs, that if you graded the eggs you got a penny extra. If they were white eggs, you got a penny extra, and if you had clean eggs you got a penny extra. So we used to sit around with cases of eggs, listening to symphonies, with sandpaper, polishing the eggs and saying, "No, that's a small one." We'd wind up with a bunch of small eggs and make the damnedest frothy thing you ever saw in your life, full of egg whites. I did one one time, I wound up with a dishpan with lemon fluff, that big! (laughter) So that was the end of that.

JL: Were there women in this?

AH: Yes, there were women. There were one, two, three, three couples, a single man, and two kids, and our philosophy was that we did everything communally. We lived communally, we ate communally, we divided all the chores on the farm. The men did the chores on the farm. We finally, being ahead of our time, mixed women in, too. One took care of the garden, one took care of the cows, and the advantage of this whole thing is, when you run a farm it's from dawn to dusk. I mean, you've got to take care of the animals at least twice a day. You milk twice a day. But we had enough so that we'd split it. Somebody would do the morning shift and somebody would do the afternoon shift. The women split up. One would mind the kids and the other do the laundry, and the other would do the cooking. And it worked out very well.

The real difference was that while the four men had been buddies in CPS and had talked about this for hours--how you do this and when you do this and what was important and what was not--the women didn't have that advantage. And I wouldn't blame the women for it, but back in their little heads they wanted their own little house and their own little curtains and to take care of their own little kids.

What we did is we gave ourselves an allowance of $25 a month for each adult to do what they want. If they wanted to buy hats with feathers, if they wanted to buy books, if they wanted to buy records, you do what you want with your $25; the rest of it was controlled communally like any organization.

And the community took responsibility for the kids. Anything the kids needed--food, health care, clothes--the same thing. Well, of course, the big advantage in the community was the kids got the most out of it. They found out how to work each adult to death; and they knew, if they wanted a laugh, oh, Al would do that; if they wanted something fixed,

Hubert did all that. Everybody had their little place, including the women, and those kids worked it to death. It was fun.

And of course, the other thing is we bought a season ticket to the Cincinnati symphony and we would take turns going. One would have to stay home and take care of the kids and the whole thing.

So there was nothing wrong with the idea. We weren't going for broke, hairshirts; but we wanted to live as high as we possibly could by our own efforts, and we did just that. Actually, it turned out, part of our problem was we were extraordinarily successful. We paid off the $30,000 before I left the thing.

Well, anyway, in the middle of this I started to get a little skeptical personally, and I was one of the starting factors. When we had 1,000 chickens, they decided that they had enough [equipment] for 2,000 chickens. I figured, well, we were working from dawn till dusk now and we were doing just fine. Isn't another 500 chickens a little exorbitant? By that time, we had twenty cows, all registered, and forty pigs, and I thought we had enough on our plate. I wanted more time for us to do [other things]. I had built a loom and one Christmas everybody got bathroom rugs. (chuckling) I mean, I sat there in the evening weaving rugs.

Well, sort of toward the middle of this whole thing we decided we needed a cash crop, so I was the cash crop. I went to Wilmington College as a business manager. Sam Marble, who you may or may not know, was a CPS guy, a very nice guy and very, very bright, and he got to be president of Wilmington College. He was looking for a business manager and he came down and talked to us and I went up there to be business manager. So I was the cash crop. I went to work every morning and did my little job and my pay went into the pot. So I was literally a cash crop and that worked very fine. On weekends I worked on the farm, and sometimes late in the evenings if somebody was off doing something else I'd do the evening chores.

And everybody we ever knew, out of curiosity--because we were not the types to begin this kind of stuff--would pass by and stop in for a minute. We had four frozen-food lockers. We used to cut up fifty chickens at a time. We'd kill a pig and we'd get it to town. We had it all packaged and it was in the freezer, and people would drop in out of

no place--I mean, from Philadelphia every Quaker we ever knew stopped by, every CPS man stopped by.

JL: Did this farm have a name?

AH: Yes, we called it Gware Community, G-W-A-R-E. It was in Loveland, Ohio, and it was really Butterworth Farm, but we called it Gware Community. And I'll tell you the brief story about that. There was once a play that Hardy Albright was in, and he was a director of a home for the aged and all of them were, like a home for the aged now, scattered around. There was a little Miss Essie that went around with a paper bag and picked up everything she found and put it in a paper bag. Finally, he said, "Miss Essie, what are you doing with that paper bag?" She said, "They're for the Gwares." He said, "What's the Gwares?" "People what believes in me." So I thought that Gware Community was a good idea. (chuckling) This was for people who believed in us.

JL: That's nice, yes.

AH: But we had fun with that, and like I said, we didn't make much money. But when it was all over we paid off the $30,000, and when I was in Gaza they sent me a check for $200. So, for two and a half years of experience I made a couple hundred bucks.

JL: So did they get in touch with you . . . ?

AH: Yes, when I was in the community then, of course I was known on the Committee and this big national emergency was going on in the Middle East. I'd had some reputation, and they called me and asked me if I would be interested, and it was about the time when I was wondering about having 2,000 chickens instead of 1,500 chickens. (chuckling) So we had a meeting and I thought, "It's time I moved on. This has been fine, but a lot of things are not working the way we thought it would work, and it's time I moved on and did my thing and saw what the other half [of the world] was doing, like good works." So I went to Philadelphia and met up with Kelly. After a thirty-hour trip on a plane--it's not that long now--we wound up in the Gaza Strip, one of the first seven.

JL: Did they give you any preparation before you went, in terms of an orientation about the region or . . . ?

AH: Well, I think they did, and they had a nice old lady, a German lady with not much sense of humor, and as people often do with me, she had to explain to me sternly that I was . . . no clowning around. The Arabs were very strict people and stern, and they couldn't stand

to joke and stuff like that. It turned out that the most fun-loving people I ever met in the world were the Arabs. She just didn't know what she was talking about. But she was the expert. She was telling us how we had to act and what we had to do. Anyway, we sloughed that off and did our own thing for three months.

JL: And that was all you remember of your information?

AH: Yes. I mean, they gave us the information when we met with the various people who had been in on it, Colin Bell and stuff like that, but that was all the prep we had, because it was an emergency. I think I spent Christmas in the community and left for Philadelphia, and I was in the Gaza Strip in the middle of January.

JL: Did your folks know you were going?

AH: Yes, I called them and told them.

JL: Did they have anything to say about that?

AH: Well, as a matter of fact . . . I can't remember if they did go to the plane. No, they thought that was weird. As I said, I had lovely, marvelous, lower-middle-class folks who didn't understand too much about what was going on in the world. I'm not deriding that. But I wrote faithfully in CPS and so did they back and forth, and I did when I was in Gaza, usually once a week, and I got letters from them. About the third letter I got from my mother, it said, "What is all this talk about the Arabs? I thought you were going over to help the Jews." I figured, well, heck, you ain't made much dent on your parents. I don't know about the rest of the world, but they didn't quite get it. (chuckling)

JL: So you flew over? You flew into where, Cairo?

AH: Yes, into Cairo. We made a couple of stops.

JL: Okay, and when you landed in Cairo, what was your impression?

AH: Very amused. Those were the days of King Farouk, and the officials had ornate uniforms, you know, like the Merry Widow stuff, and I thought that was kind of amusing and so did Kelly. A funny incident is that we got off the plane and I went through customs first. They took a look at me and we said a few things and they stamped my passport and I grabbed it. We had exactly the same thing; we each had a Valpak, the same clothes, the same shoes, everything, the same coats, the same hats and a duffel bag. This was all our worldly goods we toted in. So I came [out] and I stood over in the corner. And soon Kelly came through, and for some reason, they took Kelly apart. They

took his whole duffel bag apart and the Valpak apart. (chuckling) I stood there kind of laughing, smoking a cigarette. Of course, he was furious.

But we finally got out of there and we went to the hotel of choice, which was the Windsor Hotel that Quakers stayed in those days, and spent a day in Cairo walking through the Souk and looking at things. We had to be off the next day on a military train that was going to Gaza. Of course, we did that, and that was another thirty-hour trip where Kelly and I were the only ones on the train except the soldier boys who were fighting this heroic battle.

JL: Did anybody question why you were there from the train, any of the soldiers?

AH: Not one. [They] didn't even say, "Hey, you!" Which was unusual, because certainly in those days foreigners . . .

JL: Now you spoke Arabic at that time?

AH: No, not then. No, we were Brooklyn kids. But we sat there, nobody bothered us and we didn't bother anybody. I guess we did have a little friendly conversation with some of them because we asked for an explanation. We were around this one guy who was sitting proudly and maturely. He was [an Egyptian], downed an Israeli plane or something like that. Well, I'm sure he didn't fight very much, because he was there, and not many Egyptian pilots went up and came down after the Israelis got them.

An important thing to remember is all our visions of the little Arab with the rag head stumbling across the desert attacking things like brigands is nonsense. The Arabs cannot fight. I'm not against them, I'm for them, but they can't fight; they run, especially the Egyptians, and that's why the Israelis have been so successful. They're highly organized, they knew exactly what they were doing, they had a purpose. The Arabs really don't have much purpose, outside of their family and their clan and their village--forget the national, they couldn't care less. So it was never that much of a war.

JL: So, when you came off the train, you went right into Gaza city?

AH: Well, Gaza city was Gaza town, the southernmost center [of Palestine].

JL: Gaza town, okay. Yes, I understand it's changed quite a bit.

AH: The center of the southern part of what was Palestine. Rafah was on the border and Gaza was the big town, and, of course, famous. They thought that's where Samson had been.

JL: Oh, really?

AH: Yes, and he had pushed down a temple in Wadi Gaza, which was just outside the town. And there was some little ruins--heaven knows where it was. And the other thing it was famous for is it had an old mosque where Mohammed's grandfather supposedly was buried. And outside of that, it was a little farm community town.

JL: Was it what you expected?

AH: It wasn't . . . I had no way of expecting anything. I mean, we went and we were going to do our thing, that was it.

JL: Do you remember what your first impressions were when you got off the train?

AH: Yes, sure I do. We got off the train in the middle of the night, and you couldn't see [a thing]. Jet black. Kelly and I jumped off the train with our little satchels and stood there and looked around a minute. Pretty soon an Egyptian officer came up and asked us what we were all about and we said that we were Quakers coming to the relief agency. He went over, picked up a phone and called, and pretty soon Emmett Gulley or somebody pulled up in a car and took us in.

Well, the first house we had--this is one of the funniest parts of the whole story, that we wandered in the dark. Nothing was organized, the lights were from lamps and it was late in the evening and we hadn't seen anything, and I looked out in the back and there was an Egyptian machine gun nest in our backyard. Of course, good pacifist that I am, I got furious immediately. And they wound up putting six of us in one room in double bunks--it was not much--and one of us had a very bad cold, and the next morning six of us had a very bad cold. (chuckling)

JL: Did you say this was House 3?

AH: No, this was the first house [the Blue Villa]. We didn't keep it and the next week we changed. One, it wasn't big enough or adequate enough, and we did get rid of the machine gun nests the next morning. But the next morning we went right out and started to deliver blankets. Meanwhile we had decided we'd better get a bigger house, and that was House 1 that we got, that we started with. So we made adequate arrangements. But the next morning we started right out delivering blankets from trucks, and that annoyed me at first. Arabs are completely undisciplined, and a truck with blankets pulls up and

they were all over it. And keeping them off and trying to make a sensible distribution, one for you, one for you . . . forget it!

JL: It says you first went into . . . Which camp did you first go into?

AH: Deir el Belah.

JL: Yes, that's what I have. Had any other Quakers been into that camp yet?

AH: No. As a matter of fact, that isn't quite true. I moved on down the line. We sort of moved down the strip where there were groups of people where we figured . . . The first one, I delivered flour out of Mughazi.

Of course, our immediate mission--because none of us knew anything about Arabs or any Arabic--was to scurry around and find suitable personnel who would at least act as our interpreters. That's really all we needed. We knew exactly what we were doing--I wish--and so we didn't need any help from the locals, we needed somebody to interpret. I had a town-prominent man who I picked up very quickly and went out to Mughazi to translate with me, and he was just not adequate.

Of course, it was a rat race in the beginning. He knew these people weren't being exactly honest and he was very skeptical, so he only lasted a day or two. He was a nice enough guy, but he wasn't going to put up with this nonsense and pretty soon he was out of Gaza. He had been a prominent businessman or a government official of some kind, a government official really.

That's when I met my old pal Joseph Kachadourian. Joseph tells the story that he had come down by boat from Jaffa, and he'd been a chief inspector for the citrus fruit industry, and he decided with the other Arabs, although it was one of their biggest mistakes, that they believed what the Arab countries were telling them: "You get out of there. We're going to [throw] the Jews into the sea, and then you'll come back and there'll be pie in the sky by and by." So they went out in droves. A big mistake, but they went out in droves. And there were something pretty close to a quarter of a million refugees in Gaza by the time we arrived, really, plus the local population.

So, in a strip five miles by twenty-five miles, that was a lot of people. I mean, there were cabs running like this all the way up and down there. They were out in groups in Rafah, Khan Yunis, Deir el Belah, Mughazi, Nuseirat, and then all the camps that were down around the sea, Remal, were all around the town, all the way up to a little village called

Jabaliya and Beit Hanun were the villages after that. [They] were theoretically in Israeli territory. That's where the Israelis had their machine gun nests.

JL: When you were talking about the first distribution, I had come across a report . . . Actually, it was a report that was written in February by Howard Wriggins when he visited all of the camps, and he had mentioned that at one point when you had gone in to make distributions, I think it was in Mughazi, that you had gotten into a scrape with a military officer who said that you weren't authorized to be making distributions, that the military was making the distributions, and you, Al Holtz, were there strictly for administrative purposes.

AH: So they remember that story, do they? That happened to me a couple of times.

JL: Is that right?

AH: Yes. It wasn't in Mughazi. I never had any problem there. After Mughazi, I was only there maybe like a week, and all of us were beginning to get disturbed by the disorderly [distributions]. We had no idea what we were doing. We hadn't registered anybody and we had to set up a registration procedure; meanwhile, we had to alleviate the pain where people were dying in the streets, we were told. It wasn't true but we thought we had to get food in every little baby's mouth right now or they were all going to be dying in the street. All of those stories get exaggerated. It wasn't quite that bad.

Certainly in the beginning it was confusion and utter chaos, and people were confused because they had just left their homes and wanted to go back and, you know, all this nonsense. That was the biggest problem in the beginning . . . And it took us a little bit of time to figure out how we were going to do this so that it was orderly.

To finish the story about my friend Joseph, Joseph had a little pickup truck, a ramshackle little deal, and we didn't have much transportation. So I commandeered Joseph and his little pickup truck and we went out to open up Deir el Belah in this little pickup truck. We quickly found ourselves a house with a wall around it. Now we were getting an improvement to this whole thing.

I used to pay Joseph in the beginning--because we didn't know what we were doing, we had no facilities, there was no order, nothing was set up--and I paid him a pack of cigarettes a day at first and gas for the truck. Later I gave him a raise. (chuckling) I gave him sixty pounds, a kilo a week, of flour, and that was their first pay. Well, it wasn't too

long before we figured out we had to have a system to pay them money. And while we made a mistake in our frugality with the Quakers, it turned out that we were paying our people considerably less than the International Red Cross.

JL: Oh, is that right?

AH: Oh yes, they were doing the regular thing.

JL: Well, now, was the Red Cross getting U.N. money to do their operations as well?

AH: Yes, they were too, yes. We weren't too popular, because we had to have a very economic enterprise. We got all our maintenance at a princely sum of $200 for vacation, which got argued. I had an argument with Bronson Clark about that. He thought maybe all the other Quaker units were taking $32.50, and maybe that's what we should do, and we sort of laughed and rejected that because it was not a question of money. To get out of Gaza to go to Geneva or someplace, or Europe or Italy, was going to cost a fortune. What nobody realizes, and I talked about this last night to Lee Dinsmore and some others, nobody realizes how much we did in a short time in this tiny space. For example, I was with the first seven who came in the middle of January. And by the end of January--I've checked the records--we had twenty people. We finally got up to as much as sixty and then sort of backed off to about forty people. Forty was adequate. We didn't know that, but we had to fill in a bunch of things, but it kept gaining momentum. The whole business of timing is expanded in my mind and almost everybody else's. I mean, in the first six months, really it was only two or three months, but in my mind it was . . .

JL: It seemed like forever.

AH: I think Edele [Holtz] and Betty Peckham came right after. They were there by the end of January. In my mind, it was several months we had been working. One night in comes Edele and Betty Peckham, you know. "Okay, we're fine, that's good," and that was it. But the whole thing was only sixteen months was all we were there. I was there a little longer because I stayed in the transition.

A funny thing there is that we did so much and we did it so well because we were too naive to tell them we couldn't do it. We did things we couldn't do, but we didn't know we couldn't do them. So, at the end, we always had a little skepticism and we had meetings about how we could do things better and how it was more orderly and stuff like this, and when they finally said okay with the transition, we had instigated it.

We had been there really to do the resettlement. Emergency relief was nothing. We talked all the time how we could do it, and there were plans made how we could resettle these people back where we came from, and then we would do the good little Quaker thing, social work and stuff like that. Giving the food out had to be done, but that's life. So the whole thing, in my mind anyway, like I said, "Oh, boy, now these professionals are coming in and we'll know exactly how to do it. Now I'm going to learn something finally."

JL: Well, don't get to this yet.

AH: All right.

JL: Okay, let's back up . . . There are a lot of reports in our records about . . . particularly in Deir el Belah, about having problems keeping people organized. Can you say something about how you were able to do that?

AH: I sure can. Do you want me to finish the story about several of my arguments with the military?

JL: Yes, that's fine.

AH: We were determined from the beginning that we would do our own thing. There's the famous "Nineteen Points," which I'm going to make copies of today, which I swore by religiously, and Colin Bell really invented them and got it put through with Elmore Jackson with the Egyptian authorities. Well, at that time, the Egyptians didn't know what they were doing either, and they were scared to death of this refugee problem, so they were delighted to have an outside organization of Americans come in and do this whole thing for them. Then they figured in the back of their mind . . . I mean, we were naive Americans, young people, they would take over and move in on us after we got the brunt of the dirty work and the whole nonsense.

The "Nineteen Points" fooled them, because I carried it around translated into Arabic. Anytime I had any problem with anybody who looked at me crooked, I whipped out the "Nineteen Points" and said, "We're running this, that's it. Here's your government's approval that we have a free hand to do exactly what we wanted when we wanted," and that always gave them pause. They kept trying to get around it.

So yes, early on they had a nut, a Lieutenant

Radik, who was a ne'er-do-well son of a prominent family, I finally found out; they got him put in the army because they didn't want him around home, and they got him a commission. He was a lieutenant and he thought he was the new Napoleon and he strutted around just like that. (chuckles)

The first time he came in we were dealing in that house we had in Deir el Belah out of a back store, which was still not adequate. I finally moved it around to the living room in the front and down the stairs and then delivered it to the people. We started to add rice and oil and things like that and it got pretty complicated.

But surprisingly quick--it must be, although it seems like a long time--we conceived this idea of putting up these quonset-type huts. We had the material shipped in from Cairo--and Bernie Klausner was very good at all that stuff--and in no time we began to build huge quonset huts that were fixed up so that you could make lines of people and you could do flour here and you could do rice there and there were entrances. It was a huge [enterprise].

JL: And who interpreted this whole system to them?

AH: To them? Our interpreters that we hired. We went out and found the smartest people, and it was the smartest thing we ever did. This guy downstairs here, if you've met him, Joseph Kachadourian, was my assistant. We trained them, or thought we trained them. We worked with them. We called ourselves camp leaders and they were really there in the beginning just to translate. But little by little, they became our administrative assistants because they were dealing with the people.

Some of them were so good that . . . I didn't know, if I was talking to you here and the translator was here, that we weren't talking to one another unless he got up and walked away. And then I was . . . "What the hell can I say to her? Now she doesn't know what I'm talking about." But if they were sitting there, it was just like we're talking now. And we're talking and we'd be looking at one other and gesturing, and then the translator would [interpret]. That's an art in itself, and some of them were very, very good.

JL: Now, Joseph isn't the aide who was arrested?

AH: Yes.

JL: He was the one who was arrested?

AH: Yes, that's it. Well, the first time he wasn't arrested. The first time Lieutenant Radik . . .

(End of Side 1)

AH: He would whip, you know, like he thought he was a British brigadier, and so we backed him off. He didn't know what to do because I came on so strong and told him there was no way he was going to have anything to do with him. I said, "I'll take the responsibility if there's something wrong here," which is an American expression. Well, he took that as an insult to his entire country. "You'll take the responsibility? It's my responsibility!" I said, "No, it's not your responsibility! It's my responsibility and we're going to do this!" So he went off in a huff and went back to see his commanding officer or something to find out.

Of course, the Egyptians had talked that over and decided, well, let's see if we can keep the needle on these Quakers. So, as time went on, we got better organized and I had a little tent put up in this front yard. This was before we had the quonset, and I used that for registration purposes and to talk about . . . we called them complaints. Anybody who had a complaint about their registration or the food they were getting or whatever it was, and I held court sitting (chuckling) on the ground with them.

JL: And they would come in as individuals, or representatives would?

AH: No, as individuals and as representatives. The representatives were--and this is the good thing from our point of view of an Arabic system--they are all supervised by the clan leader, who is called the mukhtar; it's like a mayor and it's the head man of the largest family in the village, always. Sometimes, if there's two large families, there's two mukhtars in the village.

JL: Was there a counterpoint for the Bedouin refugees?

AH: Well, their sheikh. Bedouins do exactly the same thing. They have a sheikh who has been the family leader and it's inherited. Sometimes it shifts over if there's one brighter and smarter and tougher than anybody else, so the sheikhs were represented. But the Bedouins were not that hard to deal with, because they really took care of themselves. They had their own tents and they were always on the outside of the camps. We had a special registration for the Bedouins because they'd come in off the desert and go back out in the desert again. They'd come in to see what they could get. We registered some

of them so they could legitimately stay in the camp, but they always had their own tents and coverings. They'd all come in with camels and sheep all over the place.

Anyway, just to finish the story about Radik . . . Toward the end when we were getting ready to build the quonset hut . . . by that time we had set up a distribution center in Nuseirat, and then Khan Yunis was a big enclave and Rafah was a big enclave, so we had made that division. I have a map downstairs; I don't know whether I have a copy here of those maps we used. It shows all the camps all the way down to Rafah, which was on the border of the Sinai, and then you went into Egypt. The Egyptians had their barracks on the border at Rafah. There was a contingent in the government building in town, but most of them were down on the borders, and they weren't on the Israeli-side borders, believe me, (chuckling) because they went back and forth all the time and nobody was blocking anybody from anything.

Anyway, just to finish this story, because it is amusing, and Joseph tells it with much gusto. I was holding court and I was satisfying some [complaint]. All at once, there was an uproar outside. And I came out of my little tent with this frightened little refugee that I was talking to, who ran like mad, and here was Radik in the middle of the courtyard with us, ordering them in Arabic that he was taking over.

So I said to Joseph, "What's that guy talking about?" He said, (chuckling) "He's telling them he's stopping the distribution. When he takes over, the Quakers will have no more to do with this kind of thing." So I shouted, "Hold it!" (chuckling) I said to Joseph, "You tell him that we are making this distribution and he cannot stop it. And I want you to announce loud and clear to all these people the distribution is stopping. They will not get rations or flour anymore because he's stopping it, not us. Not the Quakers, we'll give you the food, but he won't let us give you the food." And the lieutenant, who knew a little English, said, "If you tell them that, I'll put you in jail!" So Joseph looked to me and he said, "He said he's going to put me in jail." "I'll take care of him. You tell [them] what I said!"

By this time I'm getting a little upset. This was not going to go on here, the military was not taking over a pacifist organization, not in my lifetime! So Joseph, gutsy as he is, stood up on the top of the porch and told them, "The Quakers are not having anything to do with this. This is the Egyptian army officer who is stopping this whole distribution!"

And the soldiers came and grabbed Joseph. (laughter) Down the road! We had all the refugees following and me coming up in the background following Joseph down till we found him.

Well, actually, nothing much happened. It was an Arab thing. We drank coffee and orange juice and had a big argument (chuckling) and sprung Joseph. Whoever was superior to this Radik got him the hell out of the way and they said nothing, so we went back to normal.

However, the next day--and Joseph tells this with gusto--we went over to see the commanding officer, Emmett Gulley and I, to tell him this story, and told him in no uncertain terms that if this ever happens again, we'll stop the distribution in all the centers, not just one. We'll just stop this until it gets settled. So, of course, he got frightened and issued orders to leave the Quakers alone and let them do what they want to do and don't bother with them. So we never had too much trouble after that. But that was a famous incident, and I've always admired Joseph for having guts enough to do it. Because it didn't take any guts on my part, I was ready to do battle right then and there. (chuckling)

The story got out, particularly from Jim Read, who had known me in CPS, that I shouldn't really do that, that I threatened to punch this guy out. Well, I never threatened to punch him out, and I wouldn't have punched him out, unless he hit first. (chuckling) But I always had kind of that rough reputation with people. Friends were never quite sure. They knew I was doing my thing . . .

JL: How far you would go.

AH: Yes, they didn't know if they could quite trust Al to not take an ambassador or something and stick my fingers in his eyes. Of course, I never did it. I have roughed up important people verbally, but I never laid hands on anybody. So that was that story.

Well, anyway, that did straighten out, and I think one of the most important victories we had was by dumb luck instilling some discipline in the Arab ranks. Once we got those quonset hut things set up and got some organization, by that time we were using refugees as clerks and as distributors. We had a clerk who would take care of the registration, and two or three people would deliver the flour. We got some old tin cans and went to the local tinsmith's and had them do measures that were exactly right and had the refugee

mukhtars see that everybody was getting the same measure, that everything was fair and square, which they were not used to. It took some doing.

JL: How about the mukhtars? Were they getting special . . . ?

AH: No. Well, they were but they were getting it from their constituency, never from us. Never from us. And we explained that to them in the beginning.

JL: That's interesting. So they were just cooperating out of understanding and they knew it was . . .

AH: Oh yes, for their own good. Well, what it was also was that the mukhtars wound up with two or three ration cards, and we knew that and I accepted all that. Toward the end when we realized it was getting too much and that everybody probably was registered, I declared, "One more week we will register everybody, then we stop registering anybody except by special decree." So they scurried around and we stopped the registration. That became the job of trying to confirm what we had.

Well, by this time now we had orderly camps set up. What we did at the distributions that no Arab ever did before was we had everybody, all the Quakers and all their assistants, when they would come in the morning, they were ready to go. We made very strict schedules so they knew exactly what was going on from the beginning, and explained it to the mukhtars and everybody. We got this concept of dealing village by village, using the mukhtar, convincing him, making a friend of him, and his people would follow.

So we explained that we wanted people to line up, everybody was going to be fed, nobody was going to be cheated, it was all equal for everybody. And the mukhtar would encourage [them]. He would be at the head of the line if he wanted to and get his rations first and let his four wives drag their flour and rice home, and then came the others. The [Arabic] expression was *wahad wahad*, "one by one." And pretty soon, by God, they got it. And once they learned that, there was no more confusion. They'd come early in the morning before we opened. We'd come and they'd be lined up. It was incredible!

JL: Was that a foreign concept to them, or was it just the way they . . . ?

AH: Oh yes! I learned that from the trucks. I mean, I was standing on the back of a truck trying to pass out blankets and they were all over my shoulders, all over the sides, grabbing the blankets. There was no control whatsoever. Of course, we didn't have any,

quote, security or military control. We got control once we got the centers set up. Then we had some control because we had a staff; they knew there was a staff and the staff were revered, as in the Arab tradition.

I mean, I was known as the mudir, the director, the big gun. They have respect for what they consider authority, as did these translators who eventually took over the whole thing. They were respected and the mukhtars respected them and certainly respected us as the Quakers. Well, the best definition I ever heard, they began to understand what we were all about, when we were not the British, and we were not the French, and we were not even the Americans. We were the Quakers. (chuckling) We had a lot of fun with that. But once we had something stolen. One of the big Bedouins--we actually made a camp leader out of him--was the son of the big sheikh that ran the tribe around Mughazi, as a matter of fact, and he was very, very good and very loyal to us. The camp leaders turned out to be very, very loyal. Once we weeded out the thieves--and we had some--and they understood they would be treated square and we wouldn't stand for any cheating, they were absolutely great.

Anyway, (chuckling) we had a generator stolen one night. We had hired a guard for the generator, and of course he was asleep. We always said some fellaheen woman came along and took it away on her head, because they carried everything on their heads. We never did get that generator back, but Mustafa was furious, and he was the big leader in that community and came from a big family. He said, "Ah, steal from the British, yes. Steal from the Egyptians, yes. Stealing from the Quakers? You don't do that!" And this went up and down the [strip]. So we really didn't have too much theft, little petty thefts sometimes.

I can remember once in Khan Yunis we had an incident where we were missing flour and we had put a guard every night--these two guards--so we had some security, which we paid three or four pounds or something like that. And we suspected, and the camp leader had suspected he was losing flour at that time. So I went down there one night and we got everybody out and closed the door and I took flour and spread it on the floor like this and went out and locked the door and went away. The next morning I arrived the first thing; we opened the door: footprints. It was the guards. (chuckling) Fired. And that of

course went all over like mad: You can't fool these Quakers, they know what they're doing.

So it wound up before we were finished we had respect, and we respected, and we did a lot of good things after we got the thing all organized and got the Egyptians off our back eventually. They kept trying, there were always problems doing this and that, and I personally was friendly but merciless. I didn't fool around with them. They wanted the influence that we had. I mean, we were God in the Gaza Strip. I'm often teased that I was thirty years old before I owned my own country. I'm just a plain everyday American boy.

JL: Were you in your thirties?

AH: I was just about thirty, I think. I never bothered to figure it out. I was reasonably young and fairly untried, except for the CPS experience. If you had the CPS experience, man, you tried everything. (chuckling) Then you were fighting everybody.

Again, I thoroughly loved what we were doing. I thought what we were doing was right, and the interesting thing is, outside of the fact that we had their respect and that the Egyptians were the enemies . . . I mean, we stood as a buffer between the Egyptians, who hated the Palestinians, and the Palestinians, who hated the Egyptians. The Palestinians had been the cream of the crop in the Arab world. They went to Cairo as tourists and were effendis and were treated graciously, and here they were refugees and the Egyptians were going to get back at them one way or the other.

And I think we stood as a pretty good buffer except for once in a while with them. We interfered any time Egyptians messed with the refugees, we kept the matter [quiet]. I never permitted any Egyptian officer who thought he was expecting to come into a center with a gun. "You park it outside. No guns." Of course, this infuriated them, then there would be another incident. I don't know how many times I had incidents, but we always diffused them just by politely saying, "No, we're doing this. Any time you want to take it over, you take it over. But while we're doing it, you have nothing to do with it."

And they'd get some little schnook who would go over and appeal to them. He wasn't getting his just desserts and so on and so on, and he couldn't get a job and the whole thing, and the officer would write out an order that we were to hire this man as a truck driver and he would bring it in to me. By that time, I was processing all the complaints. I had gotten out of the business of the distribution except as kind of a touring inspector

kind of thing. And he'd bring it in to me and I'd look at the thing and I'd have my translator translate it and I'd take it and I'd drop it in the basket. "You go tell Wahid [the Egyptian liaison officer] I said no. They have nothing to do with who we hire or when we hire." So pretty soon they stopped. But, I mean, they tried; everything they could to stick their foot in the door and get influence they tried.

And I suppose that the, quotes, occupying army was supposed to let them. I think there were Friends around who thought maybe we were guests and we should let them, and I maintained we were never guests in their country. We were asked to come in and do a job, and we were going to do it to the best of our ability, and any time they didn't like it I'd be glad to go back to the farm. It was no problem with me.

JL: Yes, I noticed that you actually served on a committee, the Quaker Military Relations Committee, at one point, and I think in your absence they drafted a statement on what they thought Quaker military policy should be.

AH: Well, that could be. Was this in Philadelphia or . . . ?

JL: No, this was actually in the field at the time.

AH: Yes, I think that was possible. We didn't have too much trouble. We got also great respect in one quarter, the important quarter, from the U.N. officials--by the time we were into it ten years, which might have been five months but it seemed like ten years to me. (chuckling)

JL: Right, in real time. (chuckling)

AH: By that time, we were very organized. There wasn't an aspect of the Gaza village refugee life that we hadn't tried to attend to. We went into education and everything. By that time we had a huge and very, very good [medical program]. We set up health clinics. We went into education; we put up huge tents and had schools and appointed teachers and had people supervising it with the local Gaza officials, the education people. We were into the middle of everything. You can't think of anything we didn't do.

We did special prenatal [care] for pregnant women. Then it turned out that their habit is when somebody dies they have to have a shroud, a wrapping. We began to furnish those; the mukhtar would come and say so and so died and they need a shroud. Then we would replace newborns; if somebody died, we would let them put another one on [rations].

Because it finally evolved that 200,000 rations in the Gaza Strip was a running economy, and, of course, that became an important thing.

By the time this went on, we had a hierarchy and there were people in charge of everything. I guess I was in charge of keeping everything straight and keeping the Egyptians off everybody's back, so I got a reputation for being pretty tough.

JL: Were you in any way involved in making policy around ration cuts?

AH: Oh yes. Alan Horton and I headed that up with Joseph, and that was something else. When we figured we had 280,000 people--but we knew we didn't, and all our friends told us we didn't and told us why it was. As a matter of fact, by that time we had invented a friendly underground that believed in us and knew that we were trying to help and knew that it was not fair that some mukhtars had six or seven cards, that it was time to do something.

I told them at the time, "The U.N. is not going to furnish that much stuff. They're screaming now that they think they have too many. We're going to start a project of cutting down, camp by camp. We'll work with the mukhtars, and when we get information and we know something, we'll do the investigation." And we did that and we cut out 90,000 people, and without too much fuss. Joseph always likes to say they threw stones at us, they threw sticks at us. They really didn't.

There was a lot of screaming because Arabs demonstrate with false fury. I've seen them, I mean, so furious. I've seen two Arabs fighting and screaming, and as soon as some people come around they grab a club or something and wave it, because then they're restrained. As soon as they're not restrained they put the club down. (laughter) They're a scream and I love them dearly, but they're not fighters, believe me. They make a noise but they're not fighters.

The Egyptians used to try to invent riots. They'd put up their own people who were doing favors to start a riot, and I would hear about it the night before. Because, like I said, in Gaza there were no secrets from the Quakers, we found out everything. I suppose that's all part of the system: If I'm nice to the Quakers, they'll give me something special. I don't remember that we ever did, other than respect and use the people who were useful and helpful to us. But I remember one particularly when I knew it was coming. I went

down there the next morning (chuckling) when they were opening up, and sure enough, about an hour later [it started].

In those buildings they would throw stones on the roof, and I'm telling you, it's scary: Bang! Bang! Bang! By this time, all the workers were loyal to us. [They were] restraining them with these tent poles. (chuckling) Finally, when it got going a little bit, Joseph and I, or whoever was busting up that particular [riot], would go out and just stand there and look. We'd hold our hands up [and say], "Shut up." And I'd call the mukhtar over and we'd talk and say, "This is ridiculous," and they'd finally admit that the Egyptians put them up to it. "Well, go on home. We'll get the distribution started now, but we can't start it until all this rock throwing stops, because it's too noisy, I can't stand the noise."

JL: I did see a couple of mentions of the riots in there and I was going to ask about that.

AH: There's a famous one.

JL: There weren't any that were actually spontaneous?

AH: Oh, no. No, they had spontaneous fights between themselves--i.e., that's my ration, that's your ration--but never with us. All of them were [planned]. Around the world, all these demonstrations are orchestrated. I mean, it's very, very rare that you and I would go out in the street and see a lot of people, "What's the trouble?" and we'd join up. I mean, my advice to everybody always was, "When you see a mob going, it has no head anymore. Just step in a doorway, get out of the way, because there's no reasoning with a mob. Let them vent their anger."

But the funny thing and supposedly the more serious--this was after Wahid got out. He was the first liaison with the Quakers and he was really a nice guy. At the end, I think they removed him because he was getting too friendly with us and too understanding of what we were doing. They rolled in another so-called tough nut, Ali Barini, and then I had to start all over with him because he was going to outspar me, too. He engineered one on the office.

By that time, we had built an office in front of House 2. House 2 turned out to be our center. We had our meetings and things in House 1, but we ate and did our laundry and everything in House 2. It was right across the street. By that time, Edele was the housemother and in charge of all this, and I was in charge of the office nonsense.

One day a group . . . their mukhtar was afraid of us. He knew he had too many cards and he knew we were coming after him. So he arranged to start a riot. (chuckling) Alan Horton knew it was all framed up [and] was just furious. Al Horton sort of turned out then to be my Quaker assistant. We worked together on a lot of things, and certainly on this cutting of the lists. And I'm getting the stones on the roof, bang, bang, bang, bang! And I'm standing in front of my office window. We had netting over the windows to keep the bugs out and glass, the regular thing. Well, I looked out and here's this mukhtar with his cane ripping the stuff off and smashing the windows. Okay.

Well, pretty soon the police came around and I was furious with the Egyptian army and I told them to get out of there. By that time it was all quieting down. Of course, they see the army coming and it stops like that.

And then I raised hell. "Who called the Egyptians? I mean, we're doing this ourselves, we came here to do this ourselves; we will not let them have anything to do with the good stuff, we're not going to let them have anything to do with the bad stuff. If we get killed, we get killed, that's life." Which we knew by then was not quite possible.

I finally found out it was one of the servants who got frightened when he heard all the noise and called the Egyptians. Anyway, that got settled and that was the end of that. But I called that mukhtar in with Al and told him, "Look, you cut your lists automatically now or I'm cutting them by July 1."

JL: How did your personnel feel about that, the Quaker staff?

AH: Well, they all knew that it was necessary. There were some who thought we were using food as a weapon, and I certainly conceded to myself that we sort of were, but we were being very, very fair. Well, we knew that we had nowhere near 200,000 refugees and we were doling out 280,000 rations. I guess some people felt uneasy about it and I worried about it a lot, but pretty soon I realized that it was the thing to do, and certainly the Arab leadership understood it and helped with it. They thought if we were being fair that they should be fair. Well, again, not a good Arab concept: Get what you can. So I don't know, a lot of little pacifists and a lot of little Friends I think would take exception to that, but it had to be done and we did what we had to do.

JL: Do you think that anybody actually lost rations because of it?

AH: No, not a soul. No, we were sure of that. We were sure of that. Anyway, there's a funny story that goes at just sort of the end of Emmett Gulley's tenure. He was a grand old man and a little confused by all these young CPS men running around running the world. He was a nice little conservative Quaker.

We began cutting lists, and this startled the hell out of them [the United Nations], because they couldn't make any cuts in the International Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies, and the administration in Beirut didn't know what was going on here. Although they were supposed to be doing this in every section, and we were the ones who [did it].

JL: Well, the U.N. mandated the cuts. Isn't that the case?

AH: The what?

JL: Didn't the U.N. ask for the cuts?

AH: Oh, sure. Sure. They knew that they had too many and they put the heat on us to do it. Well, we didn't take it as heat, because we thought it was fair; and the people we were dealing with knew it was fair, also. They were sure when we said we would see that nobody starved that it was true, and it was true.

Anyway, we got called up to a meeting with Emmett Gulley at the U.N. All the big guns from all the sections came in who were making this stuff. I forget who was leading the meeting and who was the director at the time and said, "We have to talk. It's very serious. We have got to cut these rations. Our budget is such and such . . . and we can't let them take advantage; and what progress are they making in the International Red Cross?" The League of Red Cross Societies dealt with that, and finally James Keene said, "Well, there seems to be some success in Gaza. Emmett, tell us, what do you do?" And Emmett replied, "We counted them." Like that. (chuckling) They were getting computers, and how was this going to be done, and we literally did.

JL: You did a census.

AH: We literally closed off the village--they knew what we were doing--and we went in and in each tent counted the people. We were smart enough by then to know, we watched them because the kids would transfer back. So we would count the kids, and a kid would sneak in and go out the back of the tent to the next one. We'd grab him and put him back, like that. (chuckling) So the count was still inflated, but it was reasonable and everybody accepted it.

And then, when they started to get worried about the whole thing, I went to a meeting when we got down to the bottom. They knew that we had less than 200,000--actually, we got down to about 180,000--and Keene started talking to me about that and I said, "James Keene, you can't cut [the rations]. That's the economy. Of course we're giving out too much, but they sell it to one another and then they barter and they trade. The ones who have too many people on their cards, they use it. Their economy is built on our flour and rice and oil and the things that we're doing. And we're furnishing education, we're furnishing clinics for every conceivable thing anybody ever had, we are doing a milk distribution for the kids, we're doing all of this, and it's working. There isn't any question. But we've got to have 200,000 rations or there'll be riots in the streets." I didn't think there would be riots, because by that time we were in complete control. We could have stopped any riot that anybody wanted to start. He said, "Okay, Al."

So he went into the meeting, and I went in with him, and he said, "You can't cut Gaza, they've got to have 200,000. Holtz says there's going to be riots in the street if we have less than 200,000." But they had done nothing about their damn lists! By that time, I had been around some and I knew <u>they</u> were inflated, too. They had not nearly [as many]. They thought they were sticking the Quakers at the end of the world and the International Red Cross and the League of Red Cross were getting the good [areas]. "Well, let the Quakers deal with this problem." And it was to our advantage. We practically knew all 200,000 refugees and there wasn't anyplace they could go. There wasn't any authority they could go to but us, and all we were interested in was dealing with justice.

So then it comes to pass--and Joseph tells this story with elan--we got representatives from people we trusted. The people of Gaza, maybe 20,000 or 25,000 people, were worse off than the refugees. They were starving. This again, of course, the Quakers can say was sensible to do this kind of thing, but to us it made sense. We knew what we had, and I was always particularly impressed with . . . It was a former schoolteacher that was one of our camp leaders and actually had really been an original Gazawian. He was teaching in a Gaza school, I believe, and I made a camp leader out of him. And he came and made an impassioned plea, and told me and took me and showed me six different places where people were hungry.

JL: What was his name, do you know?

AH: Kahlil Oweida. He took me, and the people were living in a little hovel and they didn't have enough food, except for the largesse they got from the refugees. So we invented a village. The Arabic word for the woebegone, the people that have been deprived--deprived is the word--and I can never remember the word *muhamin*. And we created the village of Muhamin and registered about 15,000 people. Well, the refugees in the Gaza . . . It was the right thing to do. It was against the rules but it was the right thing to do, and nobody knew we were doing it.

JL: So basically you created a camp to feed rations into.

AH: Yes, we created a village, because we did everything by villages. People were from Jaffa or they were from Beersheba or wherever they were from. That was the organization and that's the way we listed our rations, and we knew who the mukhtars were in charge of them and dealt with it that way. The mukhtars would bring something to us, to solve his terrible problem. And we learned a lot. I mean, we learned where the soft spots were, where we had to dig in.

One of our best projects was we got a hold of the Laubach Method, "Each one teach one." Because a lot of men wanted to learn English. One, so they could talk to us, and [also] just because they were bright. So we had appointed people with the Laubach Method and told them how to do it. I have a picture downstairs of one of them doing it, "Each one teach one." And by God, they did it, they started to learn English. It was incredible! The method is an excellent method!

JL: Well, now, why didn't the Quakers do that? I saw in reports three or four times, "Al Holtz is requesting Arabic lessons for the men on the staff." (laughs)

AH: That's right, I did. Little by little we picked up some Arabic. Finally, when it was all over, I went to Beirut and took Arabic lessons. But we just didn't have time and we got so reliant on our translators, our assistants. I mean, I never noticed it until I didn't have a translator and I saw some good friends and we hugged and kissed and I couldn't say anything but *marhaba* and that was it. And, of course, we began to learn enough, and some people have a language facility.

Of course, Lee Dinsmore is an expert. I've heard him give a classical Arabic speech to Arabs. And Alan Horton was very facile, had been in Cairo and was teaching in Cairo

and knew the language. He's quick with languages . . . Vern Pings picked up a lot very quickly because he had that kind of mind. I picked up enough to sneak by, but my concentration was on getting the job done and I didn't need to . . . And, of course, some of them spoke English. Certainly all of our assistants and the people who worked with us spoke English, so it wasn't that big a need.

But we were so successful [that] certain people in the U.N. began to resent us like mad, and they would send down somebody to go around and they'd come out with a report that was biased and wasn't necessarily true. Sometimes they'd report these incidents that I had with the army and stuff like that, and they weren't quite sure that was right; but they were political and I was not political, and I was winning and they weren't. So it got to be [a problem]. They sent a delegation, supposedly from the U.N., which were really a bunch of Egyptian officials, four of them, to investigate me.

JL: What year was this?

AH: Oh, this was . . . long after Emmett Gulley left. This was when we were rolling.

JL: So it would have been like the fall of 1949?

AH: Oh, I guess so. Yes, it was two years later. It probably was after we were there a year . . . We all had six-month contracts.

JL: But it wasn't before the U.N. took over?

AH: Oh, no. Oh, I'll tell you when the U.N. took over. That's an amusing story for me, and I just shake my head and say, "My God!" We did so much to keep politics out of it. Even though I knew all the answers, it was painstaking not to take sides--I mean, the Israelis or the Arabs or the Egyptians. I did buffer the refugees from the Egyptians. We did everything we did to keep them off their back. They felt that the Egyptians were the terrorists on the seven seas, they were terrible to them. I mean, they were also jealous. Anyway, we started to get these reports, and they sent a delegation down to question me. None of them spoke English, and I used Subhi Hashwa, who was by far our best translator. He was the one you could be in the room and you didn't know he was in the room, and he had exact translation and I used him because I wanted exact translation. They started to question me and ask me all their questions, and I played straight and honest with them. I finally said, "You know, I don't know really what you're after. We're doing what we thought was our mandate to do, and I have no idea if you have some

complaint or you're not very happy about the whole thing. We have absolutely no objection to you taking over starting tomorrow and we'll go home. We're here to do [a job] because we thought that it was important for us and that we could do it; and if you people think you can do it better, you are welcome to take over."

Well, then it was buzzy-buzzy back and forth. I said, "What did they say, Subhi?" He said, "They said, 'Somebody has put him up to it.'" (chuckling) Because there was no way they could deal with that, [they] couldn't deal with it. So they dropped it and I never heard another word about it. I don't know what they reported back, but that was the end of worrying about Holtz is going to be the little Napoleon of the Gaza Strip, or wherever it was. (chuckling)

Well, then we came to the very end. By that time, we were there six months and I had gone back to the United States. The U.N. asked for me to come back, Vern Pings and Edele and myself. The Quakers weren't quite sure that's what we should do, because we had the trip home and they were only committed to one trip home and stuff like that. And, of course, the U.N. prevailed, and there was a little scuffling about that in the files. Bronson Clark, who was at the Friends . . .

JL: This was in January when you left on home leave?

AH: No, it couldn't have been January.

JL: January was when your home leave took place.

AH: It would be . . . January, February, March, April, May, June . . . it had to be in the summer. I went back after Easter.

JL: So you went back in the summer then?

AH: My contract said I had seven months.

JL: Before the extension agreement was signed.

AH: Oh, absolutely. Now, by that time, we had organized in our famous meetings . . . We came for an emergency feeding program with the notion that we would help with the resettlement, which was what we were all interested in, and I was particularly interested in it. And anyhow I had my concepts of community at that time. You know, oh, boy, if I could put this on the Arabs, and I knew all the mukhtars, we'd do it village by village. We created up a plan where we would load them on boats in Gaza, take them out in lines and put them on boats, village by village, and then we would meet them in Latakia, which

was Syria, on the other end, and how we would take them off the boats. And there was this big [plain] which was the breadbasket in the Roman Empire, and all this land with nothing on it but a few [Bedouin]. And we would set up village by village and make wells, and, oh, boy, and schools!

JL: Who planned all of this out now?

AH: We did. (chuckling) It was an exchange of everybody's concept. I wrote it up finally, and of course by that time it was so . . .

JL: I don't think I have a copy of that anywhere.

AH: I must have it someplace. Anyway, this was the big plan to do this, and of course every time I advanced [it] on James Keene, who was our buddy at the time, he sort of smiled and said, "Yeah, it's a good idea, but did you ever try talking to the Syrians about it?"

JL: Oh, so at this point . . . When you first went into Gaza, did you have ideas that repatriation was possible?

AH: Oh, sure. Oh no, not [only] <u>possible</u>. That was <u>it</u>! There was no question that that's what should be done!

JL: Okay, so then somehow within those six months you had figured out that some of it was going on?

AH: Oh, sure, very, very quickly we figured out that Ralph Bunche or somebody was meeting with them on Cyprus, and we'd get all the reports. The U.N. was digging in for, as Howard Wriggins said, fifty years, and there was no way we were going to . . . I mean, if Quakers can't settle a problem overnight--forget it. I mean, none of this long-term nonsense. We go in and do our good thing and get out and everybody lives happily ever after.

All of us felt very keenly about what the Arab countries were doing politically, using them as a political football and not helping at all. It was their fault to start with. They were the ones that said, "You don't have to worry. We'll run them into the sea and then you'll come back and everything will be peachy."

One thing that I'm sympathetic with the Palestinians--and I know all the faults and I know where they've made mistakes and what they should have done and what they shouldn't have done--but the Arab has been double-crossed all through history. They have no experience with running their own lives or a democracy. The Pichot Agreement and

Balfour Declaration, the White Papers, every time they have made an agreement to get independence they got crossed in the end. That was wrong, we were wrong, Harry Truman was wrong. Although I'm an admirer of Harry Truman, it was a big mistake to be so one-sided because we had such a conscience about the Holocaust.

That was terrible and I'm the first one that says what the Jews have done with the land is incredible, the way they operate is incredible, but it's not justice for the Arab. The Arab has not been treated equally, and little by little we're beginning to see that. But the Israelis have such a strong public relations around the world and such influence in Congress, which I think is wrong. I mean, there should be a little more even-handedness. And technically, Baker and Bush have been saying that, to their credit. That's the last credit you'll hear me give Bush. (chuckling) Unless they make a Palestine, it will never be settled in your time. You will have four grandchildren and they'll still be talking about it.

JL: Let me break here for a second.

(End of Side 2)

JL: Okay, we're just about at the point now where the Service Committee is starting to talk about extending their service in Gaza or leaving.

AH: Yes, and with the negotiations, they decided it was all right to continue for another six months.

JL: Do you remember the meeting when Colin Bell came in? It was in July and he came down. There was a huge staff meeting.

AH: In Gaza?

JL: I don't see your name here, so you may have been on home leave. (chuckling)

AH: Probably, because I don't remember. I was a good friend of Colin's and I don't remember that.

JL: Okay, he came to a staff meeting on July 29 to Gaza. Kelly [Peckham] was there, Vern [Pings] was there, Marshall [Sutton] was there.

AH: Oh, well, then I must have been . . .

JL: David [Walker] was there . . .

AH: Vern was there?

JL: Vern was there.

AH: May I see that?

JL: Certainly.

AH: Boy, there's a mystery for old Al. Where the hell was I? I must have been in jail, because Vern went home with me.

JL: You must have been in jail?

AH: I'm teasing.

JL: Okay. Well, one of the things that came out of that meeting that I wanted to ask you about--and it doesn't matter if you were there or not, it's still a question that you would probably have some opinion about--some of the people in this meeting were talking about . . . Well, is this really a Quaker operation or could anybody do this?

AH: We always had that.

JL: What is the unique aspect of this operation, in terms of Quaker presence?

AH: I'd be happy to answer that. Edele is not here [on the meeting roster] either. I guess Vern must have come home after us if he's there, and he is. That's why I don't remember, because I would have been delighted to sit with Colin always. I had great affection and appreciation for Colin Bell, and like I said, he was the one who ran through the famous "Nineteen Points" that made my life easier.

That's terrific. I would like to have a copy of that sometime or at least to read. That's marvelous. I would have probably heard about it when I came back, but it didn't register that Colin Bell was there. My figuring figures that I was home in July and I didn't go back till August sometime. And there was a great to-do about that, too; they didn't want me to do that. Again, I said, "Hey, if you want us to go back we'll go back." But the U.N. insisted, James Keene insisted that we go back and it sort of happened that way.

JL: He wanted continuity, I'm sure.

AH: Yes, he wanted that. And . . . I had always regarded James Keene as one of the best administrators I ever met, and in the beginning he was. But as the thing went on and he kept being bypassed for idiots as director . . . He was the deputy director and really doing the job. He got a little testy about the whole thing and began to make a show of opposing

us, although we still always got what we needed. That's crazy. Anyway, at the very end, before I resigned, I had stayed over in the transition.

JL: Yes, but let's go back to the extension first.

AH: All right, to go back to the extension, it turned out to be more of the same and us feeling that little by little people were dropping off, I assume. It got up to sixty and people were going away. When we went to the extension, we stayed around there and did the same thing, and I think as much or more success . . .

JL: Do you feel there was a unique Quaker presence there?

AH: Absolutely, I don't have the slightest question of that.

JL: And what would that look like?

AH: Boy, that's a tough one, but I'll tell you what it really amounted to. It could not [have been] done if we hadn't been so naive [and had known] we couldn't do this. We didn't know we couldn't do what we did. I don't know to this day how we did what we did, as I look on it; but it was a daily thing, you met the problems.

We had a lot of smart, conscientious, interested, dedicated people from the beginning to end. I mean, it was a basis of a bunch of wide-eyed pacifists, the dregs of CPS, and all the European people who came in were all in the International Red Cross and all [pacifists]. Everybody was a pacifist and everybody also determined that this was a good example to show pacifism works, that you don't need to carry a gun and beat people over the head with a club to get things done. And I think we proved that without any question.

JL: Do you think that that was different from what the Red Cross was doing?

AH: Absolutely, 100 percent. They may have had hard-working, dedicated, paid people. Everybody was aware and impressed with the fact--and never heard of it before--that here were sixty people working for maintenance, and they were around us enough to know it was absolutely true. I mean, we got good, full maintenance; we had good food, we had a place to sleep and we had clothes, and we eventually had transportation, which was an early problem to get out to the camp. We finally worked that out and got a bunch of good jeeps and good trucks in from the U.N. and managed to wheedle and push our way. I don't think there is the slightest question it is the most significant project that the Friends ever did.

And one of the things that was important, not only as Friends, if you look at the original memo . . . Like I said, I can show it to you. I was showing it to Howard last night. James Vail was at the Friends meeting when they decided they would do this, and they may have pressed them into it. There was the worry that nobody had ever proven: Could pacifists go into a military zone and survive and do anything? And boy, oh, boy, we proved it.

One of the things that helped is, one, Friends didn't have to run and scurry around like all their other projects, including CPS, to raise money. The money was there and they even got a clause in there that they would get the overhead in Philadelphia paid for. So all these people like Charlie Read and Bronson Clark, people who were dealing with us at the time, they arranged the bookkeeping so that they got paid. So, from that point, it was easy. We had no financial worry, so there was more money than we needed.

I mean, we ran the most economical enterprise and the most successful. Nobody could come in there and criticize what we were doing, except from a political point of view that we were too high-handed and we did what we felt like, and we weren't listening to the U.N., and we weren't listening to the State Department. (chuckling) We weren't listening to anybody, we were doing our own thing.

JL: Yes, I read some of that, too. But I guess what I'm trying to find out is if you feel that in terms of contribution to the refugees, aside from the relief contributions and the distributions . . . For example, do you feel that your method of operating carried over then into their way of living?

AH: I'm glad you asked that question. Absolutely. Not to every little refugee living in a tent, no, but the people, the leadership that we worked with . . . I'll tell you two stories that demonstrate why I'm so confident when I say it's true.

We had the people who became the camp leaders; the people we turned it over to became area officers after we left. These were our assistants and our interpreters. More and more got administrative, and they would go out and we would back off and go do other things and just check in once in a while. It turned out they were leading the camp; they became the camp leaders. We checked on them and we had absolute confidence in them at that time and they did an excellent job.

Once in a while we'd get a complaint that somebody over there was disturbed and we would interfere, but usually the camp leader was playing it straight. It would have to be if there was the slightest rumor of any shenanigans, any payoffs, anything that was [not straight]. Because they were the band of thieves, we used to call them.

We rooted them out quick. There wasn't any question about it. That doesn't mean there wasn't still some, but we rooted out the people. We'd hear the rumor and we would objectively get the rumor and work with the people around it, and we confirmed it. There was no fuss or bother about it, or any fuss from the people we caught. "Out! That's it."

JL: You're talking about the local people? Is that who you're talking about?

AH: All the refugees, yes, everybody.

JL: Okay, because there is a report--I think Emmett Gulley's, actually--an evaluative report when he says that in terms of staffing that over 100 local refugee staff had been let go in the first six-month period.

AH: Oh, I think that's probably right.

JL: Well, his statement was because they didn't adhere to our concepts of honesty, which to me implied that there was . . .

AH: Well, that's a nice way to say it. I would say, yes, they were a band of thieves and we got rid of them.

JL: And that's what you think it was?

AH: Oh, there was no question.

JL: It wasn't a difference in semantics or . . . ?

AH: No, there's a cultural [thing]. See, an Arab, it's like my friend said, I think: "Steal from the British, steal from the Egyptian people, but you don't steal from the Quakers. You don't. I mean, this is crazy. Who thought up this thing?" Because by that time it had been established that they knew what we were there for and they knew what we were doing and they knew how we were doing it. And little by little--I mean, a Christian and a Moslem being a buddy didn't happen. If they had to work together, they would, and they became buddies.

Joseph had a dear friend who was a strict Moslem and went through all the way until his death when they were both in Beirut and the whole thing, and was a good friend of mine, too, Adnan Abu Khadra. Joseph was a strict Christian but a private one. I mean, he

didn't belabor the whole thing. He was Armenian, and Adnan was a strict Moslem, and this went all the way through. Joseph and Subi and the other Christians that we worked with became dear friends. I mean, exchanging . . . family parties and things like this. So there was a breakdown of that on a limited basis. Did it go down to every single refugee with every single Christian? No. The Christians lived in the community in fear, by and large; and most of them were in Gaza, they weren't out in the camps with the Moslems.

JL: That's interesting.

AH: They made their wives go around shrouded with a veil over their face for protection. By the time we were there it wouldn't have been necessary, and then little by little it turned out we started sewing groups and these Christian women for a time would come unveiled. I mean, don't kid yourself. We made some impact, whether it was right or wrong. And I'm not saying whoopee; we didn't know what we were doing, but we made some impact on that community and didn't even know it.

Little by little, we learned the Arab culture that when you go to dinner in a Moslem's house you're not going to see the women, but [our] womenfolk who they accepted to sit down and eat with us were supposed to ask to see the womenfolk. They would go see them in the bedroom and they would be dressed to the hilt with gowns and earrings and hair coiffed. It was a big event, the Quakers were coming to dinner! It was incredible! At least to me it was incredible.

JL: Do you think that the Quakers were a particularly Christian presence in the region?

AH: That's a good question. Nobody asked that before to me. I think it was known we were Christians. We had a little houseboy one time who was questioned about what is a Quaker. And he said, "A Quaker is somebody who would be here to help. If the Jews were in trouble, he would be helping the Jews. They're just here to help." And he was a strict Moslem. Because we did all the . . .

There's a bit in one of the meetings where Edele asked us if we'd mind moving the dinner hour back an hour because it was Ramadan and, of course, the people we were working with were Moslems and they had been fasting. It was a little hard for them to serve dinner when it was still an hour away from sundown. So we would come in and we would sit and wait until sundown. (chuckling) When the gun went off for sundown, all the waiters and the kitchen crew would grab a glass of water and dump it down. "Y-a-a-

a-y!" (chuckling) It got to be a big event. Then they would serve the food and then they would eat with us.

We broke lots of traditions--carefully; we didn't step on them--but little by little. Before I got out of there the unheard of [happened]. When I was getting ready to leave, some of the Moslem workers we worked with insisted that I come in the evening when it was getting dark and meet their wives. The Bedouins were all covered, but they wanted to meet the mudir. They wanted to meet him . . . what they were hearing all about from their husbands all the time, and several families did that. Then they would back off and we would go in and sit down and have the meal.

When I went back in 1967, by then they were bringing their women out in European dress, and when we sat down to eat, the women didn't sit with us but they brought the food in. Before, it used to be the men would go to the door and take the food and bring it in. So, I mean, it was a huge [change]. Well, of course, time was in there, too. I mean, the world was changing at the same time. But Gaza got its feel of Western culture way before the rest of them. It was so compact, a whisper would get it stopped.

Anyway, you say, "Did we make any impact?" Let me tell you this. We had a few people who were highly critical in the U.N. who would come down and pooh-pooh what we were doing: "This is not the way professionals do this." I thought, "Well, boy, when the professionals get in here, aha! now I'm going to learn something." It didn't take me too many weeks to learn that that was crazy; they didn't know half what we knew. By that time, we knew what we were doing. We didn't know we knew what we were doing, but we sure did when they came in with all this nonsense that they were going to do.

Anyway, there were several reports. They were very concerned because they had decreed from above that all the distribution centers for the refugees would receive rations twice a month, like on the fifteenth and the thirtieth, that kind of stuff.

We had started from the beginning and trained our people every two weeks. They knew when they got their cards that they would get their rations and they would be delivered, and nobody interfered with anybody else. Wednesday was your day, two weeks from now, to get it; you were in line on Wednesday, you got your rations. Two Wednesdays from now you got your rations. Whenever we distributed by the village, the village knew when we were doing it; two weeks later they would get their ration.

Well, some smart-ass with a calculator figured out that we were distributing more rations to Gaza than to the others. So what? I mean, that was the poorer section. There was no enterprise in Gaza, except a little merchandising they did with our flour. The other areas had factories and whatever that some people were working on, big farms and stuff like that. There were no big farms in Gaza. So this got criticized; and we always insisted, no way. You'd wreck the whole system. They're disciplined now, which an Arab never heard of. They line up now orderly and they know we're telling them the truth, that they'll get fair measure for anything.

We'd get arguments once in a while where somebody would complain his friend got a bigger measure than he did, and we'd take the time. We'd stop the line, take time to show him the measure: "Here. Okay, pour your stuff back in. Okay, now, you get one and you get one. Is that right? Okay. Go away now, and shut up." They were satisfied. If you know anything about measuring, flour particularly . . . Rice and oil you can distribute pretty [evenly]; but flour, you go like this. Sure, some people got a little more than others, but it wasn't deliberate. It was with the same measure, but you can't go like that to each measure like you were baking a cake.

Anyway, to finish this part of the story--because I've always loved it--one of the young ladies who was a reports officer--later married Keene, by the way; she was after him the entire time--she'd make these snide reports about what we were doing and how we were doing it when we were distributing.

So, when it was finally all over and it was the transition and I finally got out of there . . . Let's see, I guess I was there maybe twenty months or something like that, and I stayed on with a salary, by the way, which was really quite amusing. One day I went to bed and I was working for what I was eating, and the next day I got up and suddenly I was a rich man. (chuckling) I mean, I was reading the Wall Street Journal and having them bring coffee to my bed. Come on here, I'm an effendi, a class act here, which was really very amusing. We got very generous terms, and to us, you know, it blew our mind because we're not used to it. We weren't interested in it, but it was just gravy thrown in our lap.

Anyway, I was interested in the transition, one, because I wanted to help maintain what I thought we would do, and I wanted to learn. I thought these big professional experts were going to teach me something. I found out very quickly that was ridiculous. But little by

little then, after the transition four or five of us stayed on, and they started replacing us with the flotsam and jetsam of Europe. Some of them were all right, but, I mean, most of them were political appointments of one kind or another, which was real obvious, and had instructions to shake this ingrown nonsense that the Quakers were going on, which was dumb to even do it.

Of course, while I was there I maintained my famous "Nineteen Points," regardless. Part of the "Nineteen Points" was we would never be disturbed going in and out of Gaza--no visas, no fees, no anything. The entire time, I never was stopped or inspected or anything. And no flag ever went up. We used the U.N. flag for a table covering for the conference room, and no American flag went up, no Egyptian flag went up. No flags. It was a dumb CPS thing, but that's life. But it worked, and again it helped create our identity. We were not biased, we were not representing any unit of anything but to serve the people and see that the refugees got what they were supposed to get.

The day I left, on the plane I left on, a guy came down the day before who was taking my place--at that time I was acting director or something and he was replacing me--and I said to him, "Look, tomorrow I'll take you out, I'll introduce you to all the people." He said, "Hold it, Al. None of that. I came down here with a case of scotch and was told to get along with the Egyptians." With the least interest in . . .

JL: This is your replacement?

AH: Yes. He was a nice guy but this is what he was told, and he was a political appointee and that's what he was going to do. He went the next morning right over to see the Egyptians and pat them on the back and hand them a bottle of scotch and get along with them. That must have shocked them, too, because they weren't used to that from us. (chuckling) Although we did get rather friendly with some of them. We had several big parties with the Egyptian brass.

Edele had trained the cook, Mustafa. She taught him how to bake cakes American-style, which was always an interesting enterprise on a Bunsen burner. Sarwaf Bey, the governor of Gaza, came to tea a couple of times with us. We had an afternoon tea every day. We'd eat lunch and we'd go back in the field, and then we'd come in at four or five o'clock and have tea, which was the equivalent of having supper. That was the meal. We'd have a good breakfast and we'd have a lunch, and then tea in the afternoon. We

never really had a formal supper, except on weekends. So we'd invite friends from time to time. Sarwaf Bey came and he fell in love with the cake and he wanted to know who baked the cake. We brought Mustafa out and introduced him, and he bowed and scraped. [Sarwaf] thought that was wonderful. He offered to buy him and he couldn't buy him--he couldn't buy him off. When we left, he hired Mustafa as his head cook. So Mustafa was a little Gaza schnook; suddenly he became a big man in town.

JL: Was he a local or a refugee?

AH: Local, he was local. He wasn't a refugee, he was a Gazawi . . . Mustafa became a good cook and baker, but he knew nothing when he started. He was a busboy to begin with, a waiter, and little by little Ibrahim [the chief cook] and Edele taught him.

JL: Yes, I was going to say that says something about Edele's teaching.

AH: Oh, yes, incredible. We'd get lots of stories about Edele and the cook and the way we set up the housekeeping. Edele organized the laundry. Everybody knew when they were to bring their laundry. She decided we all needed our hair cut, she hired a barber, and as we came in she dragged them in to get their hair cut.

JL: The mom, the house mom.

AH: The whole thing, the whole bit. There wasn't anything that we needed that we didn't attend to. It was beautiful, it was a well-organized thing, and I think most people will tell you . . . I might not be kin to you, but I get along with you fine if I have to work with you. I mean, if I don't have to work with you, okay, I'll go off and that's the end of that. There was no real friction or jealousy among the workers, that I'm aware of. There may have been. I'm sure a lot of people hated my guts, but I've lived with that all my life and it doesn't bother me. As long as I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing it's all right. But we had disagreements, we had bad arguments in meetings and disagreements; but, I mean, it didn't carry over into the work or one avoiding the other. Sure we had problems, some people had personal problems and we dealt with them, but there was no standing on ceremony. I mean, we were far too busy. Like I said, we did ten years in ten months, so you're not aware of all that.

But it was interesting, I went back in 1967 when Sarwaf, the governor, left. The guy that replaced him, Mustafa became his cook. So here's a little guy who was nothing, we attended his wedding. He got married while we were there. I mean, I attended the male

part and Edele attended the female part. But he was a big shot in town, big respect. He had four or five kids. I've got a picture of them.

JL: In 1967 this was?

AH: This was 1967. He immediately sent out for all the people that worked with us, and Ibrahim, who was a nice guy who had been really the head cook . . . He was not well; he came in on crutches and I couldn't figure out what the diagnosis was. But we hugged, anyhow, and we had a nice little reunion with Mustafa. And here, the impossible, Mustafa brought his wife and kids out to sit and have tea with us and the whole thing. "That's the way the Quakers did things, so I'd like to do that with the Quakers." He saw it for all the while we were there, what we did, and absorbed it in his little head. He was almost an American, you know. He knew all the things to say and do. It was incredible, I loved it. (chuckling)

Anyway, to go back to the original story, I went to Beirut and finally wound up working with AUB [American University in Beirut]. A year after I left, I was at a cocktail party. In the Middle East, of course, there's not that much recreation, except what you make for yourself, so there are a lot of cocktail parties. You invite ten people and next week I invite ten people; and it's often the same people, but it's bigger or smaller. Anyway, at a cocktail party all the communities mixed--I mean, the British embassy and the whole thing--and at these cocktail parties there would be the U.N. people who we worked with. Barbara came to me, who was not particularly my friend. I mean, we never had an out-and-out fight, but I knew that she resented the Quakers. She took me aside and said, "Al, I've got to tell you something. After you left Gaza, we were determined . . . We sent people down to break that system so that it would be the same. And I want to tell you we could never do it. We couldn't change a thing in any of the programs, and certainly not in the distribution program. The people would not stand for it. They got their rations every two weeks; we just finally resigned ourselves to it." And this was a year after we left the place.

So I figured, there's the justification. Did we have a function? Yes. Did we manipulate a little bit? Yes, we sure did. Did we do things that you could sit around and argue philosophically about? Yes, but they had to be done at the time, and I don't know that we made, in my mind, any outlandish mistakes. I really never punched that lieutenant in the

mouth; I don't think I was even tempted. I didn't want him around, I didn't want to see him. He was a little wimp!

JL: I didn't read that. That didn't make it to the archives.

AH: Oh, it didn't?

JL: No.

AH: Jim Read was the one who knew me, and I played tough nut in CPS, too. Oh, I'm really a pussycat, but I'm a strong personality and I've got a sharp tongue, and sometimes people . . . I can't stand bullies and I can't stand people picking on one another, and I have a tendency to come on fairly strong. But Jim Reed, who was also a dear buddy of mine nevertheless, he was always a little suspicious: Holtz could punch somebody out with nothing flat now, believe me. I don't know why he ever thought that, because I never even raised my hand to him.

I had a lot of fun teasing him. I'm the one who invented "Have you seen the bald mystic?" (chuckling) Somebody came up to him, a complete stranger, one day and said, "Oh, I know who you are; you're the bald mystic." I was the one who called him "the bald mystic." So that's the end of that.

We were successful. Did we make a dent? No question. Could it be duplicated? In some circumstances. We were at a time in history where the pacifist ilk had risen, had gotten some status and thought it was part of what they should do. And if you replaced that, yes, it could be done again and it could be done anyplace. Yes, it could be done in Bosnia.

JL: That's a good point.

AH: Now, of course, we dealt with a different thing. Yes, there was war going on around us; yes, we backed the army off completely and showed it could be done pacifistically, and I think that's important. Now, how long that lasts or how long anybody is going to believe it or how long anybody is going to do more about it on a wider scale, they're not. They're not going to, no matter what anybody has learned. In the Middle East there is simply not going to be any peace until they create a Palestine, and then they may be lucky. There's too much . . .

JL: Do you think you realized that at the point when you were leaving?

AH: Yes. Oh, sure, by then I did realize it, yes. I wasn't satisfied. I kept up with it all the years. I made speeches and I wrote articles to the Times and the whole thing, and I got buffeted around pretty good. I went to meetings deliberately where I knew the Zionists were meeting and battled with it. I did battle, but it didn't impress anybody.

I often had Jews come to me and say, "Al, I think you're right." And every time I had a good discussion with a Jew, I would wind up saying, "And do you have an Israeli bond?" Not one ever said no. Every Israeli, every Jew, many of them said to me, "I feel I really have two countries, the United States and Israel." Well, I understand that, I am sympathetic with that, but that has got nothing to do with bringing justice and integrity to the Middle East. There is no way to do that, and they are determined they're not going to give up anything.

I understand what they're doing, I appreciate what they have been doing. I wish they would let the poor Arabs alone and there would be some [justice]. I mean, the Arabs are second-class citizens. It drives me crazy. You know, if you're going to do it, okay, make them regular citizens: let them move around, let them vote, and let them do everything. Then I think the Arabs have got no real squawk. But while you treat them as refugees and keep insisting you're going to get them all out of there, which you're never going to do in a million years no matter how much you persecute them--and they are persecuting them. Amnesty International has been there a couple of times, but they're smart and they're well financed and it doesn't get around. And it's too bad because they could live together. There have been many, in my experience, Moslem friends who have Jewish friends. [They] will exchange visitors on holy days and were good friends. I had one Israeli once when I went in there tell me, "I really feel very, very bad about this. We should have them. We need them here." Now, on the other side, I would get the stuff: "We're not going to give up an inch. Forget it. They're never going to get Gaza back, they're never going to get [Palestine]." I mean, high officials who quite matter-of-factly: "The sooner we get the British and the Americans and the French out of here, the better off we're going to be. But give me the million dollars." You know, they're conning us! They're conning us!

JL: Do you think that Friends could have played a greater role at the time in development and resettlement?

AH: No.

JL: As opposed to strictly . . .

AH: Oh, if it hadn't been political?

JL: Yes.

AH: Oh, I know we could have, I'll guarantee it. If they want to do it, I'll do it tomorrow, and I don't do anything any more.

JL: Now, you're saying if it weren't political. You mean, in other words . . . ?

AH: They wouldn't let us. They wouldn't let us and they were . . .

JL: They?

AH: They, the political entities there--Syria, Jordan, the Egyptians--even if I could find a way to get friendly with them . . .

JL: So their official policy then at that time . . . or was it an unwritten policy?

AH: It was an official policy, and I don't know that it was ever written. But every Arab state was there to bug Israel and use the refugees as a political football--guaranteed.

JL: So it was relief only, period?

AH: Relief only, period. Except the contacts we made, even in the U.N., of people where we demonstrated there was another way to do things and it didn't have to be political. I mean, we negotiated returns of families to join families in Israel. When the head of the family was in Israel and all his relatives were in there . . . I'll never forget it. We arranged it. It took hard work but we arranged to exchange a dozen families or something. It was a drop in the bucket, but they had to do it because it could be done! You could get them to do it! Well, once it gets on a wide scale and once it gets political and once it gets with the big shots that are running the world and the power structure, they put it down. They put it down completely.

I did everything I could in 1967 to organize the thing that Paul Johnson is so famous for, Conference for Diplomats. Which is a terrific idea; and as many of them that have been done, what came of it at last? When these people get back to their own countries and the power structure takes over, they say, "Hmm, that's interesting," and they go right on

persecuting Hindus. Come on, it's ridiculous. So it's got to be done. I'm always grateful that somebody would [try to] do it.

I have never marched in a demonstration in my life and I never will because I'm too much of an individual, but I'm always happy that somebody is doing that. I was glad that somebody would march in some of these things. I wish they wouldn't bring their police with them all the time, but it should be done. I can't personally do it. As an individual, yes, I'll go in the lion's cage and I'll argue with any of them if they want to talk.

It's wrong and it can be settled very, very easily; but it sounds like it's too simple, and it's suspicious because it doesn't get complicated and they're used to dealing with . . . : "It's got to be complicated. You've got to have a dozen different angles to this whole thing. You've got to write ten papers and you've got to bring in experts," and some of this stuff is not that tough! It's plain, sensible, up-tight, honest administration in most cases, but that's what's wrong with most of the things we . . .

There's nothing wrong with food stamps; it's badly administered. We don't need a big bureaucracy, we need some good, simple, strict rules and somebody who will administer fairly, and then there would be nothing wrong with food stamps. I don't reject food stamps.

(End of Side 3)

JL: When you went to work for the U.N., then you stayed until . . . I think it was November 1.

AH: It could be. Yes, you would know that better than I. When did I leave?

JL: I think that's when you left the U.N.

AH: When I left the U.N.? When did I go to the U.N.? What was the transition date, do you know?

JL: April 30 was the transition, so it was May 1.

AH: May, June, July, August, September, October, November; so I stayed on seven months more.

JL: Yes, that's what it looks like.

AH: How about that . . . Again, I was in the transition longer than I thought, too. I thought it was about four months. Do you want to know off the record why I resigned in a huff?

JL: (chuckling) Yes. Well, I didn't know . . . but yes, give me your reasons for leaving.

AH: I don't know whether you want it on tape. It was really very simple.

JL: Well, it's up to you. It's your interview.

AH: It doesn't make any difference. I really don't care who knows. In fact, I've told the story many times. We had been paying our local people . . . By that time, we had set up a salary scale and we knew how much we paid porters and how much we paid teachers, how much we paid nurses, how much we paid the camp leaders. All up and down we had a whole structure, and we were paying them modestly, maybe something in the area of like twenty-five pounds a month for a camp leader, and porters were getting like five pounds a month. We had a whole salary scale, just like you do normally. It was written and everybody knew what it was. And yes, we would entertain people who thought they were getting a raise or change jobs. We'd give them the pay that went with it.

Then I discovered that the other agencies, the International Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies--for that, I went back and forth to meetings and stuff like that--were paying them regular wages, like, you know, 120 pounds a month for people who were not doing as well as our people were doing. That was not fair and none of us thought that was fair. That was a big mistake. So I decided they were not going to do it. We had a budget meeting, and I went to the budget meetings, and I made up my mind after discussing it with people . . .

You [asked], "Did we ever make a dent on them?" I have to tell this story, this is important. The people who eventually took over--some ten or twelve people who became the big guns in the area offices, Joseph being the leader of them--they knew our way of doing things and they knew we had weekly meetings, and we started with a moment of silence. Now, toward the end they came to me and said they wanted to form their own organization, like a union. They wanted a group that could deal with things, and Joseph was to lead them and negotiate, and so be it, all that stuff. And I said, "That's a great idea," and we helped them do whatever.

We recognized them as being a representative group of the camp leaders and they sat down and discussed things, too. When we left, they later told me that the first meeting, and every meeting they had after that, in spite of the U.N., when they met together they started with a moment of silence. This is Christians and Moslems and Armenians and Lord knows what. Unbelievable!

And you say we didn't make a dent? We made a dent! But did it last? No. Did they go out and kill their brother? I guess they did. But they wouldn't have then. They wouldn't have then. And I thought that was terribly important. Yes, can it be done? It can be done. And this was a mixed group who would have been, in Jaffa, casual enemies. They might do business together but they would certainly not be friends, and yet they loved one another like brothers. They'd meet each other, hey, hugging and kissing, Moslems and Christians! So it can be done.

Anyway, to why I quit. It's petulant and it's not right, but it's me and my principles. Anyway, Keene had been my buddy always and I admired him as the best administrator I ever knew, and he was. Toward the end he got sloppy and he got political himself and a little mean once in a while. But anyway, I had gone to him as my buddy and I had this scale all figured out to raise them to the same level that all the others did and make whatever adjustments. If we had more categories than they did, we'd fix it, we'd get it all straightened out. But it was not fair that our people were working for so much less and doing just as good a job--in fact, often better. From truck drivers down, they should get a raise.

"Well, Al, you know, we're trying to cut the budget. I mean, this is costing too much, it's going on too long. I'm trying to cut the budget. I don't think you can do that. We'll give them a little bit."

At that time, they had appointed a new controller--Charles something, I don't remember the name. He was a nice guy. And I went in to meet him as an introduction and he was talking to me. He started, "Well, I have nothing but admiration for you people in the boondocks."

Do you know that the U.N. personnel were scared to go into camps? I mean, they thought we were living a life of jeopardy every single minute. We weren't. We were not exposed to anything. There was not that much sickness. No one knows yet why Clarissa [Geiger] died. She was on medication or something went wrong with the whole thing. But we had normal illness, colds and laryngitis. We had a typhoid case one time.

Somebody decided they wanted to go live on the beach with the refugees and we screamed bloody murder, "Don't do that." I never believed in that. You do the best for your personnel as you can do and keep them as comfortable as possible so they can do a

good job. Well, they insisted. In a week they were back with malaria or something, so nobody ever went and lived with the refugees on the beach again. Identifying with the refugees, that didn't make any sense.

Anyway, I went in to see this Charles. I'll have to look up his name sometime. We became good friends, too. So, as we were talking, he was telling me how much he admired us and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, I'm here for the budget meeting and I'm trying to figure out a way to get extra pay." And I explained the story to him that every other organization was paying their people 125 and we were paying 25, and there should be some equity in this whole thing. It just wasn't fair. I didn't have the heart to tell our people . . .

He said, "Well, for heaven's sakes, I'll approve it right now. You go back and tell them that beginning the first of next month they get the adjusted wage, salary and all." I said, "Terrific. I hug and kiss you, I love you like mad, you're the best administrator I ever met!"

I went back and I told James. I thought he would be happy. "James Keene, what do you know? This new guy just approved the raises. I'm going back and give all those people raises." He said, "What?" and he got white. He rushed out of the room and went in to fight with the guy. Of course, by that time you don't do that, but he did it. And I waited for him, just stood in the middle of the floor like this.

Then I began to [fume]. So the son of a gun was crossing me. No you don't. So I waited till he came back. He said, "Well, what is it?" I said, "I'm leaving, but I'm also resigning," and I walked out of the room. I got on a plane. When I got off the plane, all the camp leaders were there. "Did we get the raises? Did we get the raises?" I said, "Yes, you got the raises and I resigned." Then I went back to the office and I wrote a one-line . . . : "Please accept my resignation effective" whatever the date was, and that was the end of that.

Well, the camp leaders were up in arms. They sent letters to Keene. Keene sent me a letter and he said, "I hope you will reconsider it," blah, blah, blah, and the whole nonsense. I never said another word. I just quit and went to Beirut. That was the end of that . . .

I met Keene a couple of times and I was pleasant, but I never forgave him. He was one of the few idols I ever had, and to cross me--come on! I mean, if he said to me in the beginning, "Al, you know what I'm doing . . . ," I could have accepted that. But to say no, they couldn't do it because of the budget, and the other guy approved it, and then he opposes it? It would have been differently if he had leaned back and said, "Well, Al, you pulled that one off. I didn't expect you to do it. How'd you do it?" Instead, "Yes, I screwed you, fellow. That's it." So I never forgot that.

I don't really bear him any hurt, and like I say, he's a nice [guy]. He finally married this (chuckling) enemy Barbara and they had a kid. I've got pictures of them there and I met him a couple of times in Beirut, but we never had any real extended conversation after that, because I would have done nothing but chastise him for that. Anyway . . .

JL: So you left.

AH: So I left down there, you said like November 1.

JL: And you went to . . . ?

AH: I went up to Beirut. I still had in my mind that this can't go on the way it's going on. They're going to have to do something about resettlement. Whether it's back in Israel or someplace else, wherever it is, I would like to be part of it. It was then I went to Beirut, and unable to face throwing myself into the struggle for existence, I threw my wife into it. (laughter) She went to teach in a community school and I stayed home and I started to do some writing.

JL: That's right, second grade or something like this?

AH: Yes. She finally got to be principal of a lower school. She was a good teacher, a professional social worker it turned out in the end, but she always enjoyed teaching the first, second and third grade, that kind of thing. So she went to work.

I studied Arabic. I arranged to study Arabic because I figured I was going to need Arabic if I'm going to resettle the refugees. And, of course, in my youthful exuberance I was set. It had to go my way. No way this could last.

I told people, and I'd get delegations from the Arabs coming to my house, and I'd hold forth just like the Arabs did. There was no way the U.N. was going to continue with this ration thing the way it is. It's crazy. They've got to figure out some settlement to resettle the refugees. "Yes, okay, we're all for you, Al. But they'll give us rations when we

want;" and the dumb Arabs were right, we're still doing it. I don't know yet, are they still serving rations in Gaza?

JL: I don't know if they're doing it on rations.

AH: I can't find anybody who will tell me. Are the Israelis doing it? I can't imagine that the Israelis would not want to do it themselves. I can't imagine the Israelis stopping it, because they're not about to pay for it. They'll take what they can get. They might take them. (chuckling)

I would have liked to have been in a position with the Israeli army, who are shrewd and tough. I would have liked to have been in the same position with them. The Egyptians were, oh, not too difficult to deal with, but the Israelis would have been tough because they think they're as smart as I am. And they probably got smarter . . . (chuckling) I'd like to be put in the same position with the Israelis and I'm damned if I wouldn't back them off the same way. I wouldn't allow them to do what they're doing with the [refugees]. But I will never be in that position, and it's just as well. I'm glad to be a not-working ne'er-do-well.

Anyway, I studied Arabic and I wrote some pieces on the Middle East and had some of them accepted and some of them rejected.

JL: You were at American University in Beirut?

AH: Well, I wasn't then, but then I had some friends at the university through the years, and they had a problem in the hospital. They were getting ready to build a new wing that they'd raised the money for and they were looking for a professional hospital administrator, who was supposed to come in the fall, and some of the people at the college recommended me.

So they asked me would I go and work in the hospital as an administrator until they could get a replacement, and I said yes, sure, I'd do that. And I said yes especially because people said, "Holtz, don't do it. A civilian cannot run a hospital." "Oh?" "No, the doctors and the nurses are impossible. They run everything." "Oh, okay. No civilian can run a hospital, huh?" And I'd never even been in a hospital before.

JL: Okay, so now I want to. (chuckling)

AH: Yes, they tell me I can't do it? Huh! I'll give it a try. And like I said, I had never even been in a hospital for anything, to visit friends or anything, never been near one. And I had an objection. I had my own theory about doctors and doc slop. I was healthy as four pigs, and the AMA were burning blue crosses on my lawn because I never used a doctor. I figured, "Hey, they say I can't do it, I'll do it."

So I went into the hospital, and in my own dumb, arrogant way I took over real quick and began to run things, and that's why I enjoyed it. I didn't run a hospital, I got friendly with the nurses. Anybody who wants to run a hospital better get friendly with [the nurses], I'll tell you right now, because they're really the [brains]. The doctors make the pompous decisions but the nurses tell them what to do. And also I got along with the doctors and I made some quick improvements, which the doctors approved of.

So, it came time and they weren't able to find a [replacement]. In those days, hospital administrators weren't being graduated from every corner. There was one handbook written by one of the original hospitals about this thick that I finally got. It was their hospital administration text. They were beginning to start teaching this in graduate school and stuff like that. I got a hold of the book and what other books I could get and learned about hospitals and doctors and nurses. So, by the time the fall came around, they asked me would I take the job. They couldn't find a hospital administrator.

Well, they gave me a new contract and a reasonable salary, and by that time I was having fun, so I said, "Sure, I'll do this till you find somebody." So I took like a year's contract or something like that. They were theoretically supposed to look for a pro. Again, "Get a pro in here and then we can learn how to do this job right." Meanwhile, I had a great deal of success and we built the million-dollar wing.

That summer when we were working on it, I sent Edele home. I said, "You'd better go home by yourself," and I worked all day up until midnight because I was determined to finish that hospital and get it ready by October 1 when school started. And I will never forget the end. [We] worked like mad [but] it looked like we were not going to finish the operating room in time for the opening; and I was devastated, because we'd worked so hard on almost everything else we'd done. The beds were in . . . I had ordered all of this hospital equipment and we were all in place, but the operating room wasn't getting done.

Well, a couple of my little buddies, an Armenian and a Lebanese Moslem who were kind of assisting me with the whole thing, got it in their head they were going to fix it up for me. So they came around and got me at midnight that day. They brought me to the hospital and showed me they had finished the operating room. All the workers standing around. I said, "Yay!" and everybody cheered; and by God, we opened on time. (chuckling)

JL: Well, that's great.

AH: I don't know what I would do without these good Armenian Christians and Moslem workers.

JL: Working together.

AH: Right. You get them working together, there isn't anything they can't do!

JL: Okay. Well, it's getting near lunch.

AH: All right then, I can't keep you from lunch.

JL: Is there anything that you would like to say to tie up?

AH: No, I think this oral history business is a good idea. It wouldn't be a bad idea if we produced it with tapes, but that's neither here nor there. I mean, visual tapes.

JL: Oh, video tape.

AH: There's a lot of interesting characters in these things and it could be produced. But that's all right, an oral history is better than not doing something.

END OF INTERVIEW

AFSC ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #605
Narrator: HOWARD MCKINNEY (M)
Interviewer: Joan Lowe (L)
November 11, 1992

L: I'm Joan Lowe and today is November 11th, 1992 and I'm interviewing Howard McKinney for the American Friends Service Committee Oral History Project. We're here in Friends Center.

Howard, if you would please tell me your full name, your date of birth and place of birth.

M: I'm Howard Wesley McKinney. I was born October 22, 1918 in Saskatchewan, Canada. My family returned to the United States in 1920, so I grew up in Kansas. My father was a pastor and we lived about five different places between 1920 and when I graduated from high school in 1936.

L: What kind of community were most of the places you lived in?

M: Most of these were mostly open, rural communities. I think only in the last one did we actually live in a village. Essentially a farm community.

L: What kind of pastor was your father?

M: Kansas Yearly Meeting of Friends.

L: He was a Quaker Pastor?

M: Yes. I have said that religion was kind of "the" profession of my family. Both my grandfathers were ministers and two of my mothers brothers, and several of my cousins.

L: That's amazing! What did your mother do?

M: She was a homemaker, did not work.

L: And a pastor's wife.

M: My mother died before I was five and my father remarried again a couple of years later.

L: Did your father serve in the First World War?

M: No, he was in Canada during the war and somehow was not drafted.

L: Was he a Canadian citizen?

M: No, he was an American citizen and I think was lost in the shuffle,

JL When World War Two came you would have been draft age. Can you tell me what happened during the war?

M: I was in college at Friends University. Probably the important person was one of my professors, Cecil Hinshaw, who made it a point of making it clear he would talk to any of us

who wanted to talk about CO position or our responses. when I first registered I wrote on my draft card -- although there was no place for it -- I wrote across the top "I am a Conscientious Objector".

L: So what happened with that?

M: I was first given a dependency deferment as I did not have 13 months or something after I registered before I was sent a questionnaire. In the meantime Flora and I had been married about a month by the time I got the questionnaire. I filled out everything, requesting CO status. They gave me a dependency. That did not change, then, until I went on to Hartford Theological and had a ministerial deferment.

L: So your degree then was

M: I took a Bachelor of Divinity from Hartford.

L: Okay. How did you meet Flora?

M: I had attended earlier the bible school before I went to Friends. She was attending there. It's where we met.

L: Okay, let's get back to your CO stuff, then. You got your deferment and you finished out school?

M: I finished out Hartford, although I was serving a Congregational Church about 20 miles out of Hartford. That was during the war; '42 - '46. I actually took four years to do the seminary course because I had gone and moved out to my charge and as gas rationing was on one year I only took the Monday, Wednesday, Friday classes and was there for a short six hours at the end of three years, and stayed the fourth year and took some extra, another additional 10 hours of graduate work.

L: What year did you graduate?

M: I graduated from college in '42 and from Hartford in '46,. I went from Connecticut to Central City, Nebraska and was serving as pastor of the Friends Church there, and was teaching a couple of courses in Bible or religion and philosophy. It was then Nebraska Central College. It closed about 10 years later. it was only about 100 students at that point.

L: Did you stay for the duration?

M: By the spring of '46 the war was over. I was at Central City for three years. I had resigned for various reasons, part of which was my youth and impatience. While I was looking

around, assuming I was going to take another preaching assignment, I learned that the Service Committee was recruiting people for Gaza for six months.

L: Did you have any information about the Service Committee prior to that?

M: Yes. I guess I knew about the Service Committee about the same year that Clarence Pickett became Executive Committee. My father took the pastorate of what had been his home Meeting in Kansas. My stepmother had grown up in that community. My grandfather had served that pastorate 2 years earlier. So I knew about the Service Committee, but not a great deal in detail, but through college I began being much more aware of the Service Committee. Certainly I was aware of CPS and the Service Committee.

L: Actually, one of the things that people say a lot of times about Clarence Pickett is that the Service Committee transformed Clarence Pickett at the same time he was transforming the Service Committee because he came from a conservative part of the country in terms of the Religious Society of Friends. I'm wondering if your family or the people you were associating with had any particular points of view about the Service Committee that you heard or were feeling?

M: Well, I've said it was not always mentioned with approbation in my family, although I don't remember a great deal of criticism. It is clear that much of the religious faith was not socially oriented in terms of it. Having had both at the Bible school, which was certainly not really emphasizing it. Actually, when I went from the Bible school to Friends University, nobody that I knew had ever done it. People just did not go from Haviland Bible School to Friends University. There was a great deal of criticism. Although my father urged me to go, partly because some of the other places people tended to go to I didn't have the money to go to, there was a certain kind of caution about being careful. [laughs] It certainly began for me a kind of religious transformation, at least theologically. I guess maybe I'm a slow learner because I did not realize until I was at Hartford that the fundamentalist framework had just gone. I can remember walking out of class when I had been there about six weeks and admitting to myself, "Hey, that's gone." It's sort of like that old [inaudible] it had collapsed. That left me with two kinds of things. One was "I don't know where I'm at and I've got to figure this all out." The other kind of thing was a very real concern. "What does this do to Flora and my relationship." She came out of, also, the very similar kind of thing. Her story of the shock when I finally told her was.. [laughs] But fortunately she weathered in terms of

it. There was a group of -- although it varied year by year -- but about eight or ten other Quakers in Hartford, most of whom had come out of the Midwest or North Carolina so that we frequently got together to exchange all kinds of feelings, backgrounds. I think all of us were going through rather similar kinds of movement away from much more fundamentalist kinds of...

L: It's interesting. I think sometimes the seminary or divinity school does that to people. Deep thinking.

M: I've talked with other people and I don't know if that was true of seminary, but I know for other people who tended to sort of throw religion overboard. That was never my case, it was just "How do I really find a theological response that's satisfying and fits where I am.." So it was not a question of.. I say, it's the theology, not in any sense the whole sense of approach to religion. I guess I would add that in some sense my applying to the Service Committee was the sense that I had never really been a part of the kind of thing for which Quakers frequently got.. You know, you say you're a Quaker and people would say, "Oh, the Quakers are so great for this and that." I had never really been a part. Well, I could never see the idea of going for two years with a family, but the idea of leaving the family for six months seemed much more possible to volunteer and do that. I did it. Flora was perfectly willing to agree to it. I did what I thought I wanted to do.

L: You didn't have any children?

M: No, we had two children. We had a girl eight and four.

L: Had you had anything in school to prepare you, or anything through the Service Committee to prepare you for the cultural differences, either language or,...?

M: Well, I had had a fair amount of Biblical study. Hartford does have probably one of the largest Islamic libraries in the US. It had, at that point, a very active school admissions so we had at Hartford during that period I was there a number of people who had been missionaries. We had a number of people from abroad. But on the whole I had done some reading. A son of one of the members of the congregation at Central City had spent some time at Ramallah teaching in the Middle East. He was home and -- this was after I had decided to go -- we had some discussion about this. When I read my letters I was somewhat critical of the orientation here in Philadelphia because I felt they didn't really give us any real background in cultural kinds of things we would likely meet. They gave us a number of

books to read on the history and on problems of oil and the Middle East. We talked to people who had been in various Service Committee projects but, I think, no one who talked about "This is the Arab culture" that you need. I just suspected I needed to know more than I was getting.

L: Okay, these are your letters at the time?

M: These are my letters.

L: In retrospect do you feel that your lack of orientation was a problem or how do you feel now?

M: It seems to me that we moved in fairly well. By the time I got there, which was very late July, they had been in there for seven months. I think the whole team had some real kinds of understanding. I think an awful lot of people in Gaza recognized that these workers are good intentioned but they don't always know everything. I didn't feel there were serious problems because we didn't understand. I think early on they had had some problems of not realizing that for an assistant to just have good English, assuming that as an interpreter, I think it was very clear that those people who worked with us had to have some standing in the community in their own right for people to believe that they were telling what...

L: That they were interpreting properly.

M: Right. And I think I was fortunate in terms of people. My initial assignment was Joseph [Kachadurian]. That was about six weeks, then he moved onto something else and I was assigned with _____--___ who was a tremendous character,

L: How did you get to Gaza?

M: I went by boat. There were three of us who went together. Pat Meyer who was there, and Evan Jones. Evan's background is Jamaica. His father is Jamaican, his mother was an Iowa missionary. He had just graduated. He and Charlie _______ were probably the youngest people in the team. He had just graduated from Haverford. We were here in training for three weeks. Pat came in, I think, maybe a week later. They send a squad boat, which was a freighter. We said that was a kind of educational experience because there were three of us. There were five Indians. They were either medical doctors or Ph.D. who had been in this country studying and were going back. They were quite unhappy when they discovered the boat was going to spend a lot of time in the Persian Gulf and they would be five or six weeks on the boat getting home. There were three women going out to Abyssinia as missionaries.

L: These weren't Service Committee people?

M: No, these were not Service Committee. This was a Dutch freighter. I'd say it had a capacity of 12 passengers and there were 11.

L: Had you ever been overseas before or taken any kind of a...

M: No, I had never been. I don't think I'd been out of the country since my family came in. I had not been east farther than a conference my senior year at Richmond, so I had traveled a fair amount in Kansas, but not... Well, I had been to Hartford, but other than that experience I had not been overseas. So meeting a number of Europeans who were part of the team was in itself a real experience.

L: So you landed where?

M: We landed in Port _______. At that point I think whether it was Ernie or somebody else that put us on the bus for Cairo. This is just an ordinary bus, jammed with people and their belongings.

L: Did they have animals?

M: They had chickens at least. The driver drove wildly cursing everybody in sight. I don't know how he held the wheel because he had one hand on the horn and the other one waving at people all of the time. At one point he almost ran into a team and wagon so that the tong of the wagon was sticking in the door. But we got there safely. [laughs] I don't remember whether it was one or two nights I stayed in Cairo. I just remember that -- who was the director? -- Emmett Gulley and Lavinus Painter were on their way leaving Gaza. I just remember that they were present one night for dinner, so I think we must have stayed a couple of nights and then went up to Gaza on the train. I don't know whether we left about noon. Anyhow, we did not arrive in Gaza until dark. This was right near the end of Ramadan, so there was to be a holiday. I think the next day they took me out to see a food distribution. Then there was the long weekend which was the holiday, the celebration at the end of Ramadan.

L: So you got a little bit of a rest before you had to...

M: Yes. I saw one food distribution one day. We did a few, but then there were two or three days when it was going on. Then the next one I was in charge of! [laughs]

L: Now you first went to Nuseirat?

M: I first went to Nuseirat which was a camp of about 16,000 people. It was an old Army barracks, most of which had been destroyed so people had made make-shift shelters inside of that. Then there were other tent areas too. The woman who was a nurse who was Danish, her English was about as difficult to understand as any of them.

L: Who was this? Do you remember?

M: I don't remember her name. I might if I looked at the list. She was probably in her mid-forties or something like that. She did not drive so frequently she would come and want to go to someplace in the camp, so either I would break away from the center or have one of the other people who drove.

L: So there were jeeps or something?

M: We had jeeps./

L: That's right, because some of the accounts I've heard were you stayed in Gaza, the village, and then by bus you normally went to the site. But you must have had your own assignment.

M: All of the camp directors had a vehicle. Most of them were jeeps, although I think one of the Rafah vehicles was a station wagon. For some reason we took a larger number, but then I think there was a truck or bus that took workers down. Most of them who could preferred to ride in the car or bus. It depended somewhat on the schedule. I always tended to go fairly early so they didn't all want to go that early because we didn't start distribution, but I wanted to be there to see that things were in order.

L: So your work actually was to supervise? Did you also physically hand out the distribution?

M: I don't know that I ever sat down at the distribution. The system is, I presume, pretty much the same. People came in and cards were checked against the essential registry. Most of the centers were set up to have two lines so that a person could go either way through that line. That was partly because no one would ever know that necessarily a certain person was going to handle their rations. He'd never know in advance whether he was going right or left. So it wasn't possible to make a deal with somebody, "Slip me an extra amount of flour" or something.

L: I would think also it ______ in the position of having to say "no deals." Some of the accounts we've gotten so far have said that it was difficult. You almost at times had to force yourself into an aloofness so as not to be put in awkward positions that you couldn't follow through with, either social position or...

M: There were always invitations to dinner and this sort of thing. I recall one day when I was working with Kanaan, a man sort of crowded in the door and hollered something. Kanaan rather shrugged and said something that I felt I could understand as "the Quaker". The guy rattled off a bunch of Arabic and turned to go. There was this laughter all around the warehouse.

L: You get the distinct feeling they're talking about you.

M: I knew it was on me! [laughter] So I went to Kanaan and said, "Okay, tell me. I know it's a joke on me but what was it?" He said, "Well, the guy wanted to go to the head of the line and I said "No, the Quaker forbids it." He had rattled off a proverb that was essentially, "Who can stand up to the locomotive. That's the Quaker!" [laughs] So you did this. But I tended to move around, visible to people. Sometimes there was book work that needed to be done or something of that sort. Obviously I and the assistant did not both leave the line for more than a minute or two at a time. You tended to stay visible to people on the line, that you were [inaudible -- too soft] But I don't think I ever got sucked into trying to carry the 220 pound bags of flour. The flour came in these bags and the Palestinians would put them on their back with their hands under, and trot with the things. I know that various of the guys tried to do that. I was considerably lighter at that point than I am now, but I worked on the farm enough to know that 200 pounds is not something I wanted to be trying to carry. So I don't think I would attempt to do it. As I probably explained, there was a totally separate milk distribution so we were not involved with that. We had at Nuseirat a small carpenter shop that was supposed to be a training program. I don't think I have a very good judgment of how that worked out.

L: Somebody that we interviewed actually was involved with that. Was it Vern Pings or...?

M: Vern might have said something about it. I was thinking of a Friend from North Carolina He was there later, I think and talked about it. I remember going with a carpenter to buy some tools. There were 10 or 15 young fellows that he was supposed to be training.

L: Ernest Morgan.

M: Ernest, yeah. They made simple stools, maybe some other kinds of things. That was supposed to be one of the trainings. Why it happened to be a Nuseirat, where the money came from, at this point, if I knew then, I don't know now. But that was one of the things, along with the educational things.

L: April was just about when they started cutting rations. Do you recall going through the ration lists?

M: Yeah. I was at Nuseirat through August, September, part of October, and then shifted down to Rafah. I was in Rafah the rest of October, November, December and the 1st of January I became the coordinator for all of the centers. I was involved in the cutting of lists. Edie Haggenauer and I made a trip to do this. We had to drive from Gaza to Jerusalem, down to Hebron to check because we knew we had some lists saying villages.

L: So you actually went to the villages where they were before?

M: No, we went to Hebron where the Red Crescent, whoever was distributing there, and checked their lists. We had practically identical lists where people had registered everybody at both places. As part of that structure, I was supposed to be the one, if the director in the camp couldn't make a decision, to make the final one.

L: Oh, lucky you. How was that?

M: That about killed me off, because there was various kinds of other things to do. That position, if the director was away, I was the acting director. I'd come back to the office and here's 10 or 15 people who'd been waiting all day for me to come in to try to hear. I clearly was bone tired and worrying about doing it. There were other kinds of things that indicated.. There was a group of women and children who's husbands were in Israel. There was an agreement to send them back to Israel so there was an exchange. We sort of horned our way into this. I don't think we had any particular reason to have done this other than to say we wanted to see them off and pick up the ration cards. So we gave them some food for the journey. I think in every family there was one person registered who was not present. When you ask, "What's he going to do" well, he's not been there all along. Usually these were young men. Where they were, I don't know. Again, probably a tendency when you originally registered, despite what anybody said, if some member of your family was not present you registered them. The village mukhtars were supposed to verify these lists, but clearly they had let it go. I would be surprised if the lists weren't padded by at least one person in every family.

L: Do you remember any occasion where someone didn't get a ration that was legit?

M: I don't think we ever knew of anybody that was really legit. The problem, where I think part of the pressure came from, was that people who had resided in Gaza prior to the refugees

coming were not considered refugees, although for many of them their livelihood had been cut off.

L: You mean the residences of the villages in the area.

M: Yes. So when we were leaving it was then clear to people "they're going to be here". That was visible when we started distributing tents in the fall. "We're not going home before the rainy season when we said we were going to leave." I think there were a lot of people from Gaza who said, "I'm as bad off as the refugees, somehow I've got to get on this list." So there was a good deal of maneuvering to do it.

L: Maneuvering in what way? What do you mean there was a good deal of maneuvering?

M: They would come and say they hadn't been registered but they really were from such and such a village. Typical is my interpreter Kanaan. He essentially lived in Jaffa but his family was from Gaza. He didn't at first think of himself as a refugee. He just traveled so he was coming back home to Gaza. There may have been other people in that category who had lived in the larger kinds of cities, but there clearly was an increase in the number of requests for people to be registered They had all kinds of reasons as to why they hadn't registered and earlier why they had been left off. I think some people went to the Egyptian army and the were somewhat trying to get their boys in. We had sort of kept them at arms length and said, "We're dealing with the food here you do the general, police kind of thing." I think there was some indication that they would have also liked to have had a larger role in terms of it. We did not automatically... If they sent a note with somebody saying, "We think this man's legit" we did not automatically accept that.

L: I understand there was quite a bit of friction between the military and the Quaker operations over things like that.

[Tape 1, Side A ends]

L: I'm curious about the local people who were saying that they too were in need because of the whole situation. There are some accounts that the Quaker operation actually set up a camp that wasn't really existent but it stood for those people who were local who needed the rations so that they would ask the UN for distributions for that number of people in that certain camp. Do you recall any of that?

M: No. No. Now there were several camps around Gaza which I knew much less well than I knew the camps farther off. I have no recollection of any of our deliberately...

L: Maybe they were doing something without you knowing! [laughs]

M: Well, now that's possible that it was done earlier. I simply accepted it in the whole. We did consolidate some camps. In those final months the UN said they were going to have many fewer people, so we had consolidated some smaller camps and centers into a larger center to have fewer. Somebody might have done this. We talked about the problem, and one of the dilemmas which we felt very keenly was that we very well understood that there were people in need that we had to say no to because it didn't fit the UN definition. We raised it and sent word back to Philadelphia, "This needs to raised, needs to be resolved." But there was never any resolution or what they ultimately did in terms of it.

L: If we ever get these transcribed I'll have to go back and look to see what the name of it was.

M: I remember somebody saying something, Joseph or somebody. It could be that Palestinians did this is terms of agreeing that here is a village which is a fictional village. To have had that many people involved... _______ who was in the office as the central register, he knew dialects and accent and I had seen people come in and say "I'm from so and so" and he would say, "No you're not. Your accent is such and such." "Well, I grew up there but I married over here and that's where I live." Now, I didn't hear anything in the man's tone, but certainly there was differences in villages that people could detect that.

L: Do you recall any difficulties arising as a result of having the different kinds of populations in the Gaza area? You had the Bedouins and the refugees and the local people. Aside from distributions, were there any problems that you had to deal with?

M: I don't recall that we had particular conflict. The concentration of the Bedouins were mostly in the Rafah area. I think we had some in some of the other areas, but it was essentially Rafah and they were in separate distribution centers. When I had the village folk Edie Haggenauer was doing the Bedouin and had done it for some time. I don't recall a specific kind of problem like that. Evan Jones, his assistant was Mustafa, who was the brother of one of the Bedouin sheiks. He had been educated at the Quaker school up in ______, in Lebanon. The sheik certainly spoke very good English, but he got married while we were there, third or fourth wife, I'm not sure which. Anyhow, they invited us. I don't know how many went to this sort of party. A woman came in and talked a while, but when there came the knock at the door she went out and a Palestinian came in. She never was back. While we were there a spare tire was stolen off one of the jeeps, Evan's jeep. The next morning

when he picked up Mustafa, Mustafa noticed the spare tire was gone and said, "Oh, when did you lose your tire?" So Evan said, "Well, it was stolen when we were at the sheik's house." He said, "Oh, let me out. I've got to find it" and it started a blood feud because that's stealing from the sheik's guest. By evening he had the tire back. So there could be those kinds of things, but I don't recall any kinds of real conflicts between groups of people. It is clear that people did not trust people from other villages. They tended to surround their tents with barb wire and everything else.

L: Really? I hadn't heard any of that.

M: They felt exposed to thieves coming in. If you're not with your family or immediate people you've known there was a great deal of fear. This was one of the problems about the whole distribution. We tended to set up new villages to distribute to tents with nice neat rows in squares, blocks and all, and clearly the people felt exposed and very unsafe. Because we assigned people on the number of people in the family and we had set up certain sized tents together so people got in..

L: So they weren't in their own kind of organization.

M: They weren't in their kind of organization. Ultimately this became a controversy within the team because by January we still had quite a few tents that we had not distributed. Well, it's now been raining beginning sporadically in November, regularly every day by the first of December. We also had a snow fall, and we still had tents in the warehouse. So many of us in the centers were demanding that we had to get the tents out. We finally said "Okay, we will distribute them and give them to people and let them put them up where they will. We cannot go on with this process with people being in the tent. Ruth, who had been put in charge of tents, was very unhappy.

L: Ruth Van Aiken?

M: And I'm sorry to say we reduced her to tears and essentially took the job away from her.

L: Her position was that it needed to be done systematically?

M: Health and sanitation, which there is a modicum of justification, but pace.. I mean, if she had got it done by mid-December we would have been done, but when there were still tents that were not done it was clear. I had done at Nuseirat a good deal of travel around looking at all the areas. I started asking about the first of September, "When do we distribute the tents?" "Well, we have to have a survey, we have to know who needs them." Well I didn't

see any sign that other camp leaders were doing this, but I asked Kanaan to spend the time and after distribution we would, for three or four weeks, took another two or three hours traveling into all the areas of housing, looking and making notes on families that needed housing. We actually rented horses for a day or two as some people were two or three miles across the sand dunes. I had gotten a group of people who were fisherman and lived on the coast -- I don't know whether anybody's mentioned that the sand dunes are next to the coast. So the three miles from the water's edge was sand dunes. There were a number of families who were fisherman who had a kind of village down on the coast. I had thought to give these people tents and let them put them up there. I think they had to carry the water in a mile or two, but let them live near their boats. Somebody would have to stay to protect the boats.

L: And they were getting some food supply too.

M: Yes, and also some income probably. So I had sort of thought on that. The thing I didn't remember was that I had carried the lead quite so much on the later fight until Flora and I started reading my letters. I had said, "I don't think I had much to do with it." But it's clear that I did in terms of that fight within the unit over getting the tents out.

L: Let me back up a little bit because I don't want to go too far ahead. You got there in July. Is that right?

M: I got there in July.

L: Were you there for Clarence Pickett's visit to the field?

M: No.

L: Okay, you got there about the time they had just decided to continue. There was some question as to whether or not they were going to go beyond August, for quite a while.

M: I don't remember that.

L: It probably happened right after.

M: Now, Colin Bell came.

L: Oh! Excuse me. That's who I meant. I didn't mean Clarence Pickett, I meant Colin Bell.

M: Yes, Colin Bell came.

L: Were you a part of that discussion? It was a long meeting, in two sessions.

M: The meeting I remember is not the formal meeting but a session down on the beach. It was a Sunday and after worship some of us said, "Hey, we want to go swimming." Colin decided

to come along. We had swam a while and some of us got out and sat down and Colin started asking questions. I think we stayed there until we were sunburned. Nobody broke away to go back to the water. They were just the kind of insightful questions that he asked in terms of.. I don't particularly remember that as discussing shall we stay. The question, of course, came up again in December and that one I remember. I don't remember the discussion but I certainly remember the decision in terms of the kinds of issues. I had been rather disappointed when I met Colin in Philadelphia. It had nothing to do with Colin, per se. He was just recovering from jaundice or something. They sent Evan and I. There was a group of people who were going to one of the Conferences for Diplomats or foreign affairs or something. I just felt like here's a bunch of people who they think they know it all and they're asking questions to indicate their own.. [laughter] how much they know! I came away from that sort of disgusted because I did not feel we had any chance to really talk to Colin about the Middle East particularly. These guys who were going to wherever they were going were monopolizing it, but more to show their learning than to get anything from Colin.

Colin came and Charles Read, I think, came. Charles replaced Emmett Gulley, but there was a gap because when I was here in Philadelphia that Charles was expecting to come. My understanding was that he came because he was on the Foreign Service desk and they couldn't find anybody else. He finally decided he should do it because it was easier to replace him in Philadelphia than to find somebody to go.

L: Do you remember having any kind of opinion about what direction the operation ought to be going on for the next six months?

M: Certainly not at the point I came in. I think I pretty clearly shared the view in December that we ought not go on indefinitely feeding people when there was no resolution in dealing with the refugees. I think some of us were just naive enough to think that if we say we won't go on maybe the UN will make some decisions to deal with the refugees.

L: Were you feeling, when you got there, that repatriation was a possibility or were you thinking more in terms of resettlement?

M: I don't think I had any fixed notion. I think it didn't seem very logical, given the numbers of people in Israel. Clearly Israel was doing everything to make that impractical. Villages

were being bulldozed and every few weeks we would see a new set of lights of kibbutz. These were visible on the hills opposite the demarcation line.

L: So you could actually see the Israeli settlements being..

M: At night you could see the lights. It was far enough that you couldn't really see but you knew it wasn't really very far away. There's supposed to be a no man's land of a mile or two, so that's a little farther than you can see much movement or activity, but in terms of their lights at night, you could. This came over the winter months. I don't think I came with a feeling of knowing any kind of solution. It seemed to me clear that all the other countries, that one of the problems for both Lebanon and Jordan was the problem of their own people in poverty. How did you repatriate refugees when you had many kinds and numbers of problems. There were some proposals about increased irrigation in Iraq and other areas, to which the Palestinians always said no. My feeling was that if this is available and you an go today, that's very different than if you say, "Well, if we would do so and so, and it will take three years to get it done, would you move to Iraq?" He's going to say "No, I want to go back home." What he would have said if there had really been an option that said, "You can go today and this is what you'll have," I don't know. There was some reluctance. I think education wise and in many ways the Palestinians clearly felt themselves superior to the Egyptian army.

L: Is that right?

M: With Kanaan I'd always have to stay fairly tight that he'd be really civil. It irritated him to have to deal with the Egyptian army.

L: I've heard several really interesting accounts of relations with the Egyptian army. I can't remember who it was, but one of the camp leaders said that they actually, at one point one of the lieutenants stood in the middle of the camp and shot off a gun and said, "The Quakers are no longer in charge. From now on we do the distributions" which pretty much threw them into a tizzy.

M: Ernest seemed to have quite a bit of trouble with the Egyptians, and my feeling was that it was Ernest. I don't know whether you heard Paul telling, on one occasion the colonel who was the final liaison came to him and said, "Mr. Howard won't cooperate. He's always saying no." Paul said, "I will speak to him." Paul told me about this and said, "Now I've spoken to you. You keep right on saying no."

L: He did what he said he would do.

M: But I felt this was part of them wanting to have more say and, I think, being seen by the Palestinians as having some kind of authority. I think most of the Palestinians felt betrayed by the Egyptian army and by the leaders of the other countries who had said, "Well, leave your homes. We'll take care of this within a few weeks and you can go back home." They felt that the armies just let them down. They tended to be very critical of them in that sense.

L: Of course, this may be *the* point of contention between the Israelis and the Palestinians, but I'm just curious as to whether you had an opinion about whether or not that was a deliberate move on the part of the Egyptian military, that they deliberately removed the Palestinians to make it seem...

M: It's hard to figure anything out other than, "Get out of the way. We're going to be fighting." There were stories that one of the rulers -- who was the guy before Nasir -- there was a story that circulated while we were there that when they fled this general had three lieutenants brought in and he said to them, "You left your post in times of duty and the penalty for that is death" and he pulled out his revolver and shot them. That's supposed to have stopped. The Egyptian army didn't fire them. I don't know if that's true, but that's the story the Palestinians were telling. Clearly the ordinary soldiers we saw did not seem... They had these guys out at guard duty at various places and I don't think I ever saw one of them lace the strings in his shoes. I thought it was to keep them from running away. The general theory is that the officers of the Egyptian army are the second and third sons of the families who don't inherit the family wealth, and this is a position of social responsibility but does not necessarily mean that the person is very gifted in terms of military science.

L: As an administrator in the camps, and then later I guess you oversaw the whole distributions operation, how did you feel your communications were with Philadelphia? Did you have communication with Philadelphia or did you go through...

M: That was always handled in the office. I did not have direct communication, even when I was acting director. We sent messages back and forth but I don't remember any kinds of communication from them.

L: Did you feel that your concerns or issues were being heard in Cairo or in Philadelphia? How did that channel of communication seem to work to you?

M: I was not conscious that we were having problems with Philadelphia over issues. I'm not sure I expected a whole lot either. I was not aware that there were differences or that there was a failure to respond to issues raised, although there were things that we never exactly knew what they did. I have no recollection of ever having a specific answer or if they took up with the UN officials the question of Gaza. I suppose they did, but I don't know. I don't have any recollection of a specific answer saying, "Yes we.."

L: "We talked to the UN and this is what they said."

M: Yes, our general assumption is that they talked with them and if nothing changed that was the answer. I was rather amused in orientation when they spent time telling us about the numbered letter system. I have sometimes said that I thought that a tonnage of flour was exceeded only by the tonnage of paper work.

L: There is a lot of letter writing to Gaza, I will say that. There are a lot of letters. How about your general staff meetings? Do you recall that there were regular staff meetings?

M: There were regular staff meetings. We met as a whole team periodically. The food distribution center people. My memories of those are the of the lighter kinds of things. On one occasion there was something about the Egyptian army and Charles Read had just said, "Well the army says so and so." At that moment a donkey down on the street lets forth with this bray. We just broke up. You couldn't have timed a response.

L: Somebody else told me about that!

M: They were frequently long and we clearly had differences of opinion, but they faded as far as I'm concerned. I know we had a good deal of discussion when the Tesdales came, Margaret having been in China. She felt very close to the Chinese people and felt very keenly that our living arrangements were distancing us from the people. Ultimately I think they took a tent down on the beach for some time.

L: I remember that. Somebody went down and got there, too, doing that.

M: Larry came down with jaundice and I think they had everything stolen that they took down. My response to this was, given the kinds of physical demands on us I was not sure that we could keep fulfilling our.. Granted, we were living higher than the refugees, but we were not living high in any real sense. In order to keep fulfilling the responsibility of distribution of food I did not think we should try to do it on less. My feeling was it was a question of whether we would be able to maintain health to do our job.

L: I certainly think there were people who overextended and did get sick as a result of it. That was a real concern.

M: It's just that a number of us tended to say we did not like the Arab people particularly likable. Two things: One, we started out to be philosophical, but for an Arab a person who looks after his family is the good man. If you don't look after your family.. this is not a question, in our standards, of stealing or cheating if your family needs it. The other thing was this sort of perpetual whine for baksheesh or special treatments or that kind of thing. There are traits that we found hard to take. Various individuals we would get acquainted with, but to say that you like Arabs en mass was fairly difficult. I remember I had at some point said something about not finding the Arab traits all that.. I was not enamored of the Arab as a people.

L: I think it was a very different experience than going in to do the European work. I think that was a relatively easy transition for a lot of people.

M: The cultural differences were great. [recorded portion of side B ends]

[Tape 2, Side A begins.]

L: Did you have any opportunity at all to go visit the Acre unit and see what they were doing?

M: No, I never got there. I knew people either who were at Gaza and then went to Acre, or some Acre people visited. I remember meeting one of the Acre people in Cairo. I never got there. I read reports of that unit after I came back and worked with the Service Committee for some time, but I never was actually there.

L: One of the other things that I read was a letter by a woman, Morrison -- I don't have her first name. Her observation from working in the field was that she felt -- and other people said this too -- that the personnel were not well organized in Gaza and there was a lot of time spent trying to deal with individual personalities as opposed to getting on with the work. Do you have any feelings about that?

M: I would think so. We tended to give people major kinds of responsibility. I think some people responded more than other people. Other people had difficulty with that and required more time. Some people were hurt because they weren't able to handle the job and there was not really much you could do. You were not that flexible in terms of the kinds of assignments you could give people that didn't require a great deal of responsibility and a great deal of ability to work on their own. I remember one of the women complaining to me

about Al Holtz, that she would go to Al with a problem and rather than hear her or make suggestions he would tend to say, "I'll take care of that" which wasn't what she wanted. I think part of the problem was that the personnel in Philadelphia wasn't able to screen very much for specific jobs, or had too good of an ability to tell whether a person might respond given the situation. I expect they did a good deal of screening, I don't know, but I think we had a wide range of ability in terms of people's response.

L: I'm not sure they did do a great deal of screening. I think at one point the pressure was so great to just have people there that they were making really pretty quick investigations. Some people, I know, were turned away, but I think by and large that if you had a reasonable personality and you had some training in something that you went. My understanding is that most people came to Gaza as generalists; they had no real skills to offer other than they wanted to be there.

M: I've sometimes wondered why did they accept me? I was a pastor and the Service Committee doesn't get that very often, although I had been involved. We had raised a carload of wheat a couple of times for relief, and Elizabeth Marsh Jensen with family connections then in Central City.. I had met her and so she knew at least a little of what I had done in serving as pastor. But certainly there was not much in my background for the responsibility I carried in terms of coordination. I had not supervised personnel.

L: What would you see as your greatest strength in the operation? The greatest thing that you had to offer?

M: I guess I listen to people fairly well. I certainly was perfectly willing to work had and put in the time. I came fairly open to learning. I did not have experience in administration of any degree. I had the experience of working with people, but not of a very diverse kind of background. I had grown up in a kind of rural community where there's a good deal of emphasis on making do and working with what you have, so that I was flexible in terms of being able to deal with it. I'm not sure any of this would have come through in terms of an application.

L: There was an Arab Christian who was working with the team and he wrote a letter. His name was Mournia. At any rate, he wrote a report to Philadelphia feeling that he felt that one of the purposes of being in Gaza was to be a distinctly Christian presence in Gaza. I'm

wondering if you felt the team was either a Christian presence or a Quaker presence for that matter.

M: Well, it probably was more narrowly Quaker than Christian. Christian in the sense that we weren't Muslims, yes,.

L: Was that a distinct awareness on the part of the people, though? Did they understand that?

M: I think they sort of assumed that all American and Europeans are Christian. We had some kinds of.. there was a small Christian community, Both Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic.

L: You mean a refugee community?

M: No, within Gaza there was a small number of Christians who tended to say, "Oh, you're a Christian, you'll look after us" as though that meant they got special treatment ahead of Muslims, which we of course did not respond to. I don't know what percentage of the team was actually Quaker. Certainly less than half. How well we represented Quakers beyond the question of hard work and the effort to be fair.. Clearly the guy who was the at the hospital which we took over which was a mission hospital, Church of England, was pretty fundamentalist. One of the things we had to do was say he couldn't go preach on the wards when we took over to run the hospital. He offered, for the memorial service for Clarissa Baggett when she died, he would explain about the Christian concept of immortality. We decided that we did not want to do that, which tended to throw it back on me to do it, to say something. Nan Meyer said to me after I spoke on Sunday morning, she said she really wasn't a Quaker and she thought one thing about rituals was that they had some ability to get us through difficult situations.

L: Yeah, at least you knew what to do! [laughter]

M: Without having to invent. I don't know that I'm unhappy with the way we represented Quakerism. We were clearly very different and most of us were unhappy at what we saw of the lifestyles of the missionaries who tended to live like well to do _______ in terms of..

L: You mean missionaries in general?

M: Missionaries in general that we met there. To some extend I think that applied to the couple in Ramallah. Missionaries that we met either in Cairo or Gaza or in other places. I'm sure a few of the people who came to us in summer terms who worked for a month or two were teaching in missionary schools. I don't know that they were there to proclaim that religious

message, but I think for many of them they were able to live a more leisurely lifestyle in the Middle East than they would have been able to in the States.

L: Why is that? They were being provided for in some way?

M: And given the price range, you could hire a houseboy for a very low fee.

L: So they saw their only role as being a mission role. They didn't see themselves as getting down and doing any of the work.

M: They tended to accept Muslim culture about how the higher you are you don't do physical work. I had a cousin of Kanaan working for us as well, and he did mostly accounting work at the desk. If he wanted a chair moved up to the table and this chair was over against that wall, if I wasn't there he'd call a porter out of the back of the warehouse to come move that chair. If I was there and picked up that chair he'd jump to grab it and take it from me and move it up to the table. But if it was him, he expected to be waited on. You would see the fellows who were clerks who would buy some melons out in the camp, or you'd let them off in town, and they would set their sack of these melons and somebody would pick it up and carry it for them for a few piasters. The higher you are, you don't do physical work. I think the tendency of American missionaries was to fall right into this and be a part of that sort of distance from the ordinary people. You couldn't get away from it entirely, but we certainly tried to keep a relationship with the porters and the laborers so it wasn't a kind of distance. We tried to say that Quakers are concerned about this and we weren't about preaching to them or talking about religious kinds of issues. What many people in camps in general couldn't understand is how is it when you have all this money and food going through that you aren't making lots of money? Their expectation, if it had been their people doing it, the guy is taking his cut. We never were sure what the village mukhtar charged families for certifying that this is your family.

L: So the operation pretty much let the mukhtar follow their own form of government once the distribution had been settled.

M: Yes, people came by village and they said who they were and we said to the mukhtar, "Is that right?" We later were able to get some lists from, say, the British sugar ration and check some of these.

L: Did the distribution operations make any special dispensation to the mukhtars for their special work or did they get the same ration schedule as everyone else.

M: There were some references to Quaker wives. What is was is that he had made enough money somehow to acquire a new young wife and people were saying he did it off of the Quakers so they referred to them as Quaker wives. Obviously, given the whole background... They Arab system and the whole land owner kind of thing was that if people were really desperate you had certain obligations so that they might try to get as much as they could, but in a sense his reputation as a mukhtar was that he looked after his village. If he treated somebody too badly then it would reflect against him. I don't think we did anything to break that up. We tried not to let it have too great a leeway.

L: You talked a little bit about the transition period and the famous snowfall. When you started realizing that the operations were going to come to an end as far as the Service Committee was concerned, did you see yourself as having any further role in the Middle East or were you ready to come home? I guess Flora was probably tapping her foot at home by that time.

M: My time would have been up the end of December. When we decided that we would close and this would be the end of April, whatever it was, I said, "Well, I don't have a job to go home to so I would be willing to stay." I debated a good deal whether I would stay with the UN. What they were paying was a lot more money than I had made as a pastor. I finally decided against it as I just did not see Gaza as a place to bring the family. Had we not had children it might have been different, but with the girls I just couldn't see how we could do it. Plus, if something went wrong and I didn't stay the year I wouldn't have the money to get home. I did not have resources to say I could come and go.

L: Did you take a home leave at all during this period?

M: No, I didn't. I had two leaves, one a weekend. Before I went to Rafah I had a week and Evan and I went to Beirut and on across to Damascus and back.

M: You never got to make the famous Geneva trip?

L: No, I never went to Geneva. I went to Jerusalem. I drove up for something with a truck and the truck broke down, so we had an extended period in Jerusalem. Early on I'd had a long weekend in Cairo. I went down with Vern Pings. He wanted to drive down for some reason and so I was sort of designated to go with him because we didn't send people along. He stayed someplace and I was in a hotel and Kelly forgot me when he was going to the plane, so I ended up staying another three days until the plane landed again. That's when I met Charles Freeman who had been at Acre. He and I spent some time sightseeing.

L: That would be a horrible feeling, boy!

M: Yeah, I was a kind of wondering what was going on! I can't remember that I took a week any other time. Edie Haggenauer and I went to Hebron and she did most of the work. I had done the driving and she was doing most of the consulting, so I had some times away, but no extended. In terms of staying on, I was exploring that. The other side of the whole question was a question of what I was going to do when I came back. My letters, I guess, reflect a good deal of uncertainty. Paul Johnson had suggested that the Service Committee might have a position. I had assumed in going that I would come back and go back into pastoral work. I was sort of feeling that it was not necessarily something I wanted to do immediately, that I was certainly open to other possibilities. As it worked out I never did go back. I came back and worked with the Service Committee and eventually in civil rights with government agencies.

L: As far as the Gaza project itself goes, is there something you can think of that you were prepared to talk about that I haven't covered?

M: I don't know that there are.. I was sort of wondering what would come up in terms of this. I guess one of the kinds of things that.. I'm not sure.. The Service Committee did not engage in many projects after that of mass feeding. There were certainly situations around the world that they might have. I think I have a kind two minds about that. That's as much an impact on the people who participate as it is in terms of.. I assume that the Red Cross and some of the other groups have people who are more professional and who have done it in more than one situation and would not necessarily have a new bunch of people learning each time. But I'm not sure that the Service Committee has had other projects that have that kind of impact on individuals like Gaza did. You sort of wonder about, or at least think a little about that. There is one sense that many Friends across the country think of. When they think of the Service Committee they think of it in terms of mass feeding and going as that kind of thing.

The other kind of impact on me, which is partly theological, is that despite what I had studied the whole sense of being in a Muslim culture raises the whole question of one god. If you say there's one god does it make a difference if you say Allah or ... In some ways, certainly more than just the remoteness of WW II, being in Gaza the whole kinds of issues around the suffering of innocence raises theological questions about any assumption that

God is managing daily life for folks. I think that has some ramifications for one's theological base.

L: Correct me if I'm wrong. What you're saying then is that the Gaza experiences threw some more wrenches into your machinery as opposed to solidifying anything you were already coming to?

M: Yes. I sometimes say it was a very stretching kind of experience in terms of this. I'm not sure I have answers to any of the kinds of questions it raised, but it certainly raised for me questions around that kind of area. Certainly the Arabs were not the ones who had deprived the Jews of their homelands there for centuries themselves. It's there land which Israel is occupying. It is not a question where you can say justice is on one or that they're suffering because of something they did in the past.

L: I don't know if you recall on Monday night when I said that for most of our projects the individuals say that their first AFSC experience was their step into conscious political thought. It sounds to me like maybe that's some of what you may be..

M: It's not that I hadn't been somewhat concerned, but yes, it raised all kinds of issues. It certainly raised the whole question as to whether or not the pastoral ministry was what I wanted to do with my life and that there are other avenues of usefulness. I certainly have no regrets in terms of making that kind of shift, although we've stayed active in Friends activities.

L: So you left Gaza and came home, and you went directly to work with the Service Committee?

M: Yes. They wanted me to take an assignment in Richmond which really didn't open until September.

L: The AFSC in Richmond?

M: Yes. They had a small office in Richmond. So we led the workcamp in Washington, DC that summer and went there in September. I don't think I did very well what they hoped I would do in Richmond in terms of relating with Indiana Friends.

L: You think that's why they selected you?

M: I'm sure. By that point I was seeing Indiana Friends more as Philadelphia saw Indiana Friends. It was partly the character of the person who headed the office too, but I stayed there 18 months and then went to Des Moines.

L: You went right into your Executive Secretary position?

M: No, I did youth work in Des Moines for a couple of years and then I was acting director for six months, then fully appointed to that position. But I think in neither of those situations was I.. I clearly was not that able to relate to the fundamentalists and conservatives in those areas as they hoped I might. [chuckles] I might do better today having matured a little bit. But it wasn't until about the time I became Executive Director that we really.. When we first went to Des Moines we took our membership to the pastoral Meeting. When what's now the Des Moines Valley Meeting became a separate Meeting we went with them.

JL So Flora switched over with you.

M: I think I know enough about fundamentalists to know that when you make that kind of shift most of them consider you to have been in opposition. I just have a kind of relationship with my immediate family that we don't particularly talk about it. They accept me and we don't really make a great deal of discussion. Flora's family is much more inclined to argue with it, but I'm grateful that my brothers and sisters don't talk religion and we don't talk politics. [laughs]

L: Is there anything else you'd like to add to this tape? I've got about five more minutes.

M: Well, I'm awfully glad I went. Many people mentioned having gone to the reunion on very short notice. I was tempted to ask, "Why did you respond on such short notice? What is it about the Service Committee, about the job?" That would have been an interesting discussion.

L: That's a good question because it happened a lot.

M: There were other people, one of the nurses saying that she was in France knocking around and decided she ought to look for a job. Somebody told her Quakers were looking for nurses for Gaza. She didn't know anything about Quakers but applied.

L: Josina Berger.

M: I think Josina Berger and another girl, Peggy Holtz. There were other people who I very much hoped we'd find addresses and they'd come, but they didn't. Peggy was of a background where she'd had a coming out ball, a debutante kind of thing. You sort of wonder what happened to them. It is interesting as to how many people had either been back to the Middle East or spent time in other parts of the third world. When you look at that list there's only two or three who seem to have gone into business. Other people spent their lives

in other areas of social service or education. I think it clearly was a great experience for most of us, despite the hours and time and all we put in. For me whatever arguments we had tend to pale.

L: Sometimes your most constructive work gets done over an argument.

M: Although I know there was this whole argument about whether we were living too high, I guess there was some question about whether the pound a week that we got for spending money, which we always called squander money, was supposed to cover your personal necessities of toothpaste and razor blades. I guess they covered postage home. It was out of that that you had any money for your leave. I don't know whether they gave us something for leave.

L: Yes, they did.

M: But whatever you saved... I know on coming home that before we got to Barcelona I'd spent all my money. I didn't have money to buy anything the few hours we had on shore.

L: But you had the opportunity to spend it for the first time in how many months? Nine.

M: One of the interesting things.. I came on a boat with three others. We left Alexandria and went to ________. We were at Athens and Naples and Genoa and then a few hours in Barcelona. We were particularly, in ________, saying how nice it was to walk down the street without a crowd of kids following you. At first I felt rather shut off being in crowds who spoke Arabic. I got so it didn't bother me and didn't think about it until we were eating lunch after we got off the boat in New York and I suddenly realized that I was listening to all the conversations going on around me. There were all kinds of things that people do that I suddenly realized I could hear and understand. One of the tendencies that I had on the Indian reservation, is to want to fall back into Arab words with the Indians.

L: This was the workcamp you did right after?

M: No this was a couple years later, we went to Pine Ridge. When I moved to Des Moines I was then responsible for the project at Pine Ridge. We had workcamps for three successive years, and the second one Flora and I directed.

L: Well, that was a good experience for your kids. Did your kids get into any Service Committee work?

M: My second daughter was in VISTA in the mid '60s. She dropped out what would have been her junior year. Our older daughter went to a high school work camp. I don't think the younger kids ever got directly into Service Committee projects.

L: Well, after the 60s there really weren't as much.

M: They went into other kinds of things. My older daughter who was about twelve when we went to Pine Ridge said, when we got out there, was "You hear about cowboys and Indians, but when you get out here all the Indians are cowboys!"

L: It's true! [laughs] That's cute! And later you got involved in civil rights work?

M: I had been director for three years there in Des Moines and I decided that I was clearly not destined to be a long term administrator in the Service Committee, and I had become aware of city and state human rights commissions. I had left the Service Committee at the end of '56 and went to Erie as director of their city commission for fair employment and non-discrimination. In '62 I went to West Virginia as the first director of their state commission.

L: Where were you in West Virginia.

M: Charleston, based in Charleston. For a couple of years I was the only staff person.

L: That's still a hotbed down there, Charleston.

M: I used to tell people that I was one person who made his living on discrimination but I was the only person I knew in the state who was paid.

L: You were probably the only one at the time who was Quaker, too.

M: We established a Meeting while we were in Charleston, but I think all of that group moved away. Then in '66 I went to the Justice Department's Community Relations Service. They moved me around. I was in Washington two years. If I had started six weeks later I probably would have been based in Cleveland. I went back and forth to Cleveland and few other places, and then I was in Cleveland for three years and moved to Columbus and was there two. At that point the Nixon administration cut the budget, so they closed the outlying offices and I moved to Chicago. At that point I had moved around enough and had just enough time that if I didn't stay with them I wasn't going to have any retirement.

There have been a few Quakers in it, and I've always been surprised there were not more because my feeling is that non-discrimination needs to be built into government and that ____ administrators in it. There was a woman for a time on the Philadelphia Commission, a Florence Kite who was a Friend. Dane Shore worked in Pittsburgh for some time. I saw

him at Yearly Meeting a year or two ago, I don't know what he's doing now. Lela Smith worked with Community Relations, same agency I did in the Justice Department, for a time. The other person worked in Kentucky and he had worked with a private kind of agency and came to many of the national meetings of people in civil rights. But it's interesting that as active as Friends have been in non-discrimination... Of course people always had a little problem when I said I worked for the Justice Department. I'm not sure that some of that didn't tend to develop around the Service Committee in the '60s and "70s that almost anything the government did was wrong.

L: Well, I think that the Service Committee lost it's really close and intrinsic contacts with government people at some point. After the Roosevelt's it really went down hill. They had less and less personal contacts in high places.

Well, I really appreciate your giving me the time to do this.

M: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

AFSC ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #606
Narrator: RUSS ROSENE (M)
Interviewer: Paula Goldberg (G)
September 19, 1992

G: My name is Paula Goldberg. I'm interviewing Russell Rosene at the 4H center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Today is September 19, 1992 and I'm interviewing him as part of an Oral History Project for the AFSC Gaza Reunion.

Could you please state your name and place of birth?

R: I'm Russ Rosene. Massachusetts, 1922, April 13th.

G: I want to know a little bit about you, where you grew up, how you grew up, your family.

R: I'm one of three children, working class. My father was a tool and die maker. Swedish immigrants, second generation. My parents both spoke Swedish. My grandparents were all born in Sweden, my parents in the US. I was never taught the language nor were my siblings because, I believe, it was felt to be a private language for my mother and father for private discussions. It was very nice for them to keep something where the kids could not intrude from their perspective, but later in life when I went to Sweden I wished otherwise. It would have been nice to be educated as a child in the language of my ancestors. It would have been a benefit, as I perceive it now.

My schooling was typical of the period, and by that I mean I felt it was thorough and well organized. It was one of the states that at that time ranked very high in public education. I think I benefited very much from a good early start. I did not have a kindergarten. I don't believe any one I knew went to kindergarten. Such a thing like preschool, head start, was to come in the future. When my father came on hard times in the Depression, he had to seek out employment as a tool and die maker in other states. When I was 13 he moved us to Michigan where he had employment in the automobile industry. Then when I was 16 he had another move, which I think was largely instigated by my mother who was a visionary, to southern California to work on the aircraft industry. That's where I finished my high school. This was just in time for World War II. I remember the question of whether I would go to university was not, at that time, considered important. The question that was considered important by my parents and immediate relatives was whether I was properly prepared to go it alone and earn my keep from then on, even without any further education. For example, if I could have been apprenticed to someone who had a need for an apprentice, I think they

would have opted for that. But I had an uncle who wanted very much that I would go to the university and wanted to bear the cost. I held back from that because I perceived this uncle as a born again Christian who had ulterior motives. So that was put aside for the future. In preparation for World War II I had a brother who was insisting upon my becoming proficient in a skill. The one he was thumping for was Marine radio operating because he was a radio amateur - a ham operator - and knew all there was to know about radio and Morse code. He was an older brother by one year. Myself the youngest, my brother a year older, my sister the eldest was one year above him. So he pushed me. As this was taking place it became necessary to register for the draft. As I did so I remember feeling that they were most likely to make me 4F, which was the designation for medically unfit. The reason for that was this foot, the left foot, was badly atrophied from a case of polio at age two. I walked at a limp at that time. I walk with a limp now. I always have walked with a limp. I have had a weaker limb and weaker foot because of that atrophy. I was really surprised when I passed the physical and someone declared that I was 1A. That really surprised me. However, I was said, "I'm a conscientious objector." But I was brow beat from someone and I inherited a weaker disposition from my mother than I now feel I possess. I had to outgrow it. At that time it was easy for someone who was intimidating to push hard and find out that I didn't really stand up the way I would now. So when the person to whom I was sent for the interview said to me, "How can you be a conscientious objector unless you belong to the Quaker church? Do you belong to the Quakers?" I couldn't say that I did. I didn't know the Quakers then. "Do you belong to the Brethren?" I didn't know anyone in the Brethren. It was on down the line. Any one of the peace churches were not part of my experience. So I could not really, from his point of view, substantiate a claim that I was a conscientious objector. So he said, "I'm making you 1A." This was twice now that I was declared 1A, and I was very near to the point in my radio telegraphy skill preparation where I was about to be licensed by the FCC as a properly prepared radio telegrapher, which would be the means of obtaining a ________ as a ship's radio officer. This is what my brother was pushing me towards. So I said to the examiner, "I'm going to appeal that decision" and an appeal date was set six weeks hence. But that date became moot when the FCC issued the license and immediately I was needed. That's the way it was in WW II. Anyone with a skill such as that was immediately needed and I was put to work on an _______. I went to sea in the time of

hostilities. I feel today that I paid my dues then and there alone because the ship on which I sailed, the first voyage had already been torpedoed once, had already been prevented from sinking, repaired and put back in service. This was during the time which the German submarine commanders, which we learned later, referred to as "the happy time" when they could take ships at will because there were no defenses whatsoever. My second ship, likewise, was during this period. There was a very severe passage to England on a liberty ship in 1943 -- my first ship being in '42, my second one being in '43 -- in the winter under varying inhuman conditions in terms of cold and heavy seas, of peril, when we had five days of attack with a group of 14 submarines from the Germans, resulting in death and destruction made vivid, made personal and made present immediately in front of me, immediately behind me, immediately to the right of me, immediately to the left of me, so that I felt miraculously preserved. We got to England with somewhat close to 50 percent of the original group of ships. People would ask me at that time what my feeling was to the exposure to the hazards I had been at risk with and I felt, number one, that I was young and was going to live a long time. As youth does, youth feels indestructible. Number two, I felt that what had been so horrifying made life more precious and made it seem to me that whatever happened, whatever befell be from then on was a bonus. Whether it was good, whether it was not good, it was a bonus. I'm in the bonus period. I've been in the bonus period since 1943.

G: How long were you in the service for?

R: I was there throughout the war until the war ended. I was under attack again with the Japanese in the Bay of Bengal in 1945. We had a ship sunk. I was radio officer on these series of vessels from December '42 until March of '46 and maintained that skill and that memory of Morse code and ship service, and kind of felt that it was a reserve I could fall back upon if I met hard times. So I maintained by eligibility. Subsequent to that, upon leaving, I got married. Upon getting married I expressed a wish to my wife, and she agreed, that having been exposed to that for three years and having been deprived normal living ashore for three years, I felt I wanted to spend the next three years getting acquainted with my country, the USA, not going out on ships and not plunging into the labor market and so on and so on and so on. I just felt I wanted to be out in the world, enjoying the world for what the world was. We conceived the notion of hiking on the Appalachian Trail. Hiking

on the Appalachian Trail meant going to one end and hiking through to the other end on a continuous effort. This was something not yet accomplished by anyone. It was not historically done yet. We wished to be the first. At that same time I was more and more interested in photograph -- which is what I'm still interested in -- and I bought a camera and practiced taking pictures with color film. I came to the conclusion that if I achieved the goal of hiking down the Appalachian Trail and it was in fact the first time, most likely a magazine or someone would be interested in a series of photographs. So I made contact with magazines and was told by Life Magazine, which at that time was highly prestigious, that they were interested. So she and I started at Mount Katadin in Maine and we decided we would hike all the way through, in one effort, from May through the fall. Spring to the fall. It didn't work that way. It didn't work that way at all, but one of the most significant things of that time journey was early on having been passed by a vehicle that turned back, came back for us -- they had seen us on the roadside between Mount Katadin and the ocean and Bar Harbor and they came back. They had a station wagon and they were from Pennsylvania. They were old line Quakers from the heart of Quaker country. In the ensuing conversation I heard this man describing practically everything I believed in and I felt a confluence between my beliefs and his beliefs. His name was Jim Meyers and he was married to Anna Louise Meyers. I think he was the most single, strong influence that I had encountered to that moment, because this went on over a period of days and proceeded not only with the encounter in Maine and a subsequent one in New Hampshire, because we were traveling much more slowly. But with a third encounter in Philadelphia we met others in Philadelphia. Then a fourth encounter because he proceeded to move. He was a CPA with a desire to work _______. So Jim moved to Portland and we traveled on with our long journey -- which I have to describe as a changed journey, an altered journey of the original concept. The concept had been to hike. Now the concept was to disperse the hike and climb the best mountains and the highest mountains from one end of the country to the other. If the means of getting from one mountain to the other were hitch-hiking, that had proved to be so rewarding how could we go wrong? The problem was, what do we tell Life Magazine? The answer was, we don't tell them anything. We didn't tell them we had changed the plan. They appeared not to notice we'd changed the plan. They kept wanting us to send in photographs at the end of this trip of many months. They were enthused about running a

story, and the following spring, June 21 -- first day of summer -- there were six pages in Life Magazine about the hiking Rosenes. My son Russ, and my wife Lita. The two of us were not especially photogenic, but I think with the coaching that I got from the Life Magazine editors we managed to put together a set of pictures that had many variants, and so it was again picked up by the state department in a Russian publication, by the Voice of America, in color with different pictures. It was picked up yet again by the US Army and ran in a Korean publication with yet another group of pictures. It was picked up a fourth time commercially and run by a publication in Denmark. So we had quite a bit of exposure from that one adventure.

G: So was this first couple the first experience you had with Quakers?

R: That was the first experience, and when this journey ended we were very fast friends with Jim and Analese Meyers. Through them we became interested in the Quaker program in California. We made contacts where we lived. We made contacts where he lived in Portland. It was during this series of contacts that Jim said to us, "They're recruiting to go to Palestine, are you interested?" We both said, "Definitely, we are interested." Well, whatever influence Jim might have had behind the scenes, I don't know. All I know is that we got a telegram and the telegram said, "Can you accept immediate service in Palestine?"

G: What did you and your wife think about this offer? What were the first thoughts going through your head?

R: Very positive, very eager, very much involved.

G: What were your impressions of Gaza not knowing anything about it?

R: The impressions of Gaza were slowly formed because we had to go through an orientation in Philadelphia. We had to go through a one month journey by boat. So we had time to get acquainted with it.

G: Even before you saw Gaza, what were your pre-impressions?

R: My preliminary.. when I first thought of going? Probably that it was a difficult part of the world, interesting part of the world. I would like to know how we could work in the situation and the only way to know is to go. When they said they needed a specific skill, one of the reasons for recruitment in my case is that I had that skill. I thought all the more so that this made it a point of entree, using something that I was familiar with using to get a valuable, viable role in the group effort. Yes, I think there were many more positive

impulses there than there were negative. My wife may have had fewer positive and more negative only because from her perspective it might have been first time overseas, first time to confront the question of postponement to have a family and so on. This was the first time these questions began to come up. Anyway, we were recruited, we did go, and I was given the task of communication to follow Chuck Chapman who had done the earlier role as communicator. We had inherited in that group a radio station that required more scope.

G: When did you end up going?

R: This was November '49. The telegram was October, and we were there before the end of November.

G: So the program was already going on.

R: We were the second wave. The orientation we received in Philadelphia implied that the original concept of putting a team in Gaza was to have been there six months as a Quaker team and then phase it out in favor of a yet to be formed UN team in accordance with some early agreements with the UN. Our understanding was that this had been a process not fulfilled and was still pending, therefore a second team had to be recruited because the commitments made by the first team were somewhat limited time wise. Not many of them could continue open ended.

G: So you went over knowing that it would be eventually UN.

R: We went over knowing it would phase out, not knowing when. They said it could go from three to nine or ten months. Maybe 12. So that was pretty broad. I never dreamed that it would end the way it ended with a transition between AFSC and UNRWA, meaning volunteer and paid employee. We never thought it would go in that direction. I always felt that if the UN took over we would continue as volunteers. But that was partly naiveté because I see now, having worked with the UN in many roles, that that would be an alien concept in the UN.

G: When you were here doing your orientation, how long was it?

R: In Philadelphia, my recollection is about ten days.

G: And this was a whole group that was going over?

R: No, this was individual. The recruitments for the second wave were individual. Each one handled separately from the other.

G: How do you think they prepared you for going over?

R: I think the preparation was excellent. We had the wisdom of people who had already been there, which was not available to the first group, so we were very fortunate in that respect. Then when we did... I think one of the most interesting aspects -- and this came out in our discussion last night and again somewhat this morning -- one of the most interesting aspects of the entire experience was the comparison one could draw after having served even a limited time with UNRWA, in the attitudinal change. It the UNRWA or any UN organization could somehow operate with the same kind of commitment, volunteerism, and let us say expertise because there was a collective expertise, I think the UN budget, and in fact any budget for any operation worldwide, would be directed more effectively toward the solutions for the problems dealt with rather than the maintenance and salaries of staff. Since that experience I've always had a skeptical attitude toward those who say, "We need to pay high salaries to get the best people" because in my experience the best people were the people who were willing to work for almost nothing. That's how I determined best. It was a non-sequiter.

G: When you flew over to Cairo...

R: We didn't fly. We went by ship.

G: Oh by ship?

R: Everyone went by ship then because the cost of air travel at that time was much in excess of sea travel. My recollection was that air travel would be well over $1000 and sea travel was under $400.

G: Just thinking now a days, that seems so foreign! (laughs) Okay, so you ship over there and you go to Cairo first.

R: Alexandria was the disembarkation point. I think we were met by an employee, an Arab employee of Betty and Kelly Peckham who manned the office in Cairo. Kelly is here today. The orientation process was furthered by this experience because just in going by train -- I've forgotten if it was train up to Cairo from Alexandria or if it was road -- we were being in the company of people who were already participants in the program and had been for a lengthy period, and gave further insight on the scene where it was much more compelling as to local customs, the local climate, the culture, the language. WE were getting it first hand rather than academically. This was very valuable. I think the slow entrée to the program was very useful. And then overnight one or two nights, I think there were medical

considerations, a question of preparing oneself with whatever one needed, making sure all the health angles were covered. Going on from there with the right documentation we got on the train and went to Gaza. Whether we went by train is a question. I think we went by train, but later we had done it by plane so I'm forgetting which came first. I think the first entry into Gaza was by train, which then took the better part of the day.

G: So you stayed in Cairo to do a little more orientation, and then you went over to Gaza.

R: Right. It was a train ride through vacant territory, desert after crossing the Suez Canal, to a place called Contara. We entered another part that was military controlled. The passengers on the train were mostly military men because Gaza was occupied by the Egyptian authorities, the Egyptian occupation forces. We were under that command, so to speak, as we were on the train. We didn't see much on the train except for occasional glimpses of small encampments or villages, and in some cases the sea coast. We followed the curve up to Gaza and there the tracks ended. There was no further rail service.

G: Could you see the refugee camps outside of the window?

R: Yes, we began to see them. The Gaza Strip itself was another border to cross because the Gaza Strip had originally been part of what had then been Palestine, a different country from Egypt. When we came over that border we came into "occupied" Palestine from the perception of the Egyptian authorities. So we were in a military occupation zone under the Egyptian army and we were going to carry out our approved duties with their blessing, which had been set up in the original wave.

So when we arrived there was a place for us. We were needed. Chuck Chapman who I was replacing in the radio job was delighted that he had someone to take over. He felt dead-ended in the job he was doing and wanted very much to get more involved with the camps. When he saw me arrive and knew I could handle that job he was very quick to turn it over to me and leave the job to go into the other job, which was fine. We were fortunate in coming into the second wave because housing had been established. There were four houses. I believe we were in house 1, but I can't be sure of that.

G: Even though all of this had been set up already, did you run into any problems, conflicts or events that happened either on your trip up there or when you got to Gaza?

R: Well, I did run into some funny events. I remember very much when I was early on the scene we were singing Christmas carols. As a group we had a lot of time together in the

evening for discussion or singing, group things, meetings even. We were singing Christmas carols on a night that was extremely rainy. The rain was pelting down. The winter rains had come. We were in a metallic building. It was all corrugated iron, thrown together out of whatever was available in the area. The roofing was metallic and was resounding to the pelting of the rain. We could hardly hear ourselves singing, but with this group of 60 or more people all belting out "God is the King of Israel" we really freaked out some... No one had foreseen that this little phrase in our English Christmas carol would be so reprehensible in the eyes of the people we were there to help. The King of Israel? That was a little bit much. They were supposed to be singing there with us. Whatever they sang in lieu of Israel I never learned but I think they were offended until the whole thing was explained to them.

G: So they speak English?

R: Yes, we had some workers with us who were bilingual. You have to take into account that Palestine itself had been occupied since World War I by the British. After World War I it was a British mandate and all their education probably was bilingual. That's what I'm surmising. So for the educated class, English was a second language and we employed some of them because among the group of volunteers there was every skill known.

Another thing I remember is that at one point we tried to initiate an office for outside employment opportunities within the Arab world and I was put in charge of that office. I had an assistant named Abou Seline. We took applications in writing from those who presented themselves as candidates for employment in Saudi Arabia, or in Cairo, or in some other centers where we were told employment might be obtainable. We had to establish what kind of skills they were offering to perspective employers. I remember one person filled in "Kind of employment you wish to have: Iron and steal gang" but he spelled it S T E A L and meant S T E E L. So when I showed this to my assistant, he was educated to the point where he laughed and said, "No, no, no, this man is not a thief! Don't get the wrong idea!" He was very defensive about anyone saying there was an Arab who would steal. (chuckles)

G: When you got of the train _______ what were the first things you were saying to each other? What were conditions like?

R: I'll tell you what I felt, and I think I remember a conversation like this early on, just arriving. They led us to believe that conditions were harsher than encountered. We in the second

wave were having an easier time of it than the people in the first wave. We had talked with first wave people. To think that we actually had a room to ourselves in house one, that they had these organized meals of breakfast, lunch and dinner in house 2 or 3 -- I've forgotten the designators -- we had a common meal together.

I remember a strange event. We would frequently include the Arabs with whom we worked. I remember one of them was not familiar with the idea of passing everything down: You'd pass it down, he'd hand it to his neighbor, you'd help yourself. We had family style meals as a routine. Someone had passed the meat and it hadn't gone around. I forget what kind of meat but it was probably lamb because it was so prevalent. Then someone had handed him the gravy in a little metal bowl about the size of a soup bowl. He proceeded to take up his soup spoon and consume the entire amount of gravy while the rest of the people were waiting for it. Adele, who was very good at running that part of the operation, calmly went off and got another bowl of gravy and nothing was said, (chuckles) There were many such episodes. One of the things that surprised me was the Biblical nature of the culture that we were in. It could have been right out of what one reads in the Bible. There had not been that much change in the physical conditions. There were still some Bedouins who were in the Bedouin tents and were no longer able to take their flock or camels out into other territories. The Falahin people, the town people, were dressing in their normal tradition garb. From the point of view of someone who liked color photography, it was colorful. It was something I was eager to capture on film in a way that would not be offensive. I was always concerned with not offending anyone because the camera was regarded as the evil eye and one could be getting into deep trouble by being insensitive in the use of a camera. I tried never to offend with my camera and learned to be very diffident, stay back and shoot only when I thought it was not offending someone.

One thing that surprised me is they still used so many camels. There was a strip of land in Gaza, but apart from the ocean and the barrier sand dunes secluding it from the ocean, it was very fertile and used for intensive farming. The farming was very labor intensive along with the crop being productive. The plowing was done the way it might have been done in Biblical times, with a homemade plowshare, made out of wood mostly, a camel to pull the plow, and the plowing being done by the owner of the plot or someone engaged by the owner of the plot. The crops then came in and were very productive. There were little areas

where oranges were raised, other citrus fruits were raised because of irrigation systems that had been put in prior to this period. Photographing these systems in operations meant that I was photographing something that had been done for a long long time but improved upon in recent memory. So perhaps they were using.. I surmise now they are using electric pumps and deep wells to irrigate the fields and the horses. Then there were the date groves. I was impressed with the date groves because I've seen the date groves in southern California which are in the desert. I felt very much at home in the date groves I saw there. They were the same kinds of trees, the same kind of production. All of that was a congenial part of the world to me, whereas I know that others who came from parts of the country like the eastern seaboard or even Canada might have felt this was terribly dry and terribly hostile from the landscape perspective. I didn't feel that. I didn't feel the seclusion of being shut in unless I got close to the border, and of course one was always close to the border. If you went really close to "no man's land" it was like feeling a chill when you saw this vacant strip of land beyond which you cannot go. You may wander into a mine field. You may be shot, no one knows. This makes a sharp angle and parallels the entire strip of land from the corner where it turns, all the way down to the border of Egypt. This was, in fact, like being in prison. The psychology of being in prison was very acutely felt by the Palestinian Arabs who had fled or been forced to leave their homes and were now being held captive in an area. They weren't physically captive in the sense of being bound, but physically captive in the sense of not being able to cross that no man's land and not being able to go back to what they had known all their lives. That came to me more fully when I visited those areas and saw the no man's land.

G: How were the conditions of the refugees by the time you got there?

R: The condition of the refugees in the beginning, when we got there, were housed in tents. The tents were extremely hot in the warm periods and sunny periods, very cold in the winter nights. It was not a comfortable existence for any of the refugees to live in tents. However, it was shelter, so they didn't get rained upon in the heavy rains of winter. It was an issue that we sometimes discussed, as to whether we should proceed beyond the stage of tent housing to primitive housing like block or adobe housing, strictly this had, to us, of making the condition permanent and institutionalizing the refugee status. We were hopeful, all of us were hopeful, that a solution to the refugee status was going to be found, either the

repatriation back into Israel slowly, by assimilation, or the expatriation to jobs that might be made available in some other country. WE had the feeling that the Arab states around us could offer and maybe would offer, for those who were so inclined, a chance to move on. WE also had the hope -- or I had the hope -- that in the long run a lot of the hostility left lingering from the war would abate and Israel might become a state similar to what it was when the British had the mandate, that would house both races living together and not constantly at one another's.. in a fighting mood. It seems to me that a lot of what transpired before the war broke out was, in a sense, a reprisal in orientation. Someone has done a harm from one group to another group. The other group feels a reprisal is necessary. This gets into a back and forth kind of psychology where the original origins are no longer seen or thought about. It's the most recent atrocity that one must avenge. So it seemed to me, with the war ending with a truce in place, that maybe a lot of that hostility would begin to be overcome. If we had been told it would still be there in the 1990s when we were there in the 1950s we would have been absolutely incredulous. WE would not have believed that. It didn't seem to even be a possibility to me at that time.

G: What was your impression of the Quaker work that was being done?

R: To me the work was tremendous. You must remember, I had not been part of the Quaker world until very recently. I had not been raised a Quaker. I had not been a member of any Meeting. I was not prepared for the intensity of the team spirit that took hold of everyone. I was really amazed, and I found a sense of fulfillment that 60 individuals from diverse backgrounds, various nationalities could come together and work so effectively as a team, as if the spirit were one for all and all for one. It was really astonishing to me and it excited by admiration. I've felt since then very admiring of the world of Quakers and later joined the Meeting because of that. At some point in our group meetings here a question was raised by Paul Johnson, "Was this to be viewed as a model refugee relief operation or as a model of a community development operation?" To my way of thinking it's both. To further that, I don't see how a really successful and sound refugee relief operation can take place if the other component is lacking. I don't see how you can operate with an either/or approach. It's got to be a combination of the two in some degree.

[Side A ends, Side B begins]

R: I think that the experience that I was perceiving as something almost synergistic, where the sum total is greater than the sum of the parts, was of tremendous value, tremendously impressive to me. Not necessarily only to me, because I had the experience many years later, in the 1970s -- now this is 20 years ago but 20 years after the even, halfway to this time -- when the head of UNICEF -- his name at the time was Ken Grant -- in an interview in New York City called me into his office, sat me down in front of him and proceeded to say, to my astonishment, "The record shows you were in Gaza. Tell me, what kind of magic took place?" That was very nice. Nice to hear. Here's the head of UNICEF saying that already it has come to his attention that something magic had occurred and he wanted me to explain it.

G: What do you think caused that magic?

R: What caused the magic was, like I say, this combination of the attitude that was formed that was one of concern for the individual, concern for the plight of the people we were there to help, concern that was made manifest day after day by the kinds of discussions... WE had a cohesion as a group that was perhaps intentionally fostered. We had all of these activities over and above the jobs we were doing. We had the group meals. WE had the evening singing or evening discussion, whatever it was that transpired. Somehow we were deeply involved. Each individual was deeply involved. Whatever that individual had to contribute was somehow elicited by these conditions. It seems to me that that synergism of which I speak based itself in this attitudinal concept where everyone is part of this bigger effort and is not in it for individual purposes or individual gain. It became apparent to all of us who remained long enough to be part of the unit of UNRWA to feel offended when money was offered to do what we had been doing as volunteers. We soon got used to it and it was nice to have the money to spend, but apart from that it was offensive, the concept that we should be interested in being there for private gain, we should be there for a salary when we were only there as volunteers. I think that's an important point and I would emphasize it more because this is what I keep coming back to when I hear people say that the congressional pay justified when they raise it because you want good people. I still say that the best people I ever met were the people I was working with in the Gaza Strip, and they were volunteers. So that's a _______ argument from my perspective.

G: When you first got there and you were working with communications, radio...

R: Well, my radio job was a series of schedules that required me to go in and start the generator, set up the radio equipment and make contacts, partly for the safety of the aircraft that had a schedule twice a week, I believe, maybe three times a week, to come into Gaza and land. We had to make sure that the weather conditions and landing conditions had been properly checked out and they could in fact land their airplanes safely. We had to ascertain who was on it, who were the people that were going to disembark, who were our people returning or coming in, what cargo did they have for us? What person did we have that might go on from Gaza? The schedule wasn't always just to land in Gaza and return to Cairo. We were on a route that went from Cairo, to Gaza, to Columbia which was Jerusalem, to Amman, Jordan, to Beirut and Syria, and then back through all that series to Cairo again. This was an aircraft provided to us by the US army, provided to the UN that would have UN markings. This aircraft was manned by US pilots who we knew on a first name basis. We knew all of our people on a first name basis. The sense of comradeship was so broad as to include the pilots of the UN aircraft and the people in the armistice commission. That's another story.. I don't know if other people are bringing it out. There was a truce and there was a truce supervision organization put into place by the Mixed Armistice Commission, mixed in the sense that it was of an international body. It's like you see today when there's a UN force put into Yugoslavia it's composed of Pakistanis, Canadians, etceteras, etceteras. In that instance we had it composed of Belgians, of French, of US. We had a US major resident there, we had a Belgian colonel and a French colonel. I think there were some Scandinavians, although I don't remember any in Gaza. This Mixed Armistice Commission had headquarters in Jerusalem. They had outposts wherever they needed them, such as where the camps were in Jordan.

G: How were the Quakers involved in this?

R: That's a good question. This was the de-facto situation that prevailed when we walked into the assignment to take over the welfare of 250,000 Arab refugees. These people were already in this occupied territory. This occupied territory was already under a truce. The truce was already under supervision by the United Nations. That meant that the supervision was carried out by a military force. This was in place before the first one of us got there because in order to have a cease fire you had to have a truce. In order to have a truce you had to have supervision and you had to have an external party that was present to oversee the

truce. That's how that came into being and I think that is the pattern that has prevailed in most armed conflicts since that time.

G: When was your jobbed switched?

R: Well, my job wasn't switched, it was enhanced. I still carried out these schedules. Some of them were daytime schedules, some of them were night time schedules, but I was there to receive and send messages. That also included, by virtue of agreement as I was made to understand it by Chuck Chapman. The agreement that prevailed when the first team came in was that when Chuck was doing the radio schedules we would be handling anybody's communication, not just our own Quaker communication. In order to us the radio at all we were part of a UN net. The UN had a radio station in Jerusalem which controlled the net. The one in Gaza was one of the member stations. There was another station in Beirut and another station in Jordan.

G: I was referring to your other job as a railroad supervisor.

R: The railroad supervisor was the fill in of the time that was not needed for these schedules. The railroad supervisor job was one that I inherited also from Chuck, including the assistant of the Palestinian Arab, Housalin, who I had to have as an interpreter. My Arabic was nonexistent when I got there, so the interpreter had to ask the questions and get the answers that I would feed to him in the railroad freight yards. What happened was that all of our supplies with which we provided distributions -- this means flour, this means rice, this means sugar, oils, in some cases some canned products, blankets -- all of these supplies came in by rail. The point of origin being Cairo and the point of distribution being Gaza, the end of the line. We were concerned, and rightly so, for the transfer of goods out of railway cars into trucks, and then again from trucks into our warehouse. The agreement to move from the railroad to the warehouse was primarily the Egyptian military. Whenever they were backlogged to the point where we weren't getting the adequate flow of supplies, we were forced to bring our trucks which we used for distribution on the other end out of the warehouse and into the role that was assigned to the military to do because they were not doing the job that they had agreed to do. It fell to me to keep track of all this and try somehow to keep the flow going. This was an endless task because the big freight cars were called bootchies, and when the boochies (?) came in they had 40, 50, 60 tons of flour, which from the point of view from the refugees was a target for ________ if they could succeed in

getting some of it away from us before it reached our warehouse. We could account for it from the warehouse on, so they developed lots of skillful ways of getting some of that flour.

G: So the agreement you had with the Egyptian government was that they were supposed to carry the food from the trains to the warehouses?

R: Yes, with their military trucks.

G: And you were made supervisor to supervise that they did this?

R: I was to be the onsite rep of the Quaker team who would make sure that this was, in fact, taking place and when it didn't to report it back and be able to somehow intercede and keep it going by whatever means we could. I was fascinated to see that the military had problems of their own. They had uneducated drivers who really didn't really know how to handle trucks. They had people who were trying to find a way to divert some of that cargo so it didn't reach our warehouses. They had problems of not being willing to carry 1 1/2 tons on a 2 1/2 ton truck because the tires were low and to put air in cost somebody money and the military didn't have money for that. The driver ended up having to pay a few little coins to get the air pumped in. He didn't have the coins and didn't fill it. So rather than inflate the tires to a proper pressure he would run with them half inflated and take a ton of cargo rather than 2 1/2 tons. This was a problem you had to confront, sometimes providing the air ourselves. But if you did that too much a dependency would be created.

G: How were your dealings with the Egyptian military.

R: Usually very cordial, usually cooperative. We didn't get preemptory treatment, we didn't get lack of cooperation at the level where I worked. I don't know if it existed elsewhere, but at the level where I worked I felt that the even.. The civilian station master who still occupied the job he always occupied was more than helpful, always trying to move these because it was bad for him. It was bad for him if the whole rail yard filled up with full freight cars that weren't getting emptied. Then they didn't have anything to send back. He was then asked to explain that to the railroad people, so it was to his interest to cooperate with us and keep the flow going. I can remember the glut that would sometimes occur when you had too much of this delay and you had our trucks blocked to _____ and suddenly instead of hauling one ton on a 2 1/2 ton truck, at a very slow pace we took six tons on a five ton truck at a very fast pace and cleaned out the whole area, then started fresh. That was very nice and everybody heaved a sigh of relief, including the military drivers.

G: I read in some of the reports that this was a consistent problem, this was always happening, that wagons would get accumulated because the Egyptians weren't doing their part in this. To me that sounded very strange because in all the other reports I was reading, the Egyptians really wanted more control. I was wondering why they were reluctant to do this part, to take this on.

R: I don't think it was an official reluctance, and I don't think it was a high level reluctance. I think it was a de-facto situation. When you make plans on paper that's one thing. When you carry them out pragmatically you're dealing with reality. The reality was other than what the plans called for and I don't think they ever really fully realized it at the command level, that we were confronting all these problems down there at the implementation level. The people I was dealing with were the drivers and some of them were farm boys who had never seen a truck until they were drafted into the army at age 16.

G: Yes. One of your reports I was reading that was very funny, that was one of the big problems, the actual drivers. You described them as "They gave you the worst trucks and the worst drivers." Do you remember any funny stories?

R: Yes. I know one driver who parked his truck on the adjacent line waiting to get to the railway door, and then walked away from it and left it sitting there. When the locomotive came along it ran into it. So scratch that one. That truck's gone now. (laughs) I don't know what happened to that driver. He was inattentive. It never occurred to him that a train might come on that track, so he was parked on the other track rather than off the track. There were little things like this. I remember one other instance. Now it's hard for me to pinpoint this memory and see what the origin was. What I'm recalling is that there was a very carefully crafted plan by somebody to sneak a whole truck filled with flour away from us and make the truck disappear. This was actually done. The plan was so well executed that the army truck, when it left, went down a road and in between -- all of the town was set up in such a way in that particular part where it was like a rabbit warren. You had all of these housing areas that were walled off from the street. The streets were little alleys running between high mud walls. The tops of the walls might have broken glass on them and might be high enough that they're higher than the ceiling in this room and you couldn't see over them. Some of them had gates that were single gates or double gates where, when they opened the gates, you could see a driveway and a patio inside, maybe plants, or maybe a garage or a

warehouse. I think the story emerged over time that what they had done was to plan this thing carefully enough that they somehow managed to get out of sight of everyone, with a truck, and down on a curving road that had a double gate, opened the gate, drove it in, closed the gate and the thing disappeared forever, truck and load. (laughter) So we were paying our receipts based on what got to the warehouse. So whatever was issued, the way I had to keep track of these receipts, were the influx of goods in the freight yard was one number, and the pounds or sacks or whatever count we used in the warehouse was another number. We hoped that they would correlate. When they failed to then we had to work a little harder to find out why.

G: Did the Egyptians try to help in trying to solve this problem?

R: To some extent they did. We had good intercession at upper levels. That was Paul's job. Paul would see whoever it was. The name Colonel Dereeni comes into effect. I don't know if I'm in the right country or right project but it seems to me he had to deal with somebody named Colonel Dereeni and get assurances that they were looking into it and they were going to rectify the situation and whatever. So there was always this kind of potential tension that had to be dealt with to reduce the level of tension.

G: Did you feel that tension among the workers? Were there attitudes against each group?

R: I felt that within my own experience, I never saw anything but a cooperative attitude or an attitude of acceptance except once, and that was during the time of Rammadan. During Ramadan it's a new ball game. It's a different outlook. People are traditionally oriented to observe their Ramadan in their own style. I think we, as a team, might have done something insensitive, or for whatever reason I found myself in a crowd with the jeep with Abu Saleem hoping to get from one of the warehouses that we had just been to back to the railway yard and it was Ramadan. I think, as Abu Saleem tried to explain it to me, a crowd of young Arabs took offense at the fact that we were not observing their Ramadan and were trying to carry on our work and get to the railway station and began hurling stones. He said, "We must get away." I don't think any stones hit the jeep, but I think one of the other jeeps had a broken windshield. You may have heard some stories about this in this same period, from the same cause. But we had our work to do and I guess we were going on with our work.

G: As a supervisor of this program, you were talking a lot about the ______ and the stealing of the food. How did you try to control the situation?

R: Well, see we had our own staff people in the warehouse. We had our own trucks there. I would have a limited assignment in the sense of trying to keep on top of what is happening to the flow. I had one Palestinian Arab as my assistant to help me carry this assignment out. I think my relations with the Palestinian Arab was as warm as it could be. We were a good team working well together. I remember when we had, I think, a wedding anniversary for my wife and I in March, he went out of his way to bring flowers to her. She worked in the office with Paul Johnson. I never had any feeling that he was other than 100% dedicated to the task we were trying to carry out. I never had any indication that there was any hostility on the part of the workers we were dealing with through him, or any resistance to whatever he might be telling them, or reluctance to deal with him and tell information back. I always had the feeling that the people with whom we dealt in Arabic were giving him the straight story. He was dealing straightforward with him and they were dealing straightforwardly back. They were just as concerned as I was to get this thing dealt with. This was my feeling. I didn't feel there was evasion and I didn't feel there was game playing going on.

G: Who was doing all the stealing?

R: Oh, I think a lot of kids were trained by their families to go out and use sharp sticks and poke holes in the bottom and catch it in a tin can. If you could poke a hole between cracks and get a sack of flour, or a sack of sugar, or a sack of rice, you could fill a can in no time.

G: So it wasn't the people you were working.

R: Not necessarily, although it could have been trades people in the town who said, "You get me some of that and I'll pay you well." Could have been, but that doesn't mean that their attitudes would reveal anything different. I think that there was a cordial relationship there that prevailed from start to finish, from the time I arrived to the time I left. I never once felt that I was under any threat or that I was treated with anything but cooperation.

G: Do you remember any crisis situations?

R: It's hard to say that there were crisis situations...

G: Highly pressured?

R: There was pressure, yeah. I think there were discussions that had to do with potential or impending crisis. I think that we all were aware, as I said before, that the area was sealed off by no man's land on two sides and a border with Egypt on the next side and the ocean on the last side. We all felt that this was an area that was tightly self-contained. Therefore, there

were effects that were long lasting and insipid and the same time that were getting worse. The Bedouins, for example, no longer could go widely with their flocks, and therefore if their flocks were in need of sustenance and the only land that was available was right there, they would intrude on someone else's land. Therefore they were stuck. They couldn't be Bedouins any more. This was getting to be more and more of a problem. The trades people felt that they were victims too, that they no longer had access to the world. They only had access to what was Gaza itself, and therefore they were injured by the occupation of the others and should be included in the rations. To an extent we felt they should be, that the whole area was badly affected and negatively affected and impacted by the truce. Catching that many people in that small an area with no means of moving on... So yes, we felt there were impending crisis. We felt that the crisis of resettlement -- that was a word that came up a lot -- was not going to go away, that it would become a crisis. It was something that was an incipient crisis even then and more so today. What do you do with people who are not in their homelands and not where they belong, whose homes have been taken over? It's hard to know. Also, there was an opportunity, because of my job, where I got to know the people who were my opposite numbers in the radio net. I got to know a name and individual on the other end of the message. I would get to know somebody in Jerusalem who was frequently on the same net with me and his name would be Walt. I was invited by Walt to come and get acquainted, "Bring your wife." I would say, "I can't do that because we're on the wrong side of the demarcation line." He would say, "Oh, but an official invitation can be made for you to come to government house." So we got a vacation allowance -- we had a vacation allowance every six month period or so -- and we did talk to Walt and to the Truce Supervision Organization about whether it was possible to go up there and back. Colonel Bond said he had to go to Jerusalem periodically and it would be easy for him to just take along a couple of passengers. So my wife and I did go, we went to Jerusalem. I thought it was very interesting to get the other perspective of this land across the no man's land and the outlook of the people there. It was a different world and a different century. It was strange. It had an effect on us because there was another dimension added to all the experience up to that point. It was out of synchronization with everything else. It was jarring.

G: What kind of effect did it have? What kind of impression did you get at that time?

R: Well, looking back after all these years, it was like... When we crossed into that other land or across the no man's land -- we were in a jeep driven by a member of the Mixed Armistice Commission and going to Government House -- it was like seeing it without being part of it. It's like knowing that this man is privileged, he can go to Government House. He has the right of entrée. He can go across no man's land. He has the right of passage. We don't. Other people don't, but somehow he's extended that right temporarily to us. I felt like an interloper. I felt like I didn't belong. I was here for something that had to do with the refugees and here was a world that didn't even know they existed, that went on as thought they were not in existence. This was a world that was more like California where we had come from than anything we'd seen yet, anywhere. So it was kind of like seeing my own culture again, but seeing it under conditions which were inimical to what I'd been doing. That was a strange thing.

G: Surreal.

R: Yeah.

[tape goes off and on]

G: Yesterday when we were finishing the tape you mentioned your trip to Israel and to Jerusalem, and I remember also during the interview you mentioned that you went up to Acre. Can you describe that, and any differences that you saw in Acre and Gaza?

R: Well, there was a cultural difference. I remember going to Acre with Frank Hunt. I remember going to Galilee and to Tiberius with Frank Hunt. The Service Committees had small projects in each location. The one in Acre was on the sea and it was a small enclave that appeared to have been heavily influenced by Turkish occupation and still showed the influence, even in the change of dress that one could see in Acre. One of my photographs shows that. In Tiberius I remember going through the Galilee and thinking, "This is Biblical country. We've read about all this in the story of the trip to Jerusalem and the nativity and all. It's so so close, now it seems to me. It comes alive to me but it also comes alive in the sense that the journey wasn't as prolonged and as lengthy a journey as I first thought. I had to readjust my thinking to the fact that all of this is very close to Jerusalem and very close to Bethlehem. We're talking of a somewhat unified cultural zone with distances that are very short. So that was the one impression I had. Then I forget what the project in Tiberius was doing. I think we were only bringing some personnel there and they were new. We were in

a jeep with Frank Hunt and we got a ride with these other people, so I think they couldn't tell us much about what was going on. Then we didn't linger. We had somewhere to go to meet someone and we kept moving. I don't have very clear recollection beyond that. Then in '71, 22 years after arrival in Gaza, we were on the Pan American Development Foundation trip. It was a totally different experience because the state of Israel had co-hosted the journey. I happened to be affiliated only through the new work I was going into, VITA -- Volunteers in Technical Assistance. Pan American Development Foundation was the other co-host, so one of their personnel was along, and two gringos. I was one of the two. Everything was conducted in Spanish. The reception was in Spanish. The bus driver spoke Spanish. The officials of the government who we met and who provided the reception the first night of arrival were speaking Spanish. The bus driver was very good at organizing things with Spanish speaking people from Latin America because he knew exactly what to tell them and how to get their cooperation and not linger in the morning -- we were going to leave at eight in the morning. He said, "This bus leaves at 8:01. Anybody who gets to the bus at 8:02 will walk." And he meant it! He showed that in the very first day. I don't think we left anyone behind. From then on it was very punctual. He took us to the perimeter of Gaza, not into Gaza but into the perimeter of Gaza, one of the days that we were there. We looked at all the new settlements all through the area of the Negev and Beersheeba, along that perimeter. The point they were trying to make to us was that "community development" was their answer to hostile incursions from Arab territory. If the PLO or other factions were mounting parties that would come in a raid and return and retreat to the Gaza strip -- which at that time was a haven.. there was something about the necessity of protecting themselves against incursions. The answer to the incursion problem was a large civilian population in place that had everything it needed where it was. It didn't have to trade in Jerico. It didn't have to trade in Beersheeba. It didn't have to trade in Jerusalem. Everything was right there. So they had everything, theaters, schools, supermarkets, along that perimeter. The theory was that anyone coming in would be meeting with so many different individuals so quickly that they couldn't penetrate very far on the scene. That was the whole theory. So they lectured us on their accomplishment in responding to the threat. They also lectured us on their accomplishment in developing water potential. They said that the state of Israel had, to that point, developed 94% of all of its water resources and hydroelectric resources. They were

working on distilling sea water from the Mediterranean for a future that they painted as a glorious future starting around the year 2000. They also predicted, in that period around 2000, that the Arab - Israeli conflict would be settled. Cooperation would be assured. They would all have a better future through economic cooperation than anyone had ever foreseen. Very, very rosy predictions. Anyway, that was 1971.

I didn't get back to Israel after that. That was the last opportunity. Not been in the Middle East after that. Have not been in any of the Persian Gulf countries. The nearest I got was a trip to Africa, Kenya, and that's a little too remote to have attitudes about it.

Since that visit, '71, I got involved in disaster relief and worked in the first instance with UNICEF in Honduras. In the UNICEF interviews in 1974, when I was ready to leave New York, the head of the UNICEF operation, Mr. Ken Grant, called me into his office, sat me down in front of his big polished desk in New York City and said, "It shows here that you were in the Gaza Strip in 1949 and '50. Tell me," he said, " just what kind of magic went on?" I thought that was quite revealing because over the years there was some kind of reputation established that penetrated from UNRWA into the other agencies.

[knocking] There's your next one!

END OF INTERVIEW

AFSC ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #607
Narrator: ELWOOD GEIGER (G)
Interviewer: Joan Lowe (L)
September 19, 1992

L: This is Joan Lowe. It's September 19th. I'm interviewing Elwood Geiger for the American Friends Service Committee Oral History Project. We're talking about relief to the refugees in Gaza in 1949 and '50. Would you please state your full name and place and date of birth?

G: Elwood E. Geiger. I was born in Jacksonville. Florida on August 10th, 1925.

L: So you stayed in Jacksonville?

G: Yes, I've been back and forth, but it's been home all the time.

L: What kind of a town was Jacksonville when you were young?

G: About 120,000 people.

L: Really! That big...

G: It's now about 700,000 or something like that.

L: So it's a fairly major city then and always has been, pretty much.

G: Up until 1940 or so it was the largest city in Florida. Miami has outstripped it long since, but it was, for a long time, the city of Jacksonville.

L: And you grew up right in the city?

G: Just outside, just north of it on a farm.

L: What kind of farm was that?

G: Combination tree farm, we had beef cattle, chickens, a little bit of everything.

L: So, I am assuming then that your parents were farmers. And what kind of religious upbringing did you have?

G: You want the long or the short? (laughs) My father was a Baptist before he and mother were married, secretary to the area Baptist convention for about 12 years I think. This was a paid secretary. He and the Baptists had split up before he and mother were married on some, I think, Biblical interpretation, something of that nature. My mother was a Presbyterian preacher's daughter.

L: What a combination!

G: He had also -- my mother's father on my mother's side -- had split with the Presbyterians way back before my mother's memory on some differences on church doctrine. I'm not

clear on all the details of it but the West Minster Divines ______. But I was brought up in a very Biblically based family but not affiliated with any church.

L: You would characterize it still as a Christian upbringing, then.

G: Yes, very definitely so.

L: You said you were born in '25?

G: That's right.

L: So you were, it sounds to me, almost a little too young for the war when it started.

G: When it started it was. I had two older brothers who were drafted in the first draft in '41, '42, which left me as the oldest boy left on the farm. I was 15, 16 then. From then until 1944 when I was 19 and was drafted I ran the farm, essentially. My dad's health was not that good and so I ran the farm.

L: Did you have sisters too?

G: I had two sisters and one younger brother five years younger than I. I was next to the youngest in a family of six.

L: When the war came, do you recall your family's thoughts about what was going on in the world?

G: Yes. My family and the generation preceding mine -- I think I had five uncles in World War I. So we were not pacifists as a family. I think it was my oldest brother who really took issue with the tradition in the family. He and my second oldest brother both decided on their own that they would not take part in the war. It was based on this Biblical upbringing. It was primarily a Biblical, Christianity based thing with them. I had no arguments with them. I agreed with the stand that they took and I would say that my parents supported them in this stand, even though it hadn't been traditional. Both my father and my mother had brothers in World War I.

L: But you said that they went into the military?

G: No, no.. they were drafted into CPS, Civilian Public Service.

L: They went into CPS.. oh, I heard you say drafted. So they went into Civilian Public Service. Did your community know about this and have anything to say about this?

G: Mostly they were not pleased, but we really had remarkably little problems with the community on it. Even the draft board.. The first three of us, I don't think, ever appeared before the draft board. I was young enough so that I was involved in the second draft, the

Korean War type draft and I didn't appear before the draft board at that point. I'm quite sure that neither of my two older brothers, and I knew I didn't in the initial World War II draft... The draft board took our questionnaires as Gospel and let it go at that.

L: They were taking 20 year olds at that time.. were they going down to 18 in the World War II draft?

G: Yes. The initial World War II draft did not take 18. My oldest brother was drafted before Pearl Harbor, and that was just from 21 through 28 or something like that.

L: So did you get a draft notice yourself?

G: Oh yes, I did. And very soon after Pearl Harbor the age was dropped to 18. So by the time I came up -- I was 18 in August of '43 -- why, I had to register and go through all the rigmarole.

[knock on door]

L: Before we were interrupted you were telling me about when you got your notice to go before the draft.

G: Yes, I was deferred almost immediately for farm work. When I turned 18 I was given a 2C which at that time was the most complete exemption you could get. That lasted about six months and then they were preparing for the invasion of Europe and all exemptions were dropped. You had to reapply and I was not given the exemption the second go around. I was drafted. I was sent to Gatlinburg, Tennessee CPS camp 108 and built trails, drove trucks, dump trucks and things like that for..

L: Was that a Service Committee administered camp?

G: That was a Service Committee camp. I chose the Service Committee camp. Through my exposure to history and so forth in school I had learned about Quakers. I barely knew the name of Brethren and Mennonites at that time, so that was my choice. Really, that was my first introduction to Friends.

L: Did you meet any Quakers there?

G: Oh yes. The majority of the people in Gatlinburg were Friends. I was there for 11 months, I think, and then had applied for a transfer many months earlier to New Lisbon, New Jersey state training school, which was a state run training school for mentally deficient boys right in the middle of New Jersey, about 30 miles east of Philadelphia. If you're familiar with the area it's called the 3 mile colony. I worked there partly in the school doing recreation for

school kids. Shortly after I got there, within two or three months, I was assigned to the farm because of my background, and the rest of my time there I either ran the dairy or did general farm supervisory work for boys working on the farm.

L: So you completely did your service in CPS? You completed that without leaving again?

G: I was discharged from State Colony in New Lisbon conditionally, to work for UNRWA. So I went into the...

L: So you still had time, then, to serve.

G: Oh yes. I wasn't discharged... I was discharged to UNRWA in early March of '46, and worked with UNRWA under the Selective Service System, still subject to Selective Service until late August of '46. I didn't officially get discharged until the end of the year, and I don't know why that was. I was free on papers from UNRWA, but I didn't officially get my Selective Service discharge until just about the end of the year of '46.

I made three trips to Europe between March and August of '46, and came home after that.

L: Recreational trips or business trips?

G: No, this was with UNRWA. This was on cattle boats, taking cattle and horses to Europe. This was a joint Brethren -- UNRWA project. I came home for two or three months after getting discharged and then went back and made another cattle ship trip which took me to Greece. My reason for doing this was that my oldest brother by this time was in Poland with the Service Committee and I thought I was going on that trip to Poland. But it turned out, after I signed on, that the ship's destination was changed to Greece, so I went to Greece. I came back from that trip and almost immediately got in touch with Arthur Little who you may or may not know. He was a drama professor in Earlham for many, many years, but at the time he was the personnel director for the Service Committee whom I had known in CPS. [I got in touch with him] to get the address of the Service Committee representative in ______, Poland. He telegraphed me back asking if I wouldn't go to Poland for the Service Committee. Well, I had already signed up for this last cattle boat trip, so that was delayed.

L: So you thought you might get to go to Poland and wrote to the Service Committee and got the address.

G: To get the address of their representative in Poland. Arthur, having known me in CPS, called me right back and asked if I would be interested in going to Poland for the Service Committee. I expressed an interest to him, but I was already signed up for this trip, which

turned out to be the last UNRWA trip, cattle ship, horse ship. It turned out to be a very long one. We left Savannah in February of '47 and ran into ice almost immediately. WE were changed to Rotterdam and spent a month tied up in Rotterdam just waiting because the Baltic Sea was frozen. They got tired of us and sent us around to Denmark where we spent a week or two. _______ said the port was too small to house us so we went, with an ice breaker in front of us, to Copenhagen where we spent another three weeks I think before Lloyds of London decided the ice was soft enough to go on in. We ran into an ice flow just south of Sweden and instead of going through it the whole ship went up on top of it. It didn't do us like the Titanic but the strain was too much and it just split the hull around the engine room about ten feet long, we found out later. Well, one of two pumps...

L: With all those animals?

G: Well, some of them fell down, but they got up again. I think they said one pump out of two that were available to pump the water kept the water in tow. We finally got into Dansig, ______ as it's called now, got rid of our horses, and were sent into the same Lenin shipyard that has been so famous since, where we spent about 15 days getting a patch on our ship. We came home and I immediately turned around and went back to Philadelphia to go to Poland. They were so short of personnel at that time.

L: Wait a minute. Something must have happened with the Selective Service in the meantime.

G: No, I was discharged...

L: To... on the condition that.. all right. I understand.

G: The discharge came after my third cattle boat trip in August of '46. This is now May.. I got back here in May, finally, of '47. I spent just about exactly two weeks in Pendle Hill getting ready to go to Poland with Bill Fensky from Nebraska. They were in such a hurry that we were not given the usual time at Pendle Hill to prepare or study language. Neither of us knew Polish. We did go to a few lessons.. We were supposed to have our Visas ready in Paris. We got there and they were not, so we spent a month in Paris doing odd jobs around the Friends Center in Notre Dame de Champs, and finally did get our Visas. It was complicated by the military government at that time. They weren't passing out military passes to go through Germany. We finally got a German transit VISA or military permit which stated on our passport "No facilities, no gas, non-stop". It gave us about three days to transit Germany. We were supposed to pick up trucks in Germany, so we did which broke

the first rule of no stops. We got gas from the POL gas dumps, our trucks having army tags on them. They could get gas. We couldn't get gas but our trucks could. We finally got out of Germany about a day and a half late after our Visas had expired. The sergeant at the check point laughed at them and sent us on our way. Things were beyond our control. We couldn't get everything. So I spent just about exactly two years with the Service Committee in Poland doing transport work, transporting good material for rebuilding Polish farms and houses and barns and so forth. They had the building material but they didn't have the transportation, which had just about been completely destroyed during the war. This was a very rough kind of mechanical work because the roads had all been destroyed. There were nothing but series of potholes. We broke springs, we had flat tires from shrapnel, from machine gun cartridges, from horseshoe nails. It was still a horse drawn economy so there were horseshoes and horseshoe nails on the road. We counted ourselves lucky if we got by a day's driving...

L: How many of you were there?

G: About ten in the transport team. There was another group in northern Poland doing health work and food and clothing distribution. They had mixed English and American. Ours was mixed too, we had about two English personnel most of the time we were there.

L: I'm trying to think of Rebecca Timbers Clark.. was she there at that time or was she there earlier?

G: Yes, she was with a third unit at ___________ if I remember correctly. I met her but I didn't work with her directly so I didn't see that much of her.

L: You worked in Poland for two years on transport and then you heard about Gaza. How did that happen?

G: In the first place, at the end of the two years, this was during the Burillion Blockade. Stalin was not happy to have Americans rattling around Poland. So orders came down that we had to close our mission. The ministry of reconstruction was very disappointed. We had a very congenial relationship, very mutually helpful relationship with them. We were asked politely to leave in the end of May in '49. The project in Gaza had started, essentially, about January of that year. Bill Huntington who was commissioner for Service Committee work in Paris at the time wrote me before we left Poland asking if I would take over Doug Kernog's place who had started the transport work in Gaza. So when I got to Paris expecting to have a

month or six weeks of vacation he met me and said, "I want you to be in Geneva tomorrow and Cairo day after tomorrow" which is essentially what happened.

L: You went into Cairo by plane?

G: I first went to Geneva and met Howard _______ who got my UN papers and my Egyptian VISA and so forth. I flew from there to Cairo.

L: And then from Cairo you took the train into Gaza?

G: No, after a couple of days in Cairo renewing my international drivers license and getting an Egyptian driver's license, a few odds and ends like that, getting typhus shots, I flew up to Gaza on the UN plane and arrived there mid June.

L: Did you arrive there in the middle of the night like everyone else did?

G: I arrived in Cairo about 10:00 at night. The temperature was 108. I had left Geneva where there'd been a frost that morning and I was wearing a wool Service Committee uniform. This was before air conditioning, so I quite vividly remember sleeping in a hotel room with Elmore Jackson who snored like everything (laughter), but no.. I get along with temperature changes quite easily, but it was a drastic change.

L: What were your impressions when you first arrived in Gaza? Was it what you expected?

G: No, I don't think there's any way to prepare somebody for such a thing. I think the enormity of people sleeping on the sand -- which they were doing, this was the middle of the summer and this was the dry season so there were a lot of people who literally had no tents and were sleeping on the sand.. I was put up in an oil company house, the second floor, which was a very nice house.

L: Were you right in the town of Gaza?

G: No, our compound.. we had four houses and they were about half way between the original town of Gaza and the beach. These four houses were within 100 yards of each other. My transport compound was also right in that area.

L: So you were pretty much in the same ______ as the others.

G: That's right. One thing I should have mentioned in connection with Poland: During the time I was there I saw Auschwitz. This was before it was made a museum, before it had all been cleaned up. The last six months that we were there, every time we went to Warsaw we passed ________. So I had seen this. We had worked closely with the Joint Distribution Committee which was the Jewish relief agency. The last thing I did in Poland was to give

them 40 new tires which we'd ordered 9 months earlier and they'd just got there finally. That was our last doing. I had had the normal amount of Middle East history for any typical American high school kid, which is what I was. We knew about Lawrence of Arabia and his doings back in World War I, and very little else. So I knew very little of Arab culture. I knew a whole lot about what had happened to the Jews in Europe and I'd seen the Warsaw ghetto when it still stank. I went to Warsaw on one of my cow boat trips. So I had seen a pretty brutal picture, and that's the background of getting to Gaza. I learned very quickly that there was another side to it. The initial impression.. As I say, I don't think there's any way that anyone can be prepared for 200,000 or more people without homes. I can't emphasize that enough. Very shortly after I got there Charles Reed, who was director of the unit at that time, asked me to go up to Beirut and drive a World Health Organization Norwegian team down to Gaza, escort them down. These were BCG -- don't ask me what those initials stand for. It's a method which is hardly used in this country still, but the Scandinavians developed it. It makes your body build up antibodies to TB. It is very successful. It stopped TB in Poland. When I first got there I think better than 80% of the students at Warsaw University tested positive to TB. This same group of Scandinavians -- it was Danes there mainly -- came in there and during the two years that I was there the TB incidence went to nothing, so it is effective. The AMA in Gaza did not approve of it.

L: Well, this is not surprising (laughter).

G: No, knowing what we know it's not. But nonetheless.. I was asked to go up to Beirut and drive them down. I had this great big UN document that Howard Wriggens had gotten from me in Geneva from the UN. It worked and I drove them down the length of Israel to Gaza. The point that I'm getting to here is that this was the time that Ralph Bunch was negotiating and Israel was saying publicly that the refugees would return home as soon as they could get things settled down. Well, bulldozers we saw, as soon as we left Televiv going south. Israeli bulldozers were bulldozing all the Arab villages between there and Gaza. They had probably hundreds of dozers in there.

L: Is that the first time it was clear to you that they weren't coming home?

G: That's right. It woke me up.

L: Now I'm surprised that you were permitted to come down through Israel. How did that play out?

G: As far as that was concerned, our radio operator who was Chuck Chaplin at that time called a UN radio station -- I've lost the name of it. I have to ask Russ, he would remember -- up in Israel and they were UN personnel, and they contacted the Israeli government and got clearance for us when he explained what it was.

L: For that one time thing.

G: That's right. I crossed Israel repeatedly. This was not…

L: That's interesting, because I think there was a sort of idea that it was absolutely a wall that there was no way around.

G: We were behind barbed wire fences around the Strip. No ordinary person was supposed to be able to do this, but we did repeatedly do it. During the time I was there I suppose I crossed Israel 20 times probably, but in each instance it was for a specific purpose; hauling DDT to the Red Cross in Jerusalem, we did this a number of times. We made several trips between Gaza and Beirut and back again for different purposes. One time we hauled a load of clothing up there and I don't know what the background of that was, but it was for the refugee camps in Southern Lebanon, but how it worked out how we did it, I'm not clear to this day.

Anyway, I was quite fortunate in that that first time I ran into an Israeli customs immigration man -- they were a combination of the two -- at the Lebanese border. He took issue with me coming through with this Norwegian group. There were eight or nine nurses and one doctor with the group and they had to carry all they could carry and I drove them through. It was a little comical because all these UN documents that we had prior to that had been issued in New York out of Lake Success, which was the UN headquarters there. Mine was the first one issued by the Geneva office of the United Nations. Howard Wriggens had engineered it. So while the paper was printed and issued in New York, they had a big red stamp that they over stamped saying it was issued in Geneva. So when I pulled this out for this Israeli customs man he said, "Oh yeah, I know about those. They're issued in New York". He was trying to downplay their importance. I said, "No it's not issued in New York, it's issued in Geneva." He didn't argue anymore. He passed us right through, all ten of us. But that man was on the rise in the Israeli government stratus that they worked through. I'm quite sure, I ran into him repeatedly after that on the airport at Haifa and also on these various crossings. I'm quite satisfied that my personal relationship with him helped

out in these crossings that we made later during these nine months that I was there. I think repeatedly it was personal relationships in one form or another, not just for me but Paul Johnson or Charles Reed or Emmett Gulley, that made these things possible. I can't emphasize enough that I think these have perhaps been downplayed.; our relationships with the Israeli authorities.

L: One of the questions I was going to ask you eventually relates to. You came just about at the time that they were beginning to talk about extension. That was the big issue when you got there. There was a meeting where Colin Bell came into Gaza and they had these long discussions for hours and days. A significant number of people in the unit were saying, "This is just a relief project. This could be done by anyone. There's nothing uniquely Quaker about this project." I'm just wondering if you see that personal "in" as something you might consider uniquely Quaker or if that was just something that everybody who was trying to work out the distribution in the various areas, Red Cross staff for example, if they did the same thing. What is your experience with that?

G: My experience with dealing with the Red Cross was that it was a much more impersonal operation. We hauled DDT to the Red Cross units in Jordan -- what's now the West Bank was Jordan then. Certainly my impression was that they used hired help to do the distributions and the impression I got from it was it was much more impersonal. I think the personal relationships in the Strip, inside the Strip, with the refugees were of paramount importance. To make the thing work.. Before I left there were demonstrations against the UN, but they were against the UN and not the Quakers. My sister was a nurse and she ran a clinic. Within weeks of when I left there, there was a big demonstration in that Braige camp.

L: Are those the things that are referred to as riots in the files? In the files their saying there were some riots.

G: I think "riot" is carrying it a little too far.

L: Do you think that's what the reports were talking about though?

G: Undoubtedly. They were noise making, raucous and so forth, but I've seen riots and I wouldn't compare what we had.. Now later on, after I left, I understand things kept building up. These were demonstrations. The point I was getting at was the Palestinians around my sister tried to protect her from seeing these things. They didn't want her to see these things.

L: They didn't want her to see them because they didn't want her to get the wrong impression?

G: That's right.

L: Can I ask you a few questions about your work as transport officer? First of all, I read that you were set up in a house that was lent by a major oil company.

G: That's right.

L: There are some things in the files that say the staff of this oil company were sometimes a pain in the neck.

G: That's true! And just about when I got there we built our own garage and got out of it. We were not completely moved out when I got there. Some of the first things I did was supervise moving the rest of our stuff out of the IPC warehouse. I didn't have the problems. Doug told me of some of the problems prior to my getting there but I didn't have…

L: So you didn't have to deal with them at all?

G: I had no problems. I did deal somewhat with the IPC people later on, during the time I was there. Basically, they had pulled out of Gaza and it was just a maintenance crew still there.

L: Were they Arabs? Palestinians?

G: Originally they were English. IPC, Iraq Petroleum Company was controlled by England. Royal Dutch Shell also had a finger in the pie and I don't know the relationship. We got our petroleum products, gasoline for our trucks, through shell. The Terrozzi family who were native Gaza people had this concession from Shell for the Strip and that's where we got our oil and gas both.

L: Your drivers, did you hire the drivers?

G: Yes.

L: What were the qualifications to be a driver?

G: The qualifications to be a driver (chuckles) were number one that they brought me some kind of certificates -- these were to be very important -- from previous employers, notably the British army. Mostly all of the drivers and mechanics we hired were Palestinians that had worked for the British during the mandate, the British mandate. This was a major difference, by the way, from my experience in Poland. There were reasonably expert drivers and mechanics who knew their business which, in Poland, didn't exist. There was one during the whole time I was in Poland that I considered a good truck driver and mechanic that I ran into during the two years I was there. So it was a major difference in the work. I always had more applications than I could make use of.

L: I had seen something that said all new drivers have to be cleared with Geiger so I figured that…

G: We had problems. The clannishness of the refugees -- this is typical of all Arab ventures that I've had any experience with -- each family, meaning clan, tried to get their people on as drivers. Work was difficult to find. Any kind of remunerative work was hard to find. We weren't paying anything to speak of, but still it was paid work so it was very much in demand. One of the hardest things to do is to tell a man no who comes to you crying that he has no means of support.

L: Did you ever get references from the Egyptians?

G: I think occasionally among their certificates we did get references from the Egyptians. We got references from the Palestine police force. There was a Gaza, Palestine police force and we got references from them occasionally. Mostly I hired people who were recommended to me by other drivers and mechanics. Our head mechanic, who I inherited from Doug Kernog, and who was with me for the first six months that I was there, I guess had been taking gasoline and reselling it, things like that, more than I knew. An Arab that worked in the office, Souki Hashua who was assistant to Paul Johnson and Al Holtz, came to me and told me in no uncertain terms that he was. My only problem with the whole incident, which resulted in my firing the head mechanic, was that they were two rival families. Souki Hashua was a different family from __________ and so I am not to this day dead sure that the firing was justified. That's one of the memories of work.

L: There were also accusations before you got there that the Quakers were favoring the hiring of Christians as opposed to…

G: This was a recurrent thing and I tried -- I had a percentage in my head which was based on the percentage of the population of the strip. I don't remember it now -- but I had that in the back of my mind and I tried to keep the percentage.

L: You had affirmative action goals! (laughter)

G: That's right! It wasn't called that back then, but I had that. I had a few Christian drivers. They were mostly Greek Orthodox. There was a small Roman Catholic group but a much larger Greek Orthodox group in Gaza. So I made an effort to keep a percentage wise in that. It was not something that I held to absolute, but approximately. This was a recurrent thing,

the Moslems claiming we were partial to the Christians and the Christians claimed we were partial to the Moslems.

L: Do you think that went beyond just the giving of jobs? Do you think that went beyond into the relief operation itself?

G: I never heard it personally in regard to anything but the jobs. It may have been, very likely was, but…

L: And your mechanics came from the same place, recruited the same way?

G: Yes. One thing I had difficulty with and I don't know that it shows up in any of the minutes.. My head mechanic, this one I inherited from Doug Kernog, was a Gaza resident and not a refugee. Our stated effort was to hire refugees rather than Gaza residents. But he was a very able person, had contacts and knew.. Well, to give you an example: We didn't have bearings for cheap engines. All gasoline engines nowadays are built with a bearing shell which is a smooth piece of metal or something of that nature which you can replace between the steel connecting rod or whatever it is and the crank shaft. We were unable to get them. We had to use bored ______ bearings. This is quite a process where you have to line bore the whole engine block after you fill it with melted ________. If you have the equipment it's fine. There was a place in Gaza that did that and we had it done in Gaza. But this came through ______. I didn't know about this thing, but we did a lot of them that way and it worked satisfactorily. So he had the entree to things that I didn't have and was very important to me, particularly… There were several others of my mechanics that were his family that I again inherited from Doug. I'm not criticizing Doug in this in any way, shape or form. Doug did a marvelous job in setting up the whole system. I can't say that too much. But he created problems in that we were hiring Gaza residents. In retrospect I don't feel as badly about it as I did at the time. In many ways a lot of the Gaza residents were worse off than the refugees in that we were feeding the refugees, we were furnishing them with blankets and tents and clothing and so forth, and we weren't supposed to be doing it for the others.

L: Although I understand that the operations set up a village.

G: Yeah, right.

L: In the Poland operation you were transporting materials for rebuilding…

G: That's right. We also transported the building materials for three of Dave Richies' workcamps in Poland, '47, '48 and Christmas of '48. We didn't get one going in '49. Our group swapped personnel. This whole operation in Poland was a joint Friends Service Council and AFSC operation, so we swapped personnel around and among these groups and weren't tied entirely. My field was transport and that is what I mostly did, but we worked with the other groups on occasion. Some of our members swapped with them.

L: What would you say about the relationship between the refugees and the unit as a whole? What would you say characterized that relations between the refugees and the AFSC staff?

G: I think it was remarkably good. There were many instances where misunderstandings developed, but considering the stress that the agency personnel were under, the refugees were under, I think it was spectacularly good. In thinking of it as objectively as I can, I think it's remarkable that there wasn't much more difficulty with personnel.

L: Did you speak Arabic?

G: No.

L: How did you get along? Did you have an interpreter in the garage?

G: Most of the people we had hired had worked the British army and knew enough English to get by. There was not the pressure for me to learn Arabic that there was in Poland to learn Polish. In Poland there were very few people who spoke English. We had to sink or swim there.

L: Do you feel that you got to know any of the local people very well?

G: Yes. I can't claim to have been very close to any of them but I was accepted into their homes, invited to meals with them repeatedly. One of them took me out on a fishing boat. He was a fisherman that I got acquainted with and he took me out on his fishing boat. I think all of us who were there were under enough stress so that we didn't spend as much time developing these friendships as we should have.

L: I read a report from a woman who said that she had started socializing some and that it was just emotionally too draining. She had to maintain an air of aloofness so that she didn't feel like she was insulting them when she had to say, "I worked 16 hours today, I have to go to bed."

G: Yes. I didn't know it when I got there, but when my sister Clarissa came late in the fall of '49 she took over an English nurse's position and this other one went home. She worked

with a Syrian doctor who was in the Strip. Clarissa was warned by some of the people who'd been in the Strip longer that it wasn't expected for Quaker girls to go out by themselves with local men of any kind. They were supposed to take somebody along as a chaperone. Clarissa very quickly developed a rapport with this Syrian doctor and various others that she worked with from the hospital. She ignored the rule and she told me repeatedly that the Palestinians knew of this unwritten rule that the Quaker ladies were not supposed to go out by themselves and they appreciated it very much, they appreciated Clarissa breaking the rules. Nothing ever happened untoward that I know of. I'm sure I would have known if anything had. So.. that much I do know. We socialized considerably with them. One old Bedouin sheik, any time anyone wanted to he would provide donkeys and camels and horses, and provide a picnic at the end of the road. His tribe lived out on the beach about five miles over the sand dunes to get to these headquarters. He would provide camels, horses, donkeys to ride for anybody that wanted to go out there. You'd sit down on the ground and have a pile of goat meat and rice, so forth, in the middle, which we were supposed to eat with your right hand and no utensils. It was a very pleasant relationship as far as I was concerned.

L: What about other types of recreation?

G: Going to the beach in the evenings was my main relaxation. Practically speaking, there was no other. We did occasionally get together as a group for singing or..

L: Did you happen to go to the Halloween party in house three? (laughter)

G: Yes, I was involved with the Halloween party.

L: Were local people or refugees invited to that or was it strictly a staff function?

G: It was a staff function as far as I remember. Whether Souki Hashua and some of the cooks were there I really don't remember. If they were they didn't take any very great part.

L: Sort of a curious holiday I'm sure. (laughter)

G: I always remember Dena Lowe and Iris Hort, two English ladies, old maids who were with us. Iris Hort was about six feet tall and Dena Lowe was about 5 foot 2. They came together and they always roomed together. They came to the Halloween party just exactly as they were, as spinsters. It brought down the house. (laughter)

L: Did you dress up for that one?

G: I've forgotten what I did at that one. I made up something or other but I don't remember.

L: I also heard that one of the movie distributors had every once in a while donated films for you to watch. Do you remember being able to watch any MGM studios or something like this?

G: I don't remember that. I don't remember that at all. I went to the local movie house, the Gaza cinema occasionally, but I don't remember the movies.

L: Were you able to take a leave?

G: Yes, very briefly. The first leave that I took I don't know that my vacation time was docked for it. I went to Bethlehem for Christmas of '49. The Scandinavian World Health organization group -- this was Norwegian and Danes and Swedes and Fins -- all got together at Bethlehem. They rented a hotel just south of Bethlehem. The group that I had escorted down from Beirut earlier asked if I would escort them through Israel again -- this was another crossing through Israel -- to Bethlehem and spend Christmas with them, which I did.

L: What a great trip for Christmas!

G: Oh it was a delightful trip! Interestingly enough I met a girl there that I had known. She had worked in Poland for the Danish Red Cross.

L: Someone you knew previously then?

G: Yes. Neither of us knew the other was there, but she was among the group. She was working in Jordan at the time. That was the only.. One other leave I took within a month before I left. My sister and I went up to Beirut, Damascus for a few days. Those were the only two leaves that I took. I wasn't tied to the Strip as the others were. I did much more traveling than I guess anybody except the director, and maybe more than he did. I went to Cairo quite frequently for parts or one thing or another. I went to Beirut repeatedly. I went to Jerusalem.

L: `Did you make it up to Acre at all?

G: Yes, I drove through Acre, but I didn't ever stop at the unit there more than just stop and go through. One of the things I'd planned to do was go and spend a few weeks in an Israeli kibbutz to see what it was like. My roommate for the last while at Gaza was Evan Jones, a Jamaican. I don't believe you are familiar with him, but he did that for a week or two after leaving Gaza. But I didn't get around to it. That was one of the things I didn't do.

L: Sounds like you did a lot of other things instead. About the transition period from January through March. The files at that point indicate that staff morale was particularly low, that

there were a lot of personal... not necessarily problems, but people were starting to feel unhappy about the situation.

G: You must remember, number one, that winter in Gaza is cold and raw. The houses, even these oil company houses, were not heated. So it was.. I've forgotten how many pneumonia cases.. Russ Rosene here, and I know my sister nursed herself through pneumonia. There were several of them. Bessie Colson also had pneumonia there. She was a nurse and I'm quite sure she had pneumonia. I think there were several others. I think people didn't come prepared. I guess the problem started in Philadelphia. Philadelphia didn't have a picture of what the climate was there. It's wet and cold in the winter and then starting about March you don't see any more rain until the following November. Of course, during that time it can get plenty hot. That's what people thought about. I don't think most of them were prepared for it. I was probably better prepared having come from Poland where the winters got down to 40 below.

L: So when you say Philadelphia wasn't aware of it, are you saying that Philadelphia should have had more orientation for people to prepare them, or that Philadelphia was insensitive to what was going on or.. Those are some of the things that were being said.

G: Certainly more orientation. In this type of thing the unit was built up so fast that I don't think there was time really. And I don't think anybody knew what they were going to face. I'm sure I didn't. I don't believe that anybody really had a grasp, a picture of what they were going to face, so I wouldn't criticize. But I know that this cold, damp winter coming on top of most of the year for some of them.. a whole year there -- for me it was about seven months -- was a discouraging time. Then on top of that, about the beginning of March, we had hurricane force winds, we had snow.

L: Is that typical?

G: No, it's not. I think there'd not been a snow in Gaza for 70 years or something like that. But we had three or four inches of snow on the ground. I wasn't there. I was in Beirut. So it blew the tents down. All this sort of built up. I can't pinpoint one thing to put my finger on and say this was the cause of it. You're right. Morale did get low. Morale with the refugees got low at the same time. To point your finger and say somebody was responsible for it, no, I couldn't do that. I think it was remarkable that we got 60 odd people there to work as harmoniously as we did considering everybody was to get to Gaza as quick as you can.

Course, I went to Poland in a very similar fashion. Most people spent a minimum of a month at Pendle Hill and maybe six weeks getting ready to go.

L: What do you think it was that made it work, that made the whole thing come off?

G: I think the drastic need that was there and the fact that the Service Committee picked some fairly unusual people to send down there, people with commitment. Whatever their lack of knowledge was of what they were facing, they had this driving commitment that they wanted to make things better and wanted to see that things got better. As you say, the transition period.. I think serious talk -- and you know better about the dates than I do -- my impression was that the serious talk about bringing the UN in and so forth started about the first of the year. I know Paul was off on conferences and he'd come back and say that somebody was planning to take over the work. This Kean that..

L: James Kean?

G: Yes. He came to me and offered me the job of transport for $7500 a year with complete maintenance and so forth. You have to remember that back then this was quite good wages. Number one, it would be tax free in the United States. UN salaries were tax free. This all ties in with this transition period: I felt very strongly that I didn't want to work there for high wages -- it was high wages in my book at the time -- when we were hiring Palestinians for 2 1/2 Egyptian pounds, Palestinian pounds a month.

L: So the UN then was only offering these kinds of wages to the expatriate staff? They weren't offering the same deals to the local staff you had hired?

G: At that time this was correct and this was one of the arguing points. It gradually got changed. I think Souki Hashua, this Palestinian... I think I may be wrong. He may not have been a refugee. I think he was a Gaza resident but I may be wrong on that. I think he did get a job. Joseph Kashadurian who is here, he later on got a good job. But at that time it was mostly the expatriates like us who'd been sitting in. I think Kean was afraid that if he started hiring refugees he'd have a big payroll on his hands that he didn't know how to handle. This was my impression from these conversations.

L: Were you in on any of the discussions about whether or not the UN should be actually taking over the operations? For a while there there was question as to whether or not the AFSC was going to continue.

G: Yes, we were all involved more or less in it. Certainly I was involved with it. I very much remember sitting on the hood of a jeep with Paul Johnson, and this was not a group discussion, this was a one on one discussion of the problems. It was a trying time, no question about it. We had a series of border incidents during this winter period also. The refugees were getting restless. They came into the Strip with some kind of savings, most of them, and that had been used up long since and they were getting restless so they'd start crossing the border, sneaking through at night.

L: For the purpose of...

G: Visiting their old place, see what was going on. It might be going to Jerusalem to trade. This was done. The Bedouin sheiks had men Fridays that did their bidding, you know. I'll give you one example that I remember quite vividly. When my roommate Evan Jones had told everybody he was leaving he was in charge of the largest Bedouin food distribution at Rafa. The sheik of the largest tribe that he was involved with, when Evan told him that he was leaving, in Evan's presence he called his man Friday to him and said, "I want you to go to Damascus." Now remember, they're in this Strip with the Egyptian army on this side and the Israeli army on that side. But anyway he tells this man in Evan's presence, "I want you to go to Damascus and get a robe." He described it and it had to have gold facing on it and so forth. "I want it back here by next Wednesday." This was probably a week off, or less than a week off. The man was back with the robe and he'd been to Damascus. This meant that he had to have been...

L: Where were they getting the resources?

G: The sheiks had resources still. Where they got them is a good question. They were trading. Their herds were crossing these borders in spite of everything, particularly the southern one into the Sinai. The borders were crossed. How they did it I don't know, I really don't know. It's always been a mystery to me, but there was no problem about a man that knew his way around doing it.

L: So you decided that you, philosophically, just couldn't go on with the UN and you left?

G: No, I had not intended leaving when I left. I intended to stay on a few weeks more. When I fired my head mechanic in January, Sam Wriggle who was a Quaker preacher from Indiana had come to Gaza and was assigned to me to help me. I was being sent not only on strictly transport business, but I was being sent... Ernest Morgan who is here, the oldest man here,

was ready to leave and the airstrip was too wet so I was, with due authorization from Israel, delegated to drive him and Evan Jones and Ruth Morgan -- I think all three were leaving at the same time -- to Jerusalem. I was more and more being sent on these things that weren't strictly involved with running transport.

L: Starting to feel like a cab driver? (chuckles)

G: Yeah, Yeah! Paul Johnson or may have been Charles Reed was there at the time and decided I needed an assistant in the garage and assigned Sam Wriggle to work in the garage. So I was considerably freer at that point to go on these odd errands that came up. That was one of the reasons that I was out of Gaza a considerable amount of the time. I had to go to Cairo quite frequently to get odd ball parts. Old Kelly and Betty Peckham did wonders supplying us, but with our great assortment... I should make this clear. We had this assortment of vehicles, American, Canadian, French and German vehicles, and none of them or very few of them were anywhere near new. Most of them had seen a lot of work so we were always in need of parts. Some of them we got easily and some we didn't.

L: The accounts of keeping the trucks in shape are just... what a job! A couple of times, I think it was in November, Charles was writing to Bronson Clark and said, "Elwood is having a dreadful time trying to hold things together. I really believe we can't go into the winter without adequate transport." It sounds pretty bad.

G: (laughs) Yeah.

L: Well, is there anything that you can think of that I might have missed concerning your work in Gaza that you'd like to put on the tape?

G: No, I think we've covered the waterfront fairly well. I did leave, as I said, a little earlier than I intended when Sam Wriggle was there..

L: Oh! You were going to tell me a story about you and Paul on the truck.

G: I think it was right after Paul came we had this trip to Jerusalem for DDT for the League of Red Cross Societies at Ramallah. We got the proper authorization and drove through. We were delayed and didn't get the authorization until later on in the day and it was just good for that day and the next day or something or other. WE went on and got to the Mandlebaum gate, which was the crossing point going into Arab Jerusalem at that time. We got to the Israeli borders there about 5:00 or something, an hour ahead. At 6:00 the gate closed and nobody was supposed to transit after that. Anyway, the Israelis found some

excuse to hold us up there and let us through finally, but it was just after 6:00 by the time we got to the Arab legions post across no man's land. First they said we had to wait there until 8:00 in the morning in no man's land. But we argued and talked and argued and talked. Finally at about 9:00 that evening they let us through. We spent the night at the Ramallah Boys Schools and unloaded our trucks the next day. None of the ones that were there with us, Paul Johnson and the Swiss man and Richard Smith, had been to Jerusalem before and I had been there. We stopped at the Damascus gate. There was a parking area at that time out in front of the Damascus gate and we parked our trucks there, walked into the gate, and climbed up to the top of the Damascus gate which gives a good view over the old city. We got to the top and it was filthy. The climb up there stairs was filthy and so forth and when we got to the top Paul Johnson sort of made a sigh and looked out across the town and said, "So this is what people have been fighting for for 3000 years." (laughter) I've always remembered that.

L: Okay. Well, I really appreciate your taking the time to do this interview with me.

G: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

AFSC Oral History Interview #608
Narrator: MARSHALL SUTTON (S)
Interviewer: Joan Lowe (L)
September 21, 1992

L: This is Joan Lowe and it's September 21st. I'm conducting this interview for the American Friends Service Committee Oral History Project, and I'm interviewing Marshall Sutton on his work with the refugees in Gaza in 1949.

Marshall, could you give your full name, place and date of birth?

S: Yes, Marshall Ostrander Sutton. Born August 29th, 1918 in Clintondale, New York.

L: What kind of town was Clintondale?

S: Clintondale is in a farming area in Ulster County, in the Hudson Valley, in New York State. I grew up on a fruit farm. My father grew fruit for the New York City market.

L: Did you have any peers in the area?

S: No, the only child.

L: And no friends?

S: Yes, we had very close neighbors and were close to other members of our family. I went to a rural school, two room school house. But at 13 Mother and Dad sent me to a Quaker school. I went to a Quaker boarding school at 13, not too far away, in Poughkeepsie, New York. Oakwood School.

L: Did you father serve in the First World War?

S: No he didn't. Mother and Dad were Friends. We belonged to the Quaker Meeting which was a programmed Meeting in Clintondale. I don't know why my father was not involved in war. That's something that has missed me. I don't know that I ever asked him. I may have been on the way or he may have been working the farm.

L: You were born in 1918, so it's possible that he already had an exemption at that point.

S: Could be.

L: When the Depression hit did that effect your family at all?

S: Oh it did, yes it did. Not as bad as some others. The farming community still went on, it kept on in the business. There was a fruit growers cooperative. Dad had training in accounting and he worked as an accountant in the cooperative during that period and I know I had a partial scholarship at Oakwood. He was in local politics too. He had various things he did.

L: Did you mom have an occupation outside of the farm?

S: No she didn't. She was a homemaker. She worked in a dental office for a while before they were married.

L: What would you say were the major influences in your teenage years?

S: Very clearly a major influence was the Quaker boarding school experience. The friendships I made there and the size of the school was such that I knew the teachers well. It was oriented towards Friends. I was in touch with Friends, young people my own age, in the New York City metropolitan area. I was agile, good in sports. That took me around quite a bit.

L: You were on a travel team?

S: Yes. I was in the major sports. I played football, basketball and baseball. In baseball I was pretty good at it and played in the summer too with some teams.

L: Was there anybody in high school that particularly stood out? A teacher or someone?

S: Yes, oh yes. There were two or three. Henry Nays, a mathematics teacher, was single and lived across the hall from me in the boys dormitory. I'm sure my grades in math were a little better because of that. The principle, William J. Reagan, in English. Curtis Newland in history. I think Curtis influenced me to like history and I majored in history in college. I was well prepared when I got to college. I noticed in the freshman year I was ready to do things.

L: Where did you go to school?

S: I went to Colgate University and majored in history, I liked English history.

L: So we're just about at the war years. Do you recall when things were happening in Europe, before the States got involved? Do you recall if there were any conversations among your friends or family about the war?

S: No amongst the family, no. I graduated from Colgate in '40. Kenneth Boulding, a well known Quaker economist, was teaching at Colgate and there was a little group of us that met in a Quaker Meeting there. Kenneth got us involved, some of the students, in a little workcamp there in the town. I took a course in dictatorships. I was aware of Mussolini and Hitler and the governments and what was happening in Europe at the time. I was so involved in sports and the life of the college that it didn't.. what was really happening in Europe was penetrating too much. After I graduated I'd had such a good experience at

Oakwood School, as I've just drawn, that the principle there when I graduated asked me to come and teach. I graduated in June and in September I went to Oakwood as an intern teacher and as an assistant dean in the dormitory. It was there that the news came, getting involved, that the draft was coming up.

L: And you were right in the heart of a Friends community.

S: Yeah, that's right. That's right. My father was not sympathetic with the way my thinking was beginning to go.

L: Is that right?

S: Not too much. I wasn't aware of it at the very beginning, I discovered it later. Mother always was very supportive. I knew my father loved me, but being in local business, all the young men were volunteering and doing various things like that. I considered whether... "Am I really a pacifist or am I doing this because I want to avoid getting involved in the war?" It was then that I really began, for the first time, to -- although I've been subjected to Quaker writings and the Bible and so on -- it was then that I began to read the New Testament seriously. I read Woolman's journal particularly, I remember, and began to think about these things and talk about these things at the school while I was teaching there that year. I finally came out with the decision to be a CO.

L: Did you get a draft notice?

S: I had a draft notice and the draft board was in New Pauls, New York. Because of the Quakers that lived in the area there it was never contested. I had no problems getting a CO status. I was assigned to the Ashburnham CPS camp up in northern Massachusetts.

L: Did you meet any Service Committee people up there?

S: Yes... Roger... what was his last name? He was not connected closely with the Service Committee but he was, as I recall, a very devout person and he had a personal religious practice every day. I remember it was important to relate to him, and there were others in the camp. I went there in September and when winter came I was very cold. We were dealing with working in the woods, with hurricane timber that was down. Having grown up on a farm I was able to fit into that work easily, handling an ax and a saw. I drove the truck and headed up the crew. I was the crew "whatever" there doing wood. We'd pile up cords of wood and burn brush and things like that. It was very cold. We lived in this CCC barracks. At that age, young 20s, it was an adventure.

L: Did you stay there then?

S: I was there one year. I was just the right age, I guess. I got four years of it. I was at Ashburnham about a year, a little less. I don't remember the dates exactly. Then the opportunity came to go somewhere and I went to Coleville, California. It was supposedly fire fighting out there but we were in vary small camps around Coleville in the national forest there. I volunteered for Wellington, Nevada which was attached to a ranger there. The project was not part of the mountains, but sheep herding and the Basque people were there with large flocks of sheep up in the mountains, up in 1800 to 2000.

L: People are always amazed to hear that there's a Basque community in the United States.

S: Yes! There were eight or ten of us there in that unit in Wellington, Nevada. We had a ton and a half truck and a tent, and the ranger assigned a man to us who had all kinds of skills in carpentry and masonry and so on. We went up in the hills and developed watering places for these sheep. The Basque people would bring the sheep in every day to get water for them, to drink water. Otherwise they would just have to get it in little rivulets and small things all over the hills. But the forest service provided this. We constructed a concrete thought 66 feet long near a spring and piped the water into that so there was always water flowing in and out of it. But it would keep us in that particular location for two or three weeks and we camped there.

L: Have you ever gone back to see if any...

S: Yes, I've gone back. Our son is out on the west coast. Last fall we drove out. We had a new car and decided this was the time to go. We drove out and I wanted to show Virginia, my wife, where I was in Nevada. Fortunately we met a large flock of sheep and there was a herder there with sheep dogs and they were doing things with the dogs, having them go into a certain gate to get in to do something with them. It was fascinating. I went back twice because it was on the way to San Francisco. But I would have made a special trip. It was an important experience. CPS was a positive thing for me. For some men it wasn't. Some left. My whole life was opening up and it was... I felt a deepening going on and I became more aware of my own spiritual nurture and so on. It was a positive thing.

From there I volunteered for smoke jumpers but the smoke jumper unit was full and I ended up in New Lisbon, New Jersey at an institution for mentally handicapped.

L: Were you there with Elwood Geiger?

S: Where did I meet him? I've forgotten where I met Elwood. Elwood was not there at that unit in New Lisbon, no. But it was at New Lisbon where I met Virginia. Ginny, my wife, was working. She was in the personnel office with Charles Reed, at the Service Committee office in Philadelphia. It was then, in New Lisbon, that I began to get acquainted with the Service Committee in Philadelphia. Ginny lived down there and I went down to see her there.

At New Lisbon, that was the most trying experience. I was coordinator of that unit there. It was my job to see the superintendent every week and he was not very sympathetic to Cos. He wanted us there. We were doing a valuable piece of work which he appreciated, but he didn't otherwise want much to do with us. His son was in the South Pacific flying an airplane. I remember waiting outside his door for hours for him to see me. He spent a long time opening his mail. I could see him in there and I'd be waiting to see him about our assignments at the institution and so on. I worked in the dairy barn. I was a barber, learned to barber. It was there that an opportunity came to volunteer for the semi-starvation experiment at the University of Minnesota. Two of us from that unit went, Sam Legg and myself. We drove out in his Packard car. You don't have Packard cars any more.

It was a good experience, CPS. There were some things that happened then. I'd written letters to my hometown newspaper about conscription, about the war, about what I was doing. Because I came from a small community and was well know, and my father was well known, he was upset with that. I remember him calling me up and saying, "I love you, but don't do that any more." So my relationship with my dad was always very strained, but before he died we had a wonderful reconciliation.

L: After the CPS camp then what did you do?

S: Well, the same principle was at Oakwood School and he invited me back to Oakwood. After the four years in CPS I went back. Ginny and I were married and we moved the summer before. The July before we were married in ______ Meeting. Her home is in ______, New York. We moved into the dormitory there. I had not completely recovered from the semi-starvation. What we found out was that it takes about a year to gain back your stamina. It was a bit of a strain through the first year of marriage and first year of teaching there. It was a little difficult. The school wasn't running.. The principle, William Reagan, was a wonderful man but he felt he could save a lot of souls and he brought kids in who

were having behavior problems in other schools. As I look back upon it, Oakwood must have been having a little difficulty getting students at that time or something. But two years there was about enough for us. The opportunity came to go to Philadelphia. We still had contact with Friends and I went down as.. Let's see, I was Young Friends Fellowship of North America.. The young Quakers across the country were beginning to have conferences and so. There was evidently some money available and right after that experience at Oakwood I had a salary enough to live and I worked at that. We met Jim Reed at the Service Committee.

L: Was that under FWCC?

S: That was under FWCC, yes. I got to know James Walker and Hannah Stapler and Anna Brinton and Howard Brinton. When we were married Anna Brinton sent us a box of Quaker books. Ginny had spent a summer, she may have told you, at Pendle Hill. We really met at Pendle Hill on the tennis court. Being in touch with the people there in Philadelphia we learned about the Gazans and the refugee work. The opportunity came to go to Gaza. Ginny was recovering from rheumatic fever. It was a difficult decision for us, but we finally decided. Looking back on it I'm so glad that I did go.

L: Did you have children at this time?

S: No. We had tried to have children and we couldn't. We had even explored adopting. It was just right to volunteer for Gaza. It turned out wonderful because Ginny was able to come later and then we traveled in England with some Young Friends groups around England. We came back and Ginny's mother was very ill and we decided to move into her home and she took care of her mother and I went to graduate school in New York. We were there a couple of years. Lisa, my daughter was born there. Ginny worked up at Mary Knoll, a Catholic seminary. Then I got my masters and matriculated for a doctorate there. I was all over the place. I was not focused academically and I could see my future wasn't in the academic world, even though I'd proved to myself I could do it. I passed the matriculation with good marks and so on, but... When I knew about an opportunity in Baltimore to be Executive Secretary of the Yearly Meeting and Monthly Meeting I contacted Friends in Baltimore and ended up being the Executive Secretary of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. We moved down there in '52.

L: And that's sort of where Virginia's interview picks up.

I want to start into the Gaza work now. Who did the invitation to go to Gaza come from? DO you recall how you were recruited to do that?

S: You know, I don't recall exactly. I was in the milieu around the Service Committee office. Charles Reed may have been involved. The former president of Wilmington College, Jim Reed. Then the gal that was _______ secretary, Jensen. Elizabeth Jensen. I think it may have been Elizabeth. We were ready, I think, to assess what we were going to do. I was not in a long term situation. The thing that motivated me was that having been in the semi-starvation experiment, being involved in distributing food was something that rang a bell with me.

L: Did they give you an orientation to the area? Did they give you any kind of idea of what you were going to do?

S: No. Nothing.

L: No Arabic?

S: No Arabic.

L: How did you end up going over? On a plane?

S: I went over with Ray Hansall on a TWA plane. We left La Guardia field on the 24th or 25th of January. There was just a handful of people in Gaza at the time. I think Kellogg Peckham was in Cairo. Elmore Benton. Al Holtz was out in Gaza. We landed in Cairo and I stayed at the American University. I knew the ________ in Cairo at the American University. I remember the first experience on getting on that train and they would not sell us a ticket to Gaza. They'd only give us a ticket on the train saying we could go as far as Contara. We were so naive. We thought that was all right. We'd take the ticket to Contara and we'd get out there somehow. We got on the train and that's what happened. We met an Egyptian captain on the train who was very friendly, spoke English, and was very sympathetic to what we were doing. We had all these papers and we showed him. He said, "No problem. I'm going to Gaza on a military thing. No problem." And we just went on into Gaza.

L: So you went in on the military train?

S: It was a military train, yes.

L: Did you change in Contarra then?

S: I don't remember changing trains. I think it was the same train that went right on through.

L: What were your impressions when you got off the train and looked around?

S: Well there was nothing. I remember jumping out and it was a big step down. There was no platform or anything and we just stepped down into the sand with our duffel. We knew Al was there and some others. We had no way of.. He didn't know when we were coming. He knew we were coming but I'm sure he didn't know when. He wasn't there to greet us or meet us. He may have been involved with something else. We were so naive, you know. Someone pointed out a little four by four building with a telephone in it and we were able to go and make a telephone call. I don't know what I did but I got the Quaker house and I'll never forget hearing Al Holtz's voice. He said, "I'll be right down" but before he arrived this jeep came down with some Egyptian officers. They had their revolvers out of their holsters and they wondered who we were. They were ready to deal with us, but as I look back on it we were so obviously so unarmed and confused that they didn't pay too much attention. Shortly afterwards Al came down in a Ford station wagon, right down over the sand.

L: You arrived during the day?

S: It was evening, getting dark.

L: So you didn't have an opportunity to go right out and look around at the camps. Emmett Gully was there. We had seen Clarence Pickett. Clarence and Lilly Pickett were in Cairo. It was at the very beginning stages and there were discussions as to how to begin the distributions. As I recall -- I don't remember any distributions taking place when I arrived. It was a period of getting organized. There was a general tendency among us, since we were all knew and had never done this before, and the hugeness and bigness of the project, that we and Emmett and all and Elden Mills who was there, how to do this, how to go at it. How to get lists, how to know who you were distributing too. We were aware there wasn't enough food really. As it turned out we were distributing 1500 calories a day to a person, which is not enough. It was raining and cold in January. People were cold. They didn't have shelter. The immensity of the problem was boggling. It mired us down a little in how to approach this. We all seemed to have ideas and we didn't have enough information. Emmett was the type of leader that he wasn't strongly aggressive in telling us what to do or assigning us or anything. We were in that kind of state. Ray Hartzell and I, our first assignment was to fix the plumbing in the house where we were living. There was no water and no electricity.

Wind blowing through with no windows. We were dealing with our living conditions there. I don't remember the meals. I think Al Holtz and Adele must have been operating it at that time. The key here was, the thing I want to say is, Clarence Pickett came. I don't know how he got there but he was there. As I look back upon it, what a meeting we had. When he came we continued these discussions.

L: This was in January?

S: Yes. It came to us with his presence there. He said, "It's important to begin. We don't have to have all the answers. It's important for the people here to know we're doing it and to get started." Evidently the contacts had been made with the Egyptian army and all of that. We had these arm bands that said "Quaker" and it was known by the Gaza community. But there were refugees spread out, you see, all along this strip. The second day I was there I was in a truck with Walter Johnson loaded with blankets headed towards.. Emmett sent us down to Khan Yunis where there were a lot of refugees. We just stopped the truck there in an open area and had an interpreter. There were people milling all about.

L: Did they descend upon the truck?

S: Yes. A big crowd around the truck. The interpreter was very good and he told them who we were. The interpreter was aware of where the refugees were from, which villages. "Refugees from Jaffa", he said, "Please identify yourselves" or go to a certain place or so on.

L: Was that something that you had planned to do to begin with or was that something the interpreter took upon himself?

S: No. We had talked about it in general, yes. We were aware of people coming from these various villages and we were aware that the way to go about it was to distribute to the head of family and not to every person in the family. That was basically what it was. We were aware that we had no census to go by, no names, no registration. We were just meeting people there who needed blankets and who needed food and the important thing was to get it out to them and not be too worried about how it was done. It worked. We asked people from Jaffa to come, the head of family, and they came. Walter and I stood there and some refugees volunteered and the blankets just began to move out. Then another village was called. There was a lot of confusion and refugees wondered, "Who are the Quakers?" The interpreter was telling us some of what they were saying. They were saying, "Who are the Quakers?"

L: Do you think they were suspicious?

S: They were, yes. Yes. But it was obvious we didn't have uniforms. We weren't armed or anything. There was no identification except this band that said "Quaker" on it. We made a point of saying, "We'll be back with another load tomorrow." Our interpreter overheard a group discussing whether we would be back tomorrow and whether there was enough blankets. Maybe they should try to get some of the blankets by force because they weren't sure whether we would be back and they needed blankets so badly. The interpreter was indicating that there was not too much...

L: What was that like for you?

S: The thing that carried us through was that we were naive and had a lot of energy, I guess. It was so exciting to be there. We were so aware of the need. I think a little semi-starvation.. I could see the symptoms of what people are like when they don't have enough food. So it was a serious business. We were very clear as to that we would be back. I remember worrying. I had a lot of apprehension about whether I'd be able to get. Whether there were going to be enough blankets to come back because there were blankets being distributed in Gaza and other places. We did get back the next day.

L: Were you particularly assigned to Khan Yunis?

S: Well, I'm not sure if that first day that we went down I had the assignment there. I don't remember exactly, but in the course of the next few days it was obvious that Walter and I were assigned to Khan Yunis and we distributed blankets there. The next step was we were given a couple of tents for a distribution center.

L: Were you involved at all in cleaning up the camps?

S: Cleaning up the refugee camps?

L: Yes.

S: No, strictly distributing food and dealing with the problems of distributing food. Dealing with the problems of getting food to everyone in a fair manner and not giving more the one family when they may not have had as many children as they said they had. We had to take their statement at face value being aware that it wasn't always accurate. There was a deep concern among us to do a fair distribution. You just could come and give out the food and you'd be accomplishing something, just to give out food. But being aware that there was not

enough food and aware of how many refugees we were dealing with, we were concerned to do it accurately and conscientiously.

L: Were you there for the first ration cuts?

S: Yes. I was involved in ration cuts myself.

L: How did you go about doing that?

S: As we went along with the distribution.. Khan Yunis was a place where there were many Bedouins coming and people from Gaza. It became clear that we should have a distribution for Bedouins and town people, local people around the town of Khan Yunis who were different from the Bedouins who were nomadic. These distributions were all one for a while, but then we separated these. I began to deal with..

L: The UN didn't have anything to say about feeding local people?

S: No, we had no direction from the UN. At my level in distribution I had nothing to do with the UN. I'm sure they did in Gaza. It was such intensive work and we were so involved in the work that my focus was on Gaza. Charlie and I were so involved that we didn't even get to know, well, other people in the unit. We were getting up early and going down there, coming home tired and eating supper, then having a meeting and going to bed. I was involved with the Bedouin sheiks. We were aware that when people are hungry they will get as much food as they can. They will protect their families. We were aware that the sheiks had some dictatorial control over people and those distributions, even though various Bedouins would be picking it up, the sheik was in control. So I met with the sheiks and we were constantly explaining that there's only so much food. If you take food that you're not supposed to have you're taking it from someone else, you're not taking it from us. They became aware, gradually, week by week, that we were not making money off the food. We were not paid. We didn't have uniforms. The communication through the experience with people... Our meetings were open in Gaza. We were discussion food distribution and representatives from the refugees were in the meetings.

L: How about your interpreter? Was that a local person or a refugee?

S: Yes. I had two or three interpreters. They would get involved and too wrapped up in the politics of the food distributions and get attached to this community or that community. You became aware that people weren't trusting them too much so I was constantly changing interpreters. I had one, finally, ________ who's head of the peace delegation here in

Washington right now. He's a leading citizen in Gaza, and his brother -- he had two brothers, two doctors -- his brother came down and helped us with the lists, gave us a lot of advice about how the Bedouins operated and lived and so on, and interpreted for us and helped us correct the list. I stopped distribution to Bedouins one day because, I said, "You have to bring in better lists than these." They did. We had a riot at one time. I didn't know until this weekend in talking with Al Holtz. I suspected this but I wasn't sure: The Egyptian army people and so on were not happy with us there. We were coming in with a lot of food and meeting the needs of people and so on, and the army was not in close touch with the refugees and they were a little upset with some of the things we were doing. We were quite close to people there in the population. Al was saying they promoted the riots, some of them.

L: They Egyptian military?

S: Some of the Egyptian personnel. It came out in discussions this weekend of this happening once and I don't know what caused the riot in Khan Yunis. I was told on the spot, when I was there, that it was because one of our clerks had put up one of the wrong lists for distribution that day or something. We never really knew. People were just milling all about. They had side arms, some of them, and they'd shoot them off in the air. Walter and I just got the word out through our interpreters that we were going back to Gaza and when this stopped we would be back.

L: This was a Bedouin disturbance?

S: No, it wasn't centered in the Bedouins. Both camps were involved. We went back the next day and was still not settled down completely. We did not want to depend on the Egyptian army or the Palestinian police to deal with the situation. We just said we'd be back when we were able to continue the distribution. The third day we were able to go on just as though nothing had happened. I had the battery stolen out of my car one day. We had these reconditioned jeeps and as soon as some of the refugee families in the Khan Yunis area heard about the battery being missing, all of a sudden it was returned. It came back. We had invitations to have meals and this came out in our discussion this weekend, how important it was to refuse invitation because they expected a return.

[Tape 1, Side A ends. Side B begins]

L: You were saying how important it was to refuse invitations because if you took the invitation they would expect a return. Did you do any socializing at all?

S: Yes, you did. You sensed when it was appropriate to go to a home or a mukhtars house. We got to know the Abasitta sheik family and went to their home and so on. The Abba sheiks' brother Hussein Abbasita had a western education. He was an engineer and he was very helpful to me. I was never aware whether I was distributing more to the Abbasita family than to other sheiks. I don't know how that worked out, but we did accept some invitations to that family. Virginia went with me on a couple of them.

L: Were able, then, to return that invitation?

S: They were doing this... I don't know. You felt uncomfortable with the number of invitations. You couldn't deal with them all. It became clear not to do too much of that and it became very time consuming. You didn't have the time.

A couple of things happened that were significant that I wanted to record. One is that we had a decision whether.. Tents were not in good supply. We were asked if we would give a tent for the Moslems to worship in. I realized later how important it was to do that, that we gave a tent for the worship. It was an important decision to make. A lot of good feedback from that because the majority of people there were Moslems. I had an interpreter who was a devout Moslem and one of the most important experiences in Gaza was my relationship with him. He asked why we were there. He asked about my religious faith. He introduced me to the Koran and he would bring the Koran to work and I brought the Bible. We had a kind of ecumenical discussion, dialogue, that was so unique. I value that. Many, many times I think of that. He would ask me questions about Quakers and the worship and prayer and all these things. It was a very valuable exchange.

L: That's one of the questions that I wanted to ask you is related to that. First of all, did you feel that you were seen as a Christian presence in the region. "You" meaning you as a group?

S: No, we were seen as a Quaker presence.

L: What does that mean, then, is my next question?

S: We were a Quaker presence and they wanted to know who the Quakers were. They mean by that, how did we come to be? What was our history? Who were we? That was answered. We had a couple of meetings in Gaza in which Emmett Gully and Eldon Mills and several of

us went. I remember Eldon speaking, Emmett speaking to a large group in Gaza responding to this. Then I had these conversations with people. It was important in my own religious maturity and growth at the time that I identify myself. I said, "Yes, I'm a Christian and Quakers interpret their Christianity this way. This is our history. We're not formal. We don't have theology. We don't have programmed meetings. We have beliefs so I suppose we are theological in a way, but we don't have a creed. Our focus is on a living presence. We speak of our Meetings that there can be a presence in a Meeting, and there can be the presence of Christ in a Meeting."

L: One of the reasons that I ask this is because I had heard from some of the letters and from some of the people that there was some suspicion aimed toward camp leaders and toward the administration in Gaza that Quakers were being partial to Christians in their hiring practices. I'm wondering if you ran across any of that?

S: I didn't in hiring. I had this devout Moslem. In fact I was interested in learning.

L: So you didn't get any accusations.

S: In March some of us were rather tired out and I think I was sent to Gaza for some reason. I had a bad tooth and went down to the dentist. Eldon Mills went with me and we went up there. I bought a Koran and started reading it. I was also reading Lawrence of Arabia because I was dealing with the Bedouins. I was having a great time and I was visiting Bedouins in tents and checking. They gave me these lists and I began saying, "Well, where are you?" They'd take me out to where they were living and I'd get some sense in walking around and meeting them, seeing how many there were and so on. You'd get some ideas as to whether the lists were right. At one time I had a staff of 30 people. Our lists were up over 40,000 in Khan Yunis and we knew that was too much.

L: What kinds of things did you do to correct them besides just physically counting them?

S: That's all we could do. Where we sensed it wasn't right we would meet with the mukhtar and we began to sense which mukhtars were trying to be honest and which ones weren't. _________ came down from Gaza to help us out and then when the office staff in Gaza began working at these things hard and getting registration cards. It was a gradual process of correcting these lists. We ended up in Khan Yunis in the low 30.000s in distribution.

L: Oh my gosh. You really did cut back then. You were at a meeting, which I gave you the sheet for, with Colin Bell talking about extending the project. Talking about whether or not

the Quakers should continue with the project. At that meeting there was a considerable amount of discussion concerning whether or not the work that the Gaza project was doing was uniquely Quaker work or whether it could be taken over by just any relief agency. Some were saying, “This is strictly relief. The side things that we’re doing are still relief.” Others were saying, “No, we’re contributing something unique to this area and we should continue.” I think you felt more on that end of it.

S: I felt it was unique in various ways. We were not being paid. We didn’t have uniforms. We were motivated to volunteer for a short period of time. Relief work was not in any way our vocation. We didn’t have long term interests in doing it. Our main concern was to go back to our jobs or whatever armed with our light. I think that added a specific quality. There were enough Quakers in the unit that there was the flavor of the business Meetings, of waiting for decisions, of searching and recording decisions on the spot, of having times of silence. We began to use words like “being centered” and so on. This was a new thing to some members of the unit who were there. I met regularly in the morning with seven or eight others. We met for a time of meditation for about 15 minutes before breakfast, primarily just to sort of center ourselves for the day. A few did that. Then later, two or three months, there was regular Meeting for Worship that was scheduled during the day when more people attended. So there was a Quaker sort of approach to things. We’d have visits from Colin Bell and Howard Wriggens and all these people. There was a Quaker quality in it. It was obvious that that wouldn’t continue.

L: And that carried on into the work itself?

S: Oh yes, yes.

L: Can you think of any concrete examples?

S: The Bedouins began to refer me to... I learned later.. They used a word and I kept hearing this word. I finally said, “What does it mean?” They referred to me as the pious one. (laughter) That was they way the translated it. I think they meant by that that maybe I was trying to be very fair with people. I was sensitive to them. I was impressed by the Moslem faith, really. There’s a quality dimension of obedience in their faith, of being obedient to the leadings of God. I don’t see many Quakers getting down on their knees, but they get down on their knees and touch their forehead to the ground.

L: Most Quakers, at this point, are beyond the age where they can do that. (laughter)

S: There are a lot of young Quakers around here.

L: Are you a Friend?

S: Yes. My little daughter goes down to her knees and I look at her and I say, "How did you do that??" (laughter) I guess what I'm trying to figure out here is if you think that after the Quaker presence was gone from Gaza there were any things that remained, not physical things, not buildings or things like that, but anything that Quaker philosophy contributed to that area which might still be there.

L: I say yes, and the reason I say yes is because some members of our staff stayed on longer in the area, so that was obviously an influence there. The friendships that were built, we were really close to people there and they trusted us. There was an underground that protected us from the Egyptian decisions and so on. At the same time we were friendly with the Egyptians. I was in a tennis tournament with the Egyptian officers. There were three of us, Doctor Peterson and a third person. I played tennis in college a little bit and it was a good way to relate to them. I learned from Al.. Al Holtz is one who knows the inner things about being at the office there in Gaza. He knows some of these nuances and the way the Egyptians were really trying to mess us up.

L: What other kinds of recreation did you take part in aside from tennis.

S: Well, they got these soccer games going.

L: Were you part of the soccer team?

S: No, I wasn't part of the soccer team.

L: I understand they didn't do too well. (laughter)

S: I would go to the games and watch them participate. We sort of became part of the community life in Khan Yunis. There was later a clinic there, we established a clinic and one of our nurses came down to Khan Yunis. There was a school there during the British occupation. When the British were there they had developed some sort of cement block building, a modern looking school building.

L: I'll get back to the schools in a minute because that's something I wanted to find out too. Just in terms of your personal mental relief in the field, was there anything that you were able to do to get away from the center of things?

S: Oh yes, yes. We'd go swimming. When summer came and it got hotter we changed our hours and went to work early, worked past mid-day, and then we had the afternoons off.

Then we could relax a little. It was relaxing to me.. At Khan Yunis they'd say, "Well, a lot of our people are down by the sea." And I'd say, "Well, I'd like to go see them." You'd have to go a mile or a mile and a half over the sand down in, ride a camel or a horse. That was a relief from the intensity of dealing with some of the problems there with distribution.

L: Were you actually involved in taking the complaints? Was that part of your role?

S: Yes. That's what we spent most of the time doing. Widows.. All of the sudden our list of widows.. We were distributing to lots of widows and we began to get suspicious. People are not all widows. They all dressed in black and so on and it became a unit problem, not just a Khan Yunis problem. He became concerned about correcting the list because that was a flagrant violation.

L: What would be the purpose of pretending you were a widow.

S: You would be a mother with children and you weren't getting enough food, so you'd dress up as a widow and say you were a widow and get on another list. You would get a distribution as a widow and you got a distribution as a mother of a family. So you got two distributions. So we had to do something about that. It was very important because it was a signal to all the refugees as to why we were trying to do it. There were more and more refugees, the teachers and better educated ones -- many of the refugees in our area were illiterate -- the more educated ones began to see why we were focusing on fair distribution. So we announced one day that the Quakers had made a special place for widows. I think it was a Nuseirat. They would get special attention there and medical care and so on. Some were older. So we were going to come down with transportation and move all the widows to this new place, and on a certain day this would happen. When the transportation came I think about one quarter of the size of the group showed up ready to go. It wasn't entirely fair. You could see how some people living at Khan Yunis, knowing people there and their friends wouldn't want to move. But we decided that we would do that. You sensed among the refugees that we were not willy nilly forcing corrections upon them. We wanted to be fair with the corrections and they respected the way we were going about it. I was always aware of that. I wasn't the only one doing it. We discussed this in our unit meetings. We were all going about it in the same way and checking with each other at night and all that sort of thing.

L: You had a lot of staff meetings, I guess, late at night.

In the fall you were assigned to education work. I noticed that at one point there were some reports about teachers' strikes that were going on in some of the camps. Do you recall any of that, what that might have been about?

S: I don't recall that when I was there but I didn't start it, you know. ________, an Egyptian who Clarence Pickett and others were in touch with, he somehow knew about Quakers and he was in charge of social welfare work and one of the departments in the Egyptian government. He was interested in getting some of these things started and came up to Gaza speaking Arabic and so on. The program was started but he wasn't, of course, able to be there. I went to Gaza with him and helped him. I remember working out a report that he had on his visit to Gaza. My job was to go around to the various units and touch base with the teachers and their needs. I came up with around 16,000 children in the schools. It was an occasion for distribution of milk. It was an occasion for medical checkups by our medical staff. The schools were an integral part of the whole set up there. The teachers were paid. We paid them a little.

L: Were you aware of the fact that there were private schools cropping up at the same time? Some of the refugee groups were setting up their own schools.

S: No.

L: Didn't know that?

S: No

L: Okay, then I won't ask you about that.

S: No, we had these schools and had milk distributions in them and so on.

L: How about the camp government itself? How did that arrange itself? What were the ways that the refugees governed themselves? Was it strictly Quaker governments?

S: I don't recall.. I was aware of Palestinian policemen in Gaza sort of directing traffic in certain areas. They were around but I never knew who appointed them or whether they were paid, how that happened. There were mukhtars who were responsible for refugees from certain village areas. We were aware of distributing to refugees and not to town people, but I'm sure there were many a gray lines of division there that we may have been unaware of distributing, sometimes, to people in need in the town. I was never a part of any discussions of deliberate distribution to towns and town people. We were invited out to share a meal with people in the town. I remember going in the town. There were craftsmen in the town

making things out of tin and wood. We wanted measures to measure flour and various things that we were distributing so we were dealing with local craftsmen in the town. Our nurses were, I think, more aware of the medical and health needs in the town, and our staff people who were dealing with the sanitation knew about the sanitation of the town. People like David Walker and Vern and others really would be more familiar than myself about how the town government was working.

L: Do you recall any examples where there was an organized attempt to manipulate the Quaker distributions on the part of the refugees, not so much the widow thing you were talking about, but more something that seemed to be like what the Quakers were doing where the Quakers were making that arrangement for all the widows to go over here? Did you ever see any evidence that things were going on among the refugees to manipulate the way distributions happened and were organized?

S: Not in an organized way, no. Walter and I, when we were there, were at the very beginning. I felt we were really in control. There may have been things going on I'm not aware of, I don't know. Our interpreters were not giving us anything. They would tell us the obvious things, that people were upset or this distribution in _______ had some problems. We'd always be working with problems. People didn't have tents or they didn't have enough food. We were always aware of mobility. This was one of the things. A family in Khan Yunis might also be trying to get a ration up in Nuseirat or something. You were always aware of people moving. There were those families who weren't committing themselves to one place and staying there. We were constantly being sensitized to these problems. When you say "governments", I was always aware that our leadership in the unit and the people that were dealing with it, like Dr. Peterson, Emmett Gully, Eldon Mills, later Charles Reed, Al Holtz, people were dealing with transportation up and down the strip, were in very close communication in a sense of trust and working with community leadership in a way that was very satisfying. We were trusted, we were supported we felt.

L: So you worked closely with the mukhtars and sheiks?

S: Yes. But I was only on the local level. As a unit leader I was aware that things were going well with these other members of our unit. Emmett and Eldon, I know, it was a dual leadership. There may have been some problems with that. They finally divided up and Eldon took responsibility to the south. I related to Eldon Mills more than Emmett Gully.

L: Did you have any relationship with Philadelphia at all?

S: Not directly, no. I was on the local Personnel Committee in Gaza and we discussed where people would work. I remember one incident. One member of our unit, a young woman.. what was her name?.. she'd wear shorts and she insisted on wearing shorts and didn't think that was a problem. She was young and we said, "Well, that is a problem. You shouldn't do that." We dealt with things like that.

L: So did she finally stop wearing shorts?

S: I think she did, yes, but it was a task. David Walker, I know, one morning went down to get into the building and he couldn't get in, the sergeant wouldn't let him in. He was furious and.. We threatened to leave a couple of times. We were very firm.

L: Threatened to leave? Did you feel that the personnel that you were dealing with were adequate for the job by and large? Did you have concerns about the personnel that Philadelphia was sending?

S: Personally, no. I didn't. The problem with David was that he had used King Farouk's name in vain. You know the story?

L: He told me, yes.

S: We were very firm about it. There was a fellow who liked to get up early in the morning before breakfast and wander around in the town. He was a devout Christian person and had the Bible with him. He was arrested one day and locked up or something. We were really upset with that. I think Emmett said to them, If you don't let this fellow out, this is it! (chuckles)

L: Why do you think it was that they locked him up?

S: They thought he was a Jew. That was what they said.

L: Did you run into any suspicions?

S: That's the only one I recall.

L: But not personally.. People never had any suspicion about who you were?

S: I was talking to Lee Dinsmore this weekend. He had one incident. He may have given it to you. They greeted him "shalom" or something, thinking he was Jewish. That was one.

L: But you don't recall anything?

S: No, I don't. It was a very moving, positive experience. It was hard to leave, really. Hussein Abbasita, for example, we left on the train and he came down and saw us off. I remember him saying, "There won't be peace in the Middle East until Israel is gone."

L: What were your feelings when you got there? Do you remember having any strong feelings about what was going to happen in the next year? Were you thinking repatriation was a possibility?

S: We felt resettlement was a possibility and we focused on that and were constantly communicating through our leadership in the unit with the UN and people. I'm sure the Service Committee in certain levels was doing that. Thorton Price and I took a truckload of flour, in those early days, and drove to Jerusalem. It was those early days when it was not easy to do that. We were concerned about refugees. We kept hearing these stories from them in the camps. "We left home suddenly and left money in the bank and furniture in our home." They couldn't get the money out of the banks. I remember being aware of that and concerned about that. We talked to Emmett about it and went we went up to Jerusalem with this flour we drove over to Tel Aviv and contacted government officials there. I'm sure we didn't impress them very much. We were all dressed in dungarees with flour all over. Here we were knocking on doors of officials in the Israeli government. We did see people at a certain level and said what we were doing in Gaza and "These people have money in the banks here. Can you do something?" We made them aware of the problem. We felt we had done all we could.

L: How did you get permission to go up to Jerusalem at that time? Was that a special..

S: I can't give you the details. There was a need in Jerusalem for flour. I don't know if the Red Cross people or other distribution areas were not getting food into Jerusalem at one point there in March. We were getting supplies coming up from Egypt. There was a decision made at some level that two truckloads of flour was to be delivered to the Coptic Church officials in Jerusalem. This was worked out by Quaker people in Cairo and at our unit. We had, at that time, five new Chevrolet trucks and we loaded those trucks up with flour, had Arabic license plates, and were given all kinds of documentation to take with us. Supposedly telephone communication was made.

L: So you didn't have any problem?

S: Surprisingly enough we didn't have any problem. I wonder how we knew our road to take or what route! We were stopped at check points, but they were aware that we were coming. It was obvious that it was flour, that it wasn't anything else. We went right on through to Jerusalem. The officials there knew we were coming. We had to drive these big trucks down these narrow streets in Jerusalem. The merchants had to take all their wares off the streets and there was just enough room for the trucks to get in to where we were supposed to unload it at the church. We got in there and it was unloaded. I remember going into a lovely room with the Bishop of the church or whoever and having tea and cakes. Then we left and went down to Tel Aviv for some time. I remember picking up Israeli young people on the road and giving them a ride. Of course, we were aware... We had work in Acre in Israel.

L: Did you have a chance to get to Acre?

S: No we didn't.

L: Were there any refugees that particularly stood out in your mind.

S: I've mentioned Hussein Abbasito who was a member of this Bedouin tribe. His brother was the sheik in _______, he had the traditional dress and so on. He had three or four wives. He insisted that Ginny come down and his wives wanted to meet my wife. We had quite a visit.

L: Did you keep in touch with him?

S: Hussein was able to interpret. We couldn't speak Arabic. No, we weren't able to communicate after that. I did talk to Alan Horton here who was familiar with the Abbasita Bedouin family and he said they ended up in Jerusalem and he is no longer living. I know have a better understanding that I didn't have then. We could have been better prepared when we went over there, but there wasn't time I guess. We should have been better prepared on the customs of the Bedouin people. All this food we were giving out to Bedouin refugees went to the sheiks and they distributed it to their family. The reason they were able to have such good meals for us was because they had control of the food. We could have been more sensitive to all that. But on another level, you had to relate to these people. It was quite an opening. I enjoyed the food. I enjoyed the coffee. I enjoyed the culture of the Bedouins. I made a mistake once, as I look back upon it, of admiring a Bedouin's horse because I knew how to ride a horse. Some of them wanted to go for a ride with me and I went. We galloped. We weren't racing, really, but they were ahead of me. They were leading the way. That was a wonderful experience and they wanted to give me the horse.

They really insisted. You really got the feeling that "You must have this horse." I accepted it and said, "You keep it for me" and so on. That was the only way I could deal with it.

L: Actually, you were on a committee at one point while you were there to try to develop ideas for further Quaker projects. I guess the idea at the time was the Egyptians were saying "nothing, no development work, no political work, strictly relief." I'm wondering if you can recall any of the ideas that the committee might have come up with in terms of future work if that particular thing had...

S: I'm sure we kicked around all these ideas of the schools, education, of craft work. I was aware, and I'm sure other Quakers on the staff were aware that Friends, after their relief operations, are open to having some continuing contact in the area, some service thing or some Quaker presence in touch with the situation. It was the general Quaker atmosphere so I'm sure we talked about those things. I don't remember specifically.

L: Do you remember at all being frustrated that you couldn't go beyond what you were doing? That was there was no way to go into..

S: I was frustrated, primarily because I knew we weren't giving them enough food. That was my main concern. I was quite fulfilled in the fact that in the education project, for example, children were having an experience together as a group with a teacher and learning. That was a very fulfilling experience for me, to be in touch with that and feel the cooperation. I don't recall any problems with that. The only problems that I remember was we received a lot of geography maps from Switzerland in Swedish and the kids were having a ________. I tended to be, I think, more on the... If I had a bias that made it difficult it was that it should have been more tight in the administration than it was. I tended to trust people a little too much.

L: What kinds of problems would you see?

S: I'd believe people, what they'd tell me, and often they weren't telling me the truth, but you had to believe them. I think some staff people were better at discerning what was truth and what was not.

L: I had heard at some of the camps that there were actually tactics, I guess you'd say, that were used to correct these lists. For example, there was a decision to start giving out funeral shrouds...

S: I didn't engage in that. In my view the Quakers that were doing the

[Tape 1 Side B ends mid-sentence]

[Tape 2, Side A begins]

S: I admired the Haggenauers. I was only 31 when I was there. Ralph was older. He must have been in his mid 40s. He had been a businessman as I remember and he was aware of dealing with the details of the administration more than I was. I remember consulting him, talking with him, inspecting the way he was going about his distribution and learning from him. I don't know that we had any tactics. The way we dealt with the widows, really, was a way of dealing with something, but I thought it was a fair way. There may have been some widows, bona fide widows, for whom it was difficult to move to another place. We insisted that we not use police. We were storing flour in the place where we were distributing it. We went home at night and left a guard there. We did not lock the place. We literally told these folks that were working for us, the refugees that were working for us, "We're guarding the food at night. It's your food. If you're stealing you're stealing from each other, you're not stealing it from the Quakers." Some of them responded. They knew that and were protecting the food. We did not lock the doors there at night. There was more than one guard there. We didn't appeal to the police when we got into trouble. We talked directly to the people. "You've got to shape up in this situation so we can get on with it." Then the mukhtars or whatever, it was really important for them to get food. The food was a weapon but they made it a weapon among themselves in dealing with the problem. We were quite aware of not using food as a weapon.

L: You weren't there for the transition to the UN work. Is that correct?

S: No, no.

L: Did you have the impression, as far as the school work went, that there was something particularly... something about the schools that made them different than if they had been run by the local people? There were discussions in the end, during transition, about "yes we'll turn over the relief work, but not the schools. You shouldn't turn over the schools." Can you say something about why that might have been the sentiment?

S: It might have been the sentiment because there might have been a fear that they wouldn't continue with the UN. People might not think they were... might not have the money or personnel or something. That may have been the reason. We were paying the teachers a small amount, They were highly motivated. There were a lot of refugees sitting around with

nothing to do in the coffee houses. To have a task to do as a teacher, if you were a teacher, and be able to perform in that way was very satisfying work and it was very important to continue those schools for that reason. And it was very important to continue them because kids were learning their language and classes in the Koran. They were doing regular reading, learning to read. I did bring back from Cairo equipment, a lot of education equipment that was contributed by some foundation or somebody. There was a lot of stuff that we brought back to Gaza for the schools. I suppose it was natural to view the schools as one of the continuing things Friends might do or be connected with, and they are. Lloyd Tyler is the retirement community where we live. Lloyd and his wife Phyllis were directors of the unit in Gaza. They considered coming down this weekend, but.. We've talked with them about it.

L: Yes, their name is on one of my lists.

S: It would be worth your while to arrange to have an oral history with Lloyd and his wife. I have a lot of respect for both of them. He's a professional person, has his Ph.D. in Chemistry. She was a social worker. I'm sure they were very good staff in Gaza. I've heard they were dealing with a lot of problems there in the Gaza unit.

L: When you left was it just that your term was up or did you have a particular reason that you needed to leave?

S: I had no intention to go on with that kind of work. Ginny and I were just beginning a married life and her mother wasn't well. I wanted to do some graduate work. The thought when we went over there was that Friends were only going to be there a short time. I went over for a six month period and I think I stayed for nine months. Ginny came over, but if she hadn't come I probably would have left a little earlier, although after she came we only stayed two or three months. I think for family considerations we felt we should come home. We knew we might stay a little longer, but it seemed to be important to leave at that time.

L: You didn't have any concerns then about the discussions taking place about going on until April or beyond?

S: I wasn't deeply involved in those. I was aware of a transition taking place but I didn't get involved in the discussions. My focus was more in the local area in Khan Yunis and education. I was on a couple of committees.

L: What other committees were you on besides personnel... I'm sure you were on the distractions committee at some point, everybody was.

S: I was on another committee that dealt with the future.

L: Well, the survey of projects.

S: The survey, yes. I don't remember that. That's very hazy.

L: When you.. First of all, before we leave the camp was there anything that you particularly wanted to record that I haven't been able to touch on?

S: No, I think I've gotten most of it. There were some scary incidents I could relate.

L: Scary in what way?

S: Driving a vehicle, coming to a checkpoint and seeing the Egyptian officers. You were never sure if the command had come down to them as to who we were and why we were coming through that point at that particular time. I was never trusting. You didn't know when you were going to be dealt with.

L: You didn't have any problems with that?

S: No, it turned out there were no problems with it.

L: Some people did.

S: And going up, driving those trucks to Jerusalem. At the time we were aware of it.. We knew we were going into a no man's area and there were military installations we were going through.

L: Were you aware of the fact that the Bedouins were crossing the borders?

S: Oh yeah. We were aware of people going across the borders. They'd come back wounded. They would be shot at and hit. They were in our hospitals. They had animals. The Bedouins had horses and goats and sheep. They needed food and there wasn't enough in the Gaza strip there for these animals, They'd go across to bring back things. People who's homes were near the border, former homes, would go. So there was movement at that kind and we were aware of that.

L: All right. Well, you left Gaza and went where?

S: We had been in touch with.. I mentioned before that going to Gaza I was with the Young Friends Fellowship. I had some contact with Quakers in England and we made contact with George Gorman who was the administrative person in London Yearly Meeting. We said we'd like to visit some young adult people our age. He arranged a trip for us. We went up

to York and he arranged meetings with groups. We were giving hospitality in Quaker homes. I remember in one, we went to York, England and for some reason our host there felt we were brother and sister and they gave us hospitality in different places until they learned. The young Friends were having discussions on how to relate to Communists. We were discussing things like that, and the work in Gaza. I remember going to a Quarterly Meeting of Friends in Birmingham. I wasn't a featured speaker but we had an opportunity to talk. I remember visiting a Friends School in York and being with the headmaster there.

L: That must have been quite something for young people, to have that much expertise at that point.

S: We stopped at Friends House in London.

L: So you pretty much traveled around Europe?

S: Yes, we decided to spend a week in Florence rather than go around Italy and rented a little _________ on our own. We then went up on a train in Paris and touched base with the Friends Center in Paris.

L: So now, did you have a deal with the Service Committee that "We'll get you home and we'll give you this as long as you get home."?

S: We were given a certain amount of money. This is an area.. We ran out of money in Europe and telegraphed the Service Committee and they sent us enough money to continue.

L: So they felt you were doing their work?

S: I don't know what they thought, but they responded. My mood was, "I'll pay you back, but I need some money now.

L: I'm not sure they'd do that any more.

S: Virginia's mother was having difficulty. Virginia has a sister in Evanston, but it was important for her -- and since I wanted to do some graduate work -- it worked out. We went to _____ New York to her residence there. Her mother had just come home from the hospital. I did about a year and half of graduate work there.

L: What did you finally get your degree in?

S: I was in philosophy. I went to Union Seminary. I'd been teaching at Oakwood School so I ended up really in a doctorate program at Teacher's College at Columbia University. That included some courses in philosophy at one university and religious education. I remember relating to.. Well Paul Tillik, a leading theologian was a Union and I had some courses with

him. I had courses in New Testament, and then I had courses in history of education and what was called Philosophy of Education. I actually did think of teaching in a department of education somewhere in a university. But I was in a private school and this was all geared toward public education. I felt some conflict. I was fascinated with John Dewey's writings and so on. I wasn't very focused, really, in some of this. I really could see that even though I'd proved to myself I could do it, I didn't feel like going ahead with academic work. The opportunity came to work with the Yearly Meeting of Friends. I think if it had come up that I could return to the Service Committee... I didn't take the initiative to explore future work with the Service Committee. This opportunity came with Baltimore Yearly Meeting. Ginny was pregnant, so several things influenced me to go. The experience in Baltimore in Friends was a positive enough one that I remained working with Friends in one way or another all my life. I've led a sheltered existence in a way. I've been fortunate being the only child, financially I wasn't entirely dependent in ______ Quaker work.

L: And you have retired now?

S: Yes.

L: And what was your last position?

S: I was secretary of a Friends Meeting in Washington for ten year period.

L: All right. Do you have anything you want to add? Any recommendations to the Service Committee or concerns you'd like to express on tape? Remember that we're on tape?

S: I'm very grateful for the Service Committee's part in Civilian Public Service. It turned my life around. It was a positive experience, met my wife and all of that. And the Gaza experience. I'm aware that the Service Committee in the last few years is going through a period of evaluation on various levels. I am sensitive, and I'm glad to see, some of the efforts made by the Service Committee now in being closer in touch with the Society of Friends. There's a sensitivity to that in the regional office in Baltimore that's encouraging. I don't know where it will all lead. I tend to come out on the side that Friends need to have a way of responding to people in need and to their suffering, and dealing with the immediate needs of people. I'm not too clear about some of the other projects of long range. I tend to feel the Service Committee ought to focus more on things for young people. I see the importance of peace education work in various ways. I don't know how it applies right now in the situation we're in, but exploring those areas is important. I'm aware of the kind of

service opportunities that Friends.. In London Yearly Meeting the service work there is primarily through the Yearly Meeting, whereas the funds for Quaker work in the Service Committee comes from quite a wide area. This is good in many ways. The people like Paul Johnson and the kinds of things that he has done... I hear Paul say, "I was assigned to go over here and it wasn't quite clear what I was to do but I was to be there." I resonate with that, with a guy like Paul. I guess I would hope that the Service Committee could be an opportunity for Friends to give short term service like that. Obviously there need to be a few in long term. I tend to look at the Service Committee with a nostalgia for that past experience. I knew Clarence and Lilly Pickett, people like Howard and Anna Brinton. I have very precious feelings about all that.

L: Well, I very much appreciate your taking the time to talk to me. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

AFSC Oral History Project - Interview #609
Narrator: DAVID WALKER (W)
Interviewer: Joan Lowe (L)
September 20, 1992

L: This is Joan Lowe. Today is September 20, 1992. I'm interviewing David Walker for the American Friends Service Committee Oral History Project and we're talking about work with the refugees in Gaza in 1949 and part of 1950. You stayed there until March, I guess.

W: I came in February, something like that, and left in October. I didn't stay...

L: Oh, you didn't stay through the transition. Okay. That's good to know. Could you please state your full name and place and date of birth?

W: I'm David Whitman Walker. I was born in September 20, 1923 in Seattle, Washington.

L: And what kind of town.. Seattle.. did you live right in Seattle proper?

W: I lived right in Seattle which was a city of 3 or 400,000 at that time.

L: What did your parents do for a living?

W: My father was a bookkeeper for People's Bank. My mother was a housewife and mother.

L: And.. let's see.. was your father in the First World War?

W: He was in the latter part of the First World War but never went overseas. He was naturalized citizen from Manchester, England, so he had very strong feelings of loyalty toward the United States.

L: And what about your religious upbringing?

W: I was brought up as a northern Baptist, American Baptist Convention, in a church which my grandfather founded in Seattle, so I was well imbued with the Baptist spirit.

L: (chuckles) What would you say, in your years between about 15 and 18, before you left high school, were the major influences in your life?

W: 15 through 18...

L: Would have been probably right through the Depression.

W: Probably the major influences at that age group were outside of family. Family had a strong influence prior to that, but I think my colleagues of my own age and sports and social activities, school activities, were important. They became progressively more so as I grew older.

L: Do you recall any conversations in your household about what was going on in Europe?

W: well...

L: This is before American involvement.

W: Yes, during the 15 to 18 years.. We're just concerned with that age group?

L: Right at the moment.

W: What years would that have been?

L: ‘38, ‘39.

W: That was the beginnings of World War II. Yes, there was a lot of discussion then about what we as Americans were going to do etceteras, yes. There was a strong focus on the Far East, Japan particularly. We were very upset by what was going on in China. It appeared to me, when I was close to 18, that we were definitely going to become involved in the war. I was working at summer vacations for Seattle Hardware, which is a hardware warehouse. I was helping package things to be shipped to Alaska and so forth. We were well aware that we were preparing for war.

L: You were in that military area, Seattle. When you left high school what did you do?

W: I went directly to the University in June. I got in one full year of school and then was drafted.

L: What University?

W: University of Washington, Seattle. That year was a real eye opener for me because I was a night watchman at Seattle Hardware for the whole weekend, from Friday night until Sunday night, straight through. In other words, I lived there. There were probably only interested in somebody in the spot to put out a fire if the Japanese had bombed us or something. But I was also the houseboy in a fraternity for part of that time, and that gave me some feeling of social conscience. I had lived a more privileged life prior to that. It was an awakening of social conscience. I went into the service at the age of 19.

L: What year would that have been?

W: That was 1943. March of 1943.

L: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

W: I was in Seattle. I immediately went down to the National Guard Armory and volunteered to put out fires. We got Salvation Army donuts at 4:00 in the morning. I was terribly impressed by the fact that there was a turn out. I had previously volunteered for the National Guard, but my father came down and refused to sign my papers. I was 17 at the time.

L: He thought you were too young?

W: Yes, but also he was against it.

L: He was?

W: Yes, on principle. But immediately, after this December 7th bombing, my brother and I and_____ sister, prepared a shelter for ourselves in the basement with water.

L: So your family really was worried that there was going to be...

W: we were all concerned, yes. It was a reality to us.

L: well, I think to the west coast it was. So when you were 19..

W: I went into the service at 19 plus a few months. In March something, 1943. I was discharged in February 28th, 1946. So I spent just under three years in the service.

L: What was your role in the military?

W: At first I was taken through basic training with the cavalry in Fort ______ Kansas, in the horse cavalry, which later became the First Cav and went to __________, had a very high casualty rate. Then I was transferred to ________ ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program, which had three phases, three different branches. One branch studied language and submersion courses: Japanese, Italian, French, German, etceteras. They lived in groups and lived the language. The second group was studying basic engineering. I was in that group. The third group was a combination of basic engineering and medical studies.

L: Where was this?

W: They were all over. WE happened to be at Regis College in Denver, Colorado, a Jesuit school. A very accelerated program. We had about 20 credits per semester. It was a very interesting way to study. One of my professors was one of the original 13 that Einstein thought understood his theory of relativity. These were all Jesuit. Another one, Father McAully, later became the President of Catholic University in Peru. You've heard him speak ________. It was a joy to be with him.

L: Where were you stationed at?

W: That was on the campus at Regis College on the corner of what used to be the metropolitan corner of Denver.

L: After your education, then, where did you go?

W: I was reassigned to the First Division, which was McArthur's division in World War I, the Infantry Division. I was a 30 caliber machine gun operator. My eyes are not very good. I

had to lie to get into the service. So I figured, "I'm not going to last very long as a machine gunner", so I rode the sick _____, complained of my vision, and I was subsequently transferred to an engineering outfit and went overseas with that. I was with them for about two years. We had a company commander who was rather an eager beaver. He wanted to be re-deployed to Japan because.. you know about the point system? You got one and a half points for every month overseas, and an extra two points a month for being in a combat zone, this sort of thing. People were released on the number of points they had. The more points you had the sooner you'd get out. We were all low points because we got overseas late, so Captain Billy Holland put us on the list to be re-deployed to Japan. As a result, all of our equipment was mothballed and put on a boat and we were prepared to go to Japan. Then the war ended so we came back to the states out of sequence, much in advance to what we were entitled.

The army was an interesting experience. It was a very brutalizing experience. I was in constant conflict over what I was doing. My older brother spent two plus years in the McNeil Island Penitentiary as a conscientious objector.

L: Where do you think those ideas came from?

W: He was studying for the ministry. I was in great sympathy with him about this. The deciding factor for me to not be a CO was my father, because my father belonged to the Masons. He was a Shriner, and the people on the draft board were his personal friends. They also were the ones that castigated my brother for taking the CO stand. So it put him in a very awkward position and he felt a sense of patriotism. I felt I had a deep obligation to my father. Actually, I had a conviction to be a pacifist, but not sufficient to take the stand. And many of my friends were pacifists. We were all going through that early college socialistic experience where we were _______ authority and we had a better way to do things.

L: How did you meet up with Friends?

W: One of the first things I did when I was discharged... I might add that I had polio in the service. I contracted polio on my way back from Europe and spent the better part of six months in an army hospital. It might have been General Hospital in Fort Worth. I received a medical discharge. One of the first things I did was go to my draft board and register as a

CO. I wanted to be sure that I had protected my legal rights and I knew that the Friends had a pacifist position. Later I got involved with the Service Committee, with the workcamps.

L: Later you mean, in the early '40s?

W: well, this would be '47.

L: Which workcamps did you get involved in?

W: All local, painting jobs and this sort of thing in the Seattle area.

L: The weekend workcamps.

W: Exactly. At first I wasn't very interested in the Meeting itself. I didn't go to Meeting but we were all part of the Women's Friends Living Group which was right near the meeting. Bob and Margaret Hoyt were the houseparents for these nine or ten girls and that's were I met Della, my wife. We took turns preparing lunch for everybody and for 12 cents you got a bowl of soup and peanut butter sandwich and so forth. It was more of a social occasion than anything else, but I felt at home there. I finally saw that I could live my convictions with some comfort. At that time I was interested in becoming the world's greatest brain surgeon. I didn't want anything to interfere with that. That didn't turn out to be the case.

L: Did you know the Service Committee at the time "as" the American Friends Service Committee or were they still just "the Quakers" to you.

W: well, I knew the Service Committee better than I knew the Quakers.

L: So you knew that it was a distinct organization, separate but...

W: Oh yes. I knew that the AFSC... Let's put it this way: Many of the people who were in prison with Scotty, my brother, were associated with the Service Committee. I'd also been aware of the Japanese evacuations and Floyd Schmoe's relationship to that and the Service Committee. So yes, I knew who the Quakers were and I knew who the Service Committee was, but I was frankly a lot more interested in the Service Committee than I was the Quakers. The Quakers seemed to be not only august but a little bit distance. Of course, they were older. It was not my cup of tea during those years at all. In fact, Bob and Margaret were very simpatico, very sympathetic, but were a little bit beyond my grasp. He was only eight or ten years older than I.

L: So did you marry Della before...

W: we married in '47. She went away to college at Oberlin and we got married when she came back. We courted for about a year. It was October 23, 1947. We're going to have our 45th anniversary next month.

L: So your children weren't born until you got back it looks like.

W: No, we didn't have any children until after we came back from Gaza.

Now, we did have a little concern for Gaza, largely through the Institutes of International Relations which we both got a big charge out of. It spoke to our thinking at the time. I won't say to our condition. We were rebels looking for a cause, so to speak. This is one concern I feel for the AFSC now is the fact that... I'm not part of this whole youth scene, but there's a need I think, at least in the Seattle area or Pacific Northwest. Our Yearly Meeting has a very good youth program camp which is ________. Among young Friends it's really an outing that a lot of these kids look forward. I've, incidentally, participated in Friends camps.

An interesting aside to this. I explained to them that I am a patriarch looking for another way and that gives you an idea of my entry into this group, my eagerness to be part of what was going on. I feel that this is something that I don't have a grasp of, but I would strongly recommend this. Any group that you're going to develop, more of that would be great.

L: When did you first hear about opportunities in Gaza?

W: I don't know exactly when.

L: How did your recruitment happen?

W: we talked to a guy from Haverford, President of Haverford. There had been several meetings for which this whole issue came up. Who was the Professor at Haverford that was the specialist on Quaker History and Greek and Roman history also. Henry Cadbury. Henry Cadbury came out. We were new to Friends then and we didn't quite know how one did this kind of thing, but I had decided, "I'm not going to get into medical school, I'll switch to public health." They explained that there was a need so we expressed concern, both of us. They said, "You can come. We will take you if you can be ready by Monday." This was Bronson Clark. So it was very much a hurry up thing, but I delayed them long enough so I could take my final exam, which I did.

L: Somehow we got to Haverford. You left the University of Washington....

W: Then we went to Philadelphia...

L: You didn't go to school at Haverford?

W: No. I was trying to remember Henry Cadbury's name.

L: So they told you, "If you can leave in two days.." and you quickly packed up and tried to..

W: we delayed them a few days. Instead of just one of us going we both went. WE had some savings. WE were advised by Bronson Clark and Harry Burkes who were then in the office, "If Della wants to go she damned well better get to Philadelphia." So we decided to spend the money, and so we both went. It's a good thing we did. I don't have any regrets about the way we went. The Service Committee handled everything great. WE got in and out of there like a shot.

L: You had an orientation?

W: Virtually none. We got a lot of shots in the same day, and a tremendous reaction to the typhoid, tetanus, all in the same day. It was some Quaker doctor who was very well informed and so forth, but it put me under for 24 hours.

L: Do you remember them giving you any instruction as to what the local mores might be like and what kinds of things you should watch out for or what kind of situation might be...

W: Remember, Joan, I went as a technical person and I was expected to do a technical job. Sure, I was oriented and I had been to these institutes so I knew a little bit about Arabs. I knew a little bit about being careful about what you say and eat and so forth. There wasn't much time for that. They needed somebody to go and build latrines. They needed somebody to go up there and make some water faucets, and that was my job and I gladly accepted it. In fact, I didn't want to be burdened with a lot of information that I didn't need. I didn't want to be distracted. I think it worked out okay. I didn't step on too many toes.

L: Did you go by boat or plane?

W: I went by plane with Forest _____ who went to Acre. Forest was a very steady influence. He's now deceased but he was a Brethren, very simple but not proselytizing. He and I went out together.

L: You went to Cairo?

W: we got through Cairo...

L: And then did you get in the middle of the night like everybody else did or did you actually make it there in day time?

W: I made it during day time and they had no place for me to sleep, so they put a cot in the office that Emmett and Delbert and Elden used.

L: What were your first impressions when you got off the plane?

W: Terribly confusing, what I expected though. My biggest problem, frankly, was the fact that I couldn't sleep nights because these three -- the Holy Trinity, as we called them -- would meet every night until one or two o'clock, and I'd get up at four. So I didn't get any sleep while they were meeting because my bed was their desk, literally.

L: Where was Della?

W: She hadn't come yet. We didn't know it but the Service Committee had recruited me to go to the west Pakistan border and her to go to Rasulia, India. So we were to have been nearly a continent apart. Neither of us were aware of this. She brought the sewing machine and all that stuff from the boat and I was to join her as soon as we had gotten a modicum latrine started and _____ program started and so forth. There was a real sense of urgency. I think you're fishing for a remark about my comment about what was the social structure of the team itself. That had no importance to me.

L: No, not really. What I'm looking for are your impressions of the situation there in terms of... Here you were, a young man. At this point you had actually had some international experience because you had gone in the army for a stint, but basically the situation was pretty cataclysmic to be walking off of a plane into...

W: But Joan, compared to a military situation, it wasn't.

L: Okay, see that's what I'm looking for.

W: I think that Friends are more concerned with process, at times, than they need to be and I sense this among this group. Some of what this group has said in silent meeting, and some of what's been brought up as humor and so forth, I agree with but it seems very trivial to me. I know these people pretty well that have made these comments so I'm not being.. I don't mean to demean what they've said at all. It's simply that I don't think that many of the people who were on the team were prepared for this kind of chaos.

L: No, I don't think they were.

W: I wasn't completely prepared either, but I had been in similar situations that were a lot worse. At least nobody on the team was dying and we had food. There were prepared meals and there was a place to sleep, etceteras.

L: You got there in February?

W: Yes.

L: What was one of the first things that you were put to work doing?

W: I was first introduced to the local sanitarium. There was a crackerjack, a great guy. He knew very little English and I knew no Arabic, but we both knew what we wanted to do.

L: Did you have an interpreter?

W: Later I did, but there wasn't a need for an interpreter in the beginning. we simply toured the whole Strip and saw what was needed, and we agreed. My goal was one latrine for every 20 people, which was more or less the normal standard. We did achieve one for 100, and that was a great achievement. Of course, the water system... Let's back up a little bit.

The priorities that we had were based on communicable disease transmission. So we were interested in typhoid, para-typhoid, dysentery of all kinds. Malaria was secondary because malaria and fly control are really... pure water is really the most important. Water and food, and then insect born disease. The malaria program was not on the front burner at all in the first. The main thing was to get a place for people to deposit their wastes. Then get rid of the dead animals on the road. There were a lot of dead animals. The local health department was strained beyond belief. You've got this residue of Armenian and Greek refugees too, so homeless people in Gaza were ______ too.

L: There were Armenian and Greek refugees in the camps?

W: Not in the camps. They had been there from years previous. This was not just people coming in the last few weeks. This was a long-standing problem.

L: Was there any attempt on the part of the Egyptian military to clean up before you got there?

W: The Egyptian military, like all militaries, looks out for itself first so that it can be effective to do what it was deployed to do. They had done their best, but they were not well supplied and they certainly did have a louse problem and a flea problem, and a malaria problem. They wanted whatever help we could give them. There was a about 20 pounds of pure, 100% DDT, on hand, but there was no ______ to put it with. You could put it in kerosene and it could be stretched a long, long way but we didn't have any money to buy kerosene, so we didn't have any way to apply it. The guy at the sanitarium.. I think his name was Joseph _______. He was a very sharp guy and he had the full trust and confidence of the district health officer, who was also a very sharp guy. So technically we had a good... Jerome

Peterson was well, well qualified. He knew what he needed to do. He was glad to see me. He said, "Here's the problem, do it." There was no question of my receiving support from him. This is all secondary to Quakerism. It's not related. It's of a different order of things. In order to say grace you have to have something to say grace about, okay? In order to be thankful for something you've got to create the thing to be thankful for.

L: well you obviously didn't go into this situation as.. You said you took a tour of the camp, of the Strip, and got an idea of what the first needs were going to be, which I guess was cleaning up.

W: And he knew these better than I did. He was just showing me, "Here's where we've got to begin, and this is what we're going to do here."

L: Who ended up being "we" when this work actually started?

W: This Joseph ______, the sanitarium _____ himself.

L: Did you employ other refugees to assist?

W: Then we started developing the whole thing. The first latrines that were built were built in Gaza______, because that's where the problem was the greatest. Later we built in the north of the city, Jabalya and what was the other camp? The worst in the whole... Getting latrines built was the first priority. It was obviously more expeditious to supply the where with all and let them employ the people. We didn't want to directly employ anybody we didn't have to. When we got that well under way, then we started on the malaria control. We were sent to _______ DDT.

L: When you did the latrine work, who actually built them?

W: The refugees.

L: And they were employed for flour? Money?

W: For money. They were paid through the health department. We didn't.. We supplied the money and they dispensed it.

L: So the village itself didn't really cooperate with this sort of..."we realize we have to clean up our area and get this stuff together."

W: They didn't have that much leadership. I have a home, okay? My sister's family gets bombed out or something so they come to live with me. Their children come, their children's friends, and pretty soon you have a group that is not related. That's exactly what happened in Gaza. Distant relatives, people who didn't really have blood relationship,

people of great need who couldn't be kept out because maybe they were sick or injured or something. There was a tremendous amount of love demonstrated person to person outside of any organized group. We tried to exploit that. We tried to use that.

L: It's interesting that you say that, and I don't mean to beat this into the ground, but I'm trying to figure out where the inconsistencies are in my own mind. Most of the things that I have heard and read so far indicate that most of the refugees, at least, not the local people, came in a clan or village a settled down, and then there were mukhtar who took responsibility for that group in terms of getting them -- maybe not organized -- but in getting their cooperation.

W: we're saying the same thing. You've got these people coming in with no sense of direction so the first thing they ask is, "Where's my village? Where are my village people?" Then they find the mukhtar and they feel secure. The Italians were the same thing.

L: So when you say that you used to your advantage what they could, you mean you went to the mukhtar and...

W: If village A that had now come to Gaza was 50 people, they needed a latrine. The whole thing was handled through their leadership, their mukhtar. So when they built the latrine, they chose the site etceteras. It was their project. All we did was try to help them. It was much easier to do it that way. I might add that that's the way the _______ program worked too. We tried to get a balance of people when we hired so that we represented different political views and different groups.

L: were you involved in that process?

W: I hired all those people. I hired virtually all the sanitation workers too. I'm talking about the pre Pings era. Vern did a splendid job and had the wherewithal, but we were setting this thing up. Terry also was of that later era. Terry Reese. If you have a chance Terry would be a good source. Terry is a very bright guy. We tried to use established groups and the hierarchy that existed. We weren't always successful. You've got to realize that virtually every one of our interpreters was a Christian, not a Moslem.

L: And how did that dynamic work out?

W: well, if I were a Moslem, I don't know that I would trust a Christian, and yet all of our interpreters, the people we trusted...

L: Why was that? Do you have any idea why it happened that way?

W: Yes. The Moslems traditionally do not trust Christians and they've been disappointed and very prejudice towards Christians and Christians are prejudice towards them.

L: What I'm asking is why was it that we only ended up with..

W: Because they were the only people that spoke English, and they were the people that came to us.

L: were you perceived as a Christian presence in the field?

W: Frankly, I don't know how I was perceived. I think I was perceived as being a little mad because I was always in a great hurry!

L: How about the unit as a whole?

W: They were very suspicious of all of us. I don't think that these camp leaders realized it, but I was spoken in Hebrew time after time after time. All the time. It wasn't until later that I realized that I was being...

L: Do you understand or speak Hebrew?

W: The only thing that I know is shalom and it didn't sound like Salaam ______ to me so I would just shrug it off. But being with a uniformed sanitarium from the Palestinian government was a big help. I was constantly in his presence when I was doing something. I didn't go out on my own.

[Tape 1, Side A ends, Side B begins]

W: I'm sure that each of us has a different perception of this. I went out with a very preconceived idea that "this is what I'm to do and this is the easiest way to do it." Now I had daily communications with Jerome Peterson. I have phenomenal respect for that man. I think he was very patient with me because I was very headstrong. Pete and I have had strong differences of opinion, one of them over typhus. I found a lot of people with lice had typhus and one form of typhus was lice born. I told Pete this. "Yeah, okay, if this happens in a cold climate where people are crowded we're going to have typhus, you wait and see." we did. So we started dusting the heads of people too to get rid of their head lice. I think that.. The milk of human kindness was there, there was just a phenomenal sense of urgency and immediacy and dedication. We'll be nice after we get this done, so to speak.

L: You started going through the projects that you were setting up, piece by piece. First the latrines, then the malaria control. What did that entail?

W: well, let's go back to the very beginning now. It meant getting a latrine for every community group and every place. We had to set up a priority for that. What's more important? we had to get funds for that and then get a minimum of supplies for that too. Our original intent was just to build slip trenches, just a long hole in the ground with some degree of privacy. It turned out we *definitely* needed privacy because people would go out and defecate on the desert. It would dry fast enough in the hot weather, so we'd stay ahead on it provided the area wasn't super saturated with people. This is ________ problem. So latrines were a number one priority. Then we started developing the malaria work. That was done by logic. We said, "Here's where we're going to start." we looked for whatever standing water was around..

L: Yes, I think of malaria as something that's from standing water.

W: The malaria program has gotten bad press. We were interested in fly control as well as malaria. We were spraying the walls. It was only two, maybe a dozen actual good breeding sites for the anopheles (?) mosquito. It breeds in certain types of water; cistern water collection where you get drinking water. The breed in still bodies in water and in irrigation ditches. So you have a clue of where this anopheles ______ is going to be. You don't just go out and kill mosquitoes. That's too expensive. You go out and kill the vector that's going to transmit it. Also, you've got some idea of where the reservoir of the infection is, what people are infected with malaria. You definitely want to reduce the insect population in that area because that's the reservoir that's going to provide the organisms. So you look at this as a chain, a three part chain. You've got the reservoir of the disease, the vector, and the potential host. You do whatever you need to do, logically, to break that chain in the easiest place. It isn't by guess and by golly, it's reason. The latrines were the same way. Where is the least drinking water potential, where can people keep clean, where is the fly problem the biggest. Our whole basis was that. It may not have been rational as far as going from district to district to district, but it was done on a priority basis. That took a little bit of ________. I had great help with people. It wasn't a stab in the dark by any means.

L: So was the malaria program.. basically you were filling in areas where water was standing?

W: we didn't fill in anything. During the wet season we drained pools and made sure the water ran. There wasn't a lot of standing water. The cisterns were the main problem.

L: Then what?

W: Then we shifted into second gear. It was very frantic at first, but I think the image I have of all this is the fact that a lot of things came together at the same time. Dorothy Headly developed a ration card system. This is a clerk, a single female from Philadelphia who had worked as a secretary in the Philadelphia office. She came up with this ration card system. I don't know where she is today, but..

L: I'll tell you my opinions on this after the interview.

W: I know I sound chauvinistic but this lady was really on the ball.

L: It isn't chauvinistic at all.

W: None of the rest of us high priced people could come up with this. I don't know who came up with the idea of giving the swaddling clothes to the infants and shrouds to the dead. A lot of things came together. One person would tell another person how he handled a date distribution or how he doled out the flour or whatever. There was a lot of comparing ideas. If there was one talent that this whole group had it was brains. This was a very select group as far as intelligence was concerned. Because we were bonded by this sense of urgency and a sense of really good will, there weren't very many big problems.

L: Did you have regular staff meetings.

W: Jesus! we met every day..

L: (laughter)

W: Talk about process! Tell me about it! I got very tired of meetings. In fact, this...

L: I work for the Service Committee, I understand. (laughter)

W: Then it was a lot easier. People would say, "I've got a special problem in my area, can you get some latrines built for us." Then we could respond.

L: Who would come in and say that?

W: The camp leader would come because some mukhtar would come to him. So a system of logical communication was established. Of course here was Pete, Jerome Peterson, supervising from the top all of this stuff and responding very well to our requests. I'm speaking of Vern, Terry and myself.

L: So he would channel out the work.

W: Definitely. We were in pretty good shape by that time. IT was part of the magic of consensus. I don't disagree with this at all. I think that sometimes a little logic has to be

applied. That's not answered your question but it was a natural development. We'll leave it at that.

L: You were there in July when Colin Bell was in the camps and the camp was talking about extending beyond August. Do you remember the gist of those discussions?

W: I remember Colin Bell. By that time I had some complaint. I don't even remember what it was but I brought it to Colin. I had a personal conference, a personal meeting with Colin. I think Della was there by then.

L: well, let me tell you some of the things that were going on in that meeting that interested me and maybe that will refresh your memory.

W: Was I listed as an attender?

L: You were in the meeting, uh huh.

W: I've seen Al _______'s minutes and I didn't see myself listed in any of the minutes he took. Later I'd like to see that list.

L: Okay, I'm making copies for a number of people and I'll put you on the list. One of the discussions that took place in this meeting which I found rather interesting and curious is that there were people that felt that this was not uniquely a Quaker project. They weren't in favor of continuing as a Quaker team because they felt they weren't making any unique contribution, that their services could be duplicated elsewhere. The other question was about what kind of long term project it would be. It seems to me there was a statement that you made -- and that may be part of what you're thinking -- where you said that you concurred "with Frances' feeling that we can't be used as a political tool."

W: Who is Frances?

L: I believe Frances is Frances Morrison. I concur with Frances' feeling that we can be used as a political tool if we stay on. On another thing, the effect that we as a unit have on the home office in Philadelphia. We're not specializing the Service Committee to such a degree that they're off balance but we're not doing a Quaker job."

W: I felt we were sort of the dog wagging the tail at that point because we were the biggest thing that the Service Committee was doing, and I was then a little bit conscious that Quakers need to play a leadership role in a lot of things and not just doling out food. I can't recall my emotional set with that. I was fond of Frances, incidentally, and often agreed with her. I was very sympathetic to what she said. She was a great gal.. Now hang on, wait a

minute... that was about the time or a little later when the head of the malaria control unit was arrested as a communist. So was my interpreter.

L: Oh?

W: I think it was a little after that. I went to see the mother of my interpreter and took his pay to her because I knew they were in great need. I was very fond of this kid. He was a little younger than I but his English was good. He was, incidentally, not a Christian and that's why I was so aware of the fact that we had Christian interpreters by and large.

I want to say one thing. This is kind of crude, but the basis I had for hiring people -- I interviewed maybe 700 or 800 people to work as latrine diggers or malaria workers -- those people who had worked for the army I definitely hired because they knew what we wanted.

L: You're not the first to have said that.

W: One guy came up to me and said something. I said, "Do you speak English." He said, "Yeah, I speak English." I said, "Why do you want a job?" He said, "I want a job because I'm fucking broke." I said, "Hire that guy, he knows English." And we did. He became a good worker. There wasn't a great deal of feeling of idealism. I felt very loyal to the people that I felt were loyal to me. Therefore I wanted to protect the structure that we had created and I found it very upsetting that the Egyptians arrested Joseph and also _________. I think that was a factor that was used.. one of the factors that was used against me when I was exiled. You know about this?

L: No, I don't' know anything about this at all. Is this later on?

W: This was later on. May as well get into that now.

L: Let me ask you more about this meeting because I want to get through to see if you had any feelings about the other major issue which was.. It looks like this was going to be a relief project. Should be continue this as a relief project or should we get out because it looks like their not going to let us do any political.. nothing concerning settlement, nothing concerning repatriation, nothing concerning development work. Did you have any feelings that you can recall about that?

W: I can't have any feelings, but my guess would be that I had shared the view of those Arabs with whom I could communicate, which was very limited, that we could best serve them by forcing the issue. I think that's where my thought would have been at that time.

L: By forcing the issue of...

W: Of saying, "Let's leave if we're not going to get something else. I'm not sure though. I plead ignorance. I can't recall. I was still sort of a wild, liberal during those years. I had no responsibilities other than a wife who could take care of herself.

L: What happened after August then?

W: Della and I had become friends with _________ Captain who was in the French Foreign Legion. He _______ corporal in the Marine Corps and was a radio operator. He was a dead beat, that guy. At any rate, we would go down to ______'s place at night when things calmed down a bit. This was anywhere from June to... We didn't go frequently but it was an outlet. You head was full of problems so you'd try to get away from them. He'd always have a glass of wine and something for us, which was nice. He was fond of Della. He said, "I have to go to Tel Aviv." we were very interested in seeing Israel and we said, "Can we go?" we went with _______, Della and I. We got through, there was no problem. Getting back was another thing because we were kept three or four hours in the hot sun in an open jeep at the border by a guard who had seen us less than 72 hours before. He said, "I've never seen these people before." An Egyptian army lieutenant. He was scared...

L: Oh, he knew he had let you through and he was afraid to admit that.

W: Yeah, well whatever. I don't think that was exactly it because _______ had them all buffaloed. There were four of us that went, ______, the radio operator, Della and myself. Getting back was a hassle because we came back without _______. We came back with the radio operator and we had some explaining to do for that. These two _______ workers -- there may have been more that I didn't know about -- were really my whole communication network to the work. Plus, the trip to Israel and the suspicion that draws, plus my statement, apparently in front of some Palestinian Arab workers _______. This is how that happened. The statement was as follows, "I don't care weather King Farouk or King _______ come here to look for DDT, they don't get it without a written check from me." And that was made to a major in the Egyptian army who was the malarialogiest. He was taking DDT from our stores which we needed for the refugees and which he needed for the Egyptian army. I was told to leave in 48 hours or something like that, so I had to get out. But I can't help but feel that they had some sort of attitude toward me.

L: Where did you get out to?

W: I went to Beirut. I took a plane out.

L: Was that end of your service then?

W: That was it. In October.

L: Good heavens!

W: I persuaded Della to leave. We had planned to stay and work for AUV and so we hung around Beirut for about two months. No, I left under unpleasant circumstances. Later, _______ we came through some months later.. I'll tell you, the Service Committee really pays off. When we got to Beirut we decided, "Okay, let's stay a little while longer." I was going to work for AUV and she was going to work in a girls' school teaching. But when we put everything together there wasn't enough to live on under those circumstances. So I asked the Service Committee to give us our travel funds to get home all in one lump sum. Now, the Service Committee is very liberal. They said, "But be sure and get home. Don't try to.."

L: Use the buck and stay.

W: Exactly, "and don't expect any more." So they gave us enough money to get to Rome. That was exactly at the time of the devaluation of the British pound, and the Lebanese pound went with it, so I bought our tickets at the official weight in Lebanese pounds using dollars to buy Lebanese pounds. I gained about 30 percent on that. I held those Lebanese pounds for a few more pounds and changed them back, and I made money on that. So on a $700 allotment which was to get us to Rome, we made about $300. That was great! I thought I understood international finances after that. (chuckles) we stopped two weeks, maybe ten days. Oh, we stopped for two weeks because the plane didn't come the second week in Istanbul and Turkey. Then we got to Rome and we still had plenty of money. The Service Committee gave us more money at that point so we spent 7 1/2 months in Europe adding about $1000 to it. The cost to us, Joan, for 7 1/2 months was $1300 of our own savings. But of course we were well connected with the Service Committee so we stayed with people ______ Paris. All Service Committee places. It was truly the salad days. I don't regret that at all.

L: well, let me ask you some questions. I want to get back to the camps. These are just some general questions. we talked a little bit about the mixed populations in the camps. Did you do any work for the Bedouins at all?

W: The Bedouins pretty well took care of themselves. They knew how to cover up their little piles and things like that. Most of their animal dung was used for fuel. The Bedouins are

very clean people. There weren't very many Bedouins in the heavily populated areas. Something that may not have been made aware to you is that they were going in and out across the lines a lot of the time. They were in these two other villages north of us. There were a couple north of that that were evacuated and the Bedouins were in and out of those. WE walked up there one day and they poisoned the well and burned the homes. The walls were adobe brick and they burned the ceiling tinder so the houses had to be repaired. I don't know whether they were booby trapped or not. Maybe they were but we didn't know it.

L: They used to cross through the borders?

W: Bedouins were going anyplace and they were better informed than the ______. They were much prouder too. They were a different class of people, very independent.

L: Did they consider themselves to be refugees, do you know?

W: I don't think they wanted to be beholden to anybody, to us or to any authority. On the other hand, if there was no grazing and things were tough they would like a little flour too, or whatever. Also the food that.. particularly fish and stuff like that, they didn't need. They didn't need a lot of the stuff on the marketplace like fresh vegetables. A lot of the stuff they had was a different diet. They ate a lot of curds and milk products and mutton if they could have it, maybe a few eggs if they had chickens. Their diet was more protein than the other people.

L: Do you remember at the time that you were there, did you feel that repatriation was at all a possibility?

W: I thought that was the only thing that could happen. I was certain it was going to happen, which it didn't. Now excuse me.. We had some Jewish friends in the Seattle area, one of whom emigrated to Israel. A lot of them had been in and out of kibbutz. I can't remember her name, but we saw her when we went with _____ to Israel. She was in charge of screening all of the photographs that were released to foreign newspapers.

L: For Israel?

W: For Israel. She was not much older than we were, but she was the center for the photographs. Not for the text or anything like that, just the photographs. We had known her in Seattle. We looked her up and she told us what she was doing and so forth.

L: There were occasional references in the files to what the files call "riots". Did you experience any of those?

W: I don't think I'd know a riot if I saw it. Then again, I was always with a uniformed public health service person. Not always, always, but when we did the malaria work it was with them. They'd know what those people were doing. There was always the accouterments, the accessories to explain our presence. I didn't have anything to give them, I was just giving them poison, that's all. An insecticide, which they were grateful to get and they were very cooperative. No, I didn't experience any riots. I experienced a whole lot of unpleasantness from the Egyptian army. They thought we were stupid and... But that's the way every army is, Joan. Again, an army is a closed circuit thing.

L: Did they try to stand in the way of any of your work?

W: They tried to emphasize their own importance, but that, again, is typical of any army. My prejudice was just that they were stupid, and they were stupid. They were super stupid, but of course many of the people employed and enlisted in their army couldn't write or read. They were just following orders.

L: Are there any refugees that you can remember that particularly stand out in your mind?

W: Joseph Kashadurian I now remember. This fellow that spoke yesterday afternoon, I don't even remember his name, but I remember being in his house. I would like to make contact with my former interpreter and I would like to find two or three of those people, but I don't even know their names now. This is a sentimental thing, it's an emotional thing. There are some things I can't explain. I want to check out what I was like to them and see what they were like to me, what I think they were like. This is entirely emotional and gut feelings. I don't feel I can do them any good. If I could be of help I'd be happy to. I feel an obligation to find them and I think Joseph is going to be of some help.

L: What kind of recreational activities did you take part in?

W: Lot's of picture taking, and I didn't do very well. We assembled a basketball team which played an Arab team. It was hopeless. They called a foul no matter what we did, but those guys were hanging on our shoulders and didn't go home! They beat us by about 180 to 5 or something. (laughter) But they needed that! I concluded that at that point sportsmanship goes on the window. It was a bitter pill at the time because I really wanted to win. I don't even remember who was on the team but we were almost all Americans. I think Ian Robinson was part of it because he and I were roommates before Della came. Finally when I

moved out of Emmett's office I got in with Ian. Ian was very fussy, though. He was a great guy but a real anal type.

L: So did you do anything else besides basketball?

W: we did some swimming, some horseback riding because they always had good horses available. Lots of picnics, and not just necessarily the whole staff. We might go to somebody's place and eat a few dates and cheese or something, lots of coffee. Lots of socializing on a gesturing basis.

L: Socializing with the refugees?

W: Not with the refugees, with the locals. My window on all this was not a refugee, it was this sanitarian. I enjoyed those people. I had a sense of how they lived not from what they said but they way they acted. I enjoyed it. It was a lot of empathy and that sort of thing. We had $10 a month and that went a long way. I bought a suit, got free chocolate from Cadbury's and Rowntree. I got my _______.

L: Cadburys really kept the Quakers well stocked throughout the war!

W: Yeah, that was great. We visited with other people among ourselves, and also this Kiosh guy. I think a wife was a great advantage there. Some guy was really wild for my wife and said he wanted to take her to the orange grove and all this. It was obvious he had something much different in mind than she did. She said, "well, what about my husband?" He said, "we'll take care of him too." He came to the house to visit her and she finally said, "I can't see you any more." It was fun. These were solid years, they really were.

[Tape 1 ends, Tape 2, Side A begins]

L: You weren't involved in cutting ration lists, I asked you about that?

W: No, I had nothing to do with food distribution, which was a blessing.

L: How about your relationship with Philadelphia? Did you have any relationship with Philadelphia at all? were there letters that went back and forth and did you have any impression about their oversight?

W: well, anything that I had to do with Philadelphia was done through channels. I was not bothered by anything, no. I thought things went very smoothly. As I say, I met Colin Bell personally. Now maybe the Philadelphia office was worried about me, I don't know. When I came back to Philadelphia some months later, Olive Bray, who was the psychologist, interviewed me. She didn't interview Della but she did interview me. But she didn't give

me any words afterwards or anything. I think I may have been interpreted, by AFSC Philadelphia, as being a rather unstable person. I don't know.

L: Maybe they were concerned about the way you had left, it may have had some kind of impact. There really is nothing. I've gone through all of the materials for '49 and there's nothing in there at all about the circumstances, any of the letters or anything. I'm wondering if maybe the censors were concerned about talking about it via letter and it never made it into written form in any way.

W: well, Colin Bell came out before this exile, so those two things weren't related. I wasn't involved with any of the women there, nor were any of the single women involved with me.

L: No, I'm just thinking in terms of the political.

W: But that was another factor. Here you've got a bunch of men and women of reproductive age, so to speak. You've got a lot of potential for interaction and it's amazing to me that things didn't happen. If they did I didn't know about it.

L: It is fairly amazing.

W: In a general population I don't think you'd find that.

L: Not in the AFSC population either with other projects. There was quite a bit of romancing. There was some criticism in the end. Cassius Fenton had written a report saying that he felt that personnel was really not suited for the area, that they were really unprepared. They didn't work as a team, they worked as individuals. There were a lot of problems involved in that. Did you experience any of that?

W: Cassius must have been thinking of me at that point. I was free wheeling, but I felt that if this has to be done.. You might have gathered that I don't have a small ego. I think you already plumbed that out. Cassius was a very sensitive soul and I think he was probably right. But I think perhaps he was talking within the context of a perfect model and this wasn't possible. I come back to the statement that it was chaotic, but many of us expected it to be chaotic. Had it not been chaotic it would have been wrong. Cassius was a very experienced person and I trust his judgment. I'm sure that was made during the late part of '49 when there they were talking about should we continue this or not.

L: Actually, it's an undated report, so it could be.

W: I can tell you that the lady from California that you mentioned, and also Ruth van Akren were overwhelmed toward the end of my tour. You mentioned her name, the California gal I agreed with.

L: Frances Morrison.

W: Frances Morrison left sometime in mid summer of ‘49 as I recall.

L: You didn’t have any problems with your staff, the people that were working with you in terms of theft.

W: I’m sure people stole, not from me personally but this is inevitable in this situation.

L: That was another one of his concerns. He said that he felt they went through so much local personnel, that they discharged nearly 100 people at the time of this writing because they didn’t adhere to the Quakers’ concept of honesty. It was almost sarcastic, if you can read that into a report.

W: Cassius had a very high standard of morality and I think that Cassius was expecting more than could be expected. If I needed a jeep and nobody was around to ask, I’d take it. I’d take good care of it and I’d bring it back, but I needed it. I don’t know that anything personally was stolen from me and I don’t recall stealing anything from anybody else. We did a lot of borrowing.

L: I think he meant the local staff.

W: well, Adele kept very close tabs of food and silverware and all that jazz. Al Holtz was on top of everything. Al and Adele really made that whole thing possible. I can’t remember where Cassius lived. House One I think. Our standards of deviancy were more restricted than the Bedouins were.

L: How were you provided for as opposed to.. Obviously you didn’t get rations. Where did you get your food from?

W: Adele had Ali and four other people who were cooks. They had three meals a day for us and we were allowed to eat from 5:00 in the morning until 6:30. It was a long period. If you were in Gaza you could even get an odd meal at noon. we couldn’t all sit at once. They would go out and come back at meal time. Supper was usually pretty late but they were good meals, hearty and plenty to eat. Ali had cooked for the British army so things were a little heavy. It was not the kind of food you’d loose weight on. We were in very good physical shape. The only problem is we never got enough sleep. You had a place to sleep

and it was comfortable and warm and all this, but the pressure when I was there was always that you'd sit down to eat and say, "I've got to talk to you about this." And then two minutes later someone else would come in and "I've got to talk to you about this."

L: Constant interruptions.

W: And then these staff meetings would go on for... Oh God!

L: Did you ever serve on the executive committee or any of the peripheral committees?

W: I didn't realize they existed.

L: There was a rations committee and a military committee, the executive committee. That might have been later. In terms of being a Quaker presence there, did you feel that there was anything uniquely Quaker about the work? Aside from the long staff meetings every night? (laughter)

W: I was going to say, the process was uniquely Quaker. (laughs) The motivation was Quaker. The presence was Quaker.

L: In what way?

W: Everybody was highly motivated. There was a single purpose. There was a very genuine interest in everyone begin able to do what he had to do. A tremendous sense of responsibility, one for another. That's Quakerly. A great deal of sharing. If you were the same size and somebody needed your socks you loaned them. Also a very personal... After Adele got the laundry system going, if you got somebody else's laundry or whatever, you knew what they were doing and they knew what you were doing in terms of what you need to wear. There was a great deal of caring, yes. It was very Quakerly but not a relaxed, harmonious.. it was still a little bit frenetic. It was a Quaker presence, no doubt about that. One person spoke, Russ Rosene. He stayed on until the UN took over because it no longer had a Quaker presence. I sense that in everything we do. There's a strong emotional calm with all these people, even now. Pat Hunt was asked about her husband. She's a widow now. She's a lovely lady.

L: Is this Quaker presence something that you think was recognizable for people who.. for the refugees? Do you think that they appreciated that this was different? Could they see?

W: I think they trusted us. I think they were puzzled by us but I think they trusted us. I think being a Quaker has phenomenal advantages with people when they learn of us. Being a Quaker is...

L: Because of reputation?

W: Fabulous. On the way home we stopped in Manchester, England to see an aunt of mine. She had borrowed an overcoat in Vienna because we were cold. She had an AFSC patch on her shoulder. In the post office in Manchester, England we were approached by a Friend and asked what we were doing. At that time we were trying to get a check cashed from American Chemical Bank and he agreed to take that check for us -- total strangers -- because of that patch on her shoulder. I was very moved by that. I said "Look, I don't want to get any screw up here. Let's see if we can't solve it here." He said, "I have just enough money, $600 or $700. I'll take it." I wouldn't have done that.

L: Did you have Meeting for Worship there?

W: Yes, and almost every day. Every staff meeting would be started that way. Even Jerome Peterson would have moments of silence in his little staff meeting, and Pete was not a Friend at that point. I understand he became a Friend later.

L: Okay. Do you feel that there was any effect on the local area of your being there that...

W: Me personally?

L: Yes. Anything that you contributed that would still be around standing?

W: we were at the 15th Street Meeting in New York and there was somebody going to speak on the Middle East afterwards. It turned out to be a lady from the Rockefeller Foundation who knew of Friends. When I introduced myself to her I said, "I'm David Walker." She said, "Are you David? You know Tofik ________?" I said, "Certainly I know Tofik. Where is he?" She knew Tofik and Tofik had asked her to find where I was. This is due to the fact that I took Tofik's pay to his mother when he was under arrest.

L: How long ago was this?

W: 20 years ago. It was 20 years since Gaza. I'm sorry I can't remember that lady's name but we were interested in something quite different at that time. We lived in Puerto Rico and had lots of responsibilities in Puerto Rico, but we were passing through New York and went to meeting and so forth. There was a level of commitment. It wasn't very widespread. People respected Emmett Gully. The Egyptians respected us, grudgingly I might add. I think all of us were held in some degree of esteem.

L: Do you feel that there was anything that the Service Committee did in Gaza that might have had a negative effect on the region?

W: I'm sure there are things but I don't know of any.

L: To tie it up, I'd like to ask you what your recommendations are to the Service Committee if you have any, either for work in the Middle East or...

W: well, we have not been involved with the Service Committee in the last 20 years, but it's out of a feeling that we should support FCNL instead. It's a question of priorities. The choice was made on the basis of two things. First, we feel that AFSC is understood by the Wider Quaker Fellowship and non Quakers much better than FCNL is. Therefore it gets financial support from a much broader base. Therefore we don't feel the obligation to give what little bit we could to AFSC. We'd rather give it to FCNL. Secondly, we were rather disillusioned and felt that, in particular, the Middle East part of the AFSC was dominated by pro-Israeli sentiment at one time. This was about 10, 12 years ago, and we weren't very supportive of that. We were in an institute in Washington, and it may not have been the fault of the person who was the Middle East rep from AFSC employed by the AFSC, it may have just been the audience was loaded with pro-Israelis, but it didn't leave a good taste in my mind at all. AFSC definitely is worth whatever anyone can give to them, physically, morally, the whole thing. I have always felt that Friends should pick the precise spot and precise time where you can do the most good. I think AFSC has traditionally done that. AFSC has recruited some really upstanding people. But again, it has a popularity base of support that's much broader than some other Quaker enterprises and so I'd rather stick with those things that are uniquely Quaker that we don't have much resources for.

L: Is there a question that you would like to have been asked that I haven't asked you?

W: I'm rather curious as to why this is all being done.

L: I'll turn the tape off and explain that...

END OF INTERVIEW

AFSC Oral History Interview #610
Narrator: LEE DINSMORE (D)
Interviewer: Joan Lowe (L)
September 20, 1992

L: This is Joan Lowe. Today is September 20th, 1992. I'm interviewing Lee Dinsmore for the American Friends Service Committee Oral History Project. We're going to be talking about work with refugees in 1949 in the Gaza area.

Lee, could you give your full name, place and date of birth?

D: Yes, my name is Lee Friese Dinsmore. I was born in Barren, Wisconsin on June 19th, 1916.

L: What kind of area is that?

D: That's northern Wisconsin, rural, lakes, lots of woods.

L: Sounds pretty. Was it that way when you were young? It was undeveloped?

D: I didn't live there very long. My parents moved to other small towns in Wisconsin, but I grew up in Wisconsin, generally.

L: What did you parents do for a living?

D: My father, when I was born, he was a Baptist preacher. Then he left that when I was very young and got a job with an electric supply company, an electric power company.

L: And your mother, did she work?

D: My mother was a housewife.

L: So your religious upbringing, then, I assume was Baptist?

D: Protestant, Baptist, very conservative.

L: You went to a local grade school?

D: I went to grade school in Toma, Wisconsin. Yes. I went through eighth grade there and then through freshman in high school in Toma, Wisconsin. Then we moved to Madison.

L: Did your dad serve in the First World War?

D: No, he didn't. I don't know why he didn't. I was very young, of course. I think he was working at a YMCA part of that time, but he didn't leave the country.

L: What would you say in your teenage years, between the ages between 15 and 18, what would you say were the major influences in your life?

D: My friends in high school and a group that was formed of my friends, but by a YMCA worker, secretary as they were called in those days. We had a kind of a club that really

wasn't very formal but, nevertheless, we called ourselves a club and we did everything together. They were very influential.

L: So you were involved with the Y pretty early on, then.

D: Yes, but I don't recall that I was a member of the YMCA, just happened to be with a group that ____ were doing things with.

L: When you started hearing the news about.. Did you go to school before your service in Gaza? College?

D: Yes.

L: Why don't you talk about that.

D: I finished high school in Madison and then I went four years and got a BA at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

L: When the war was coming, things were going on in Europe. What were you thinking?

D: I'm older than that. I graduated the university in 1938. Yes, war was coming in Europe.

L: Did you have any feelings about that?

D: I don't think I did. I'm sure I must have, but they were very conventional, I think. I didn't think of myself.. It never occurred to me to be a conscientious objector, although it had occurred to me to avoid getting into the military.

L: What were you doing then, at that time?

D: I finally got a job in 1940 in the YMCA in Milwaukee organizing boys clubs in houses, basements, garages, that kind of thing. That's what I was doing when I heard a man in the International Committee of the YMCA who had spent 25 years in Egypt give a talk. It just interested me greatly. I talked to him afterwards and said, "What do I have to do to do this?" He said, "Appy. Why don't you try it?" I did and forgot that. By the end of 1942 the war was on then. I heard from the International Committee in New York about an opening in Cairo. They were considering me.

L: Did you have Arabic at this time?

D: No. One thing led to another and they appointed me. Then it was a matter of getting over there. My draft status was changed to something that deferred me.

L: Did you formally apply for CO status?

D: No, I never did. I didn't apply for CO status at all, and I don't think I'd be likely, at these days, to be able to claim that. No, I didn't. All of my closest friends -- this group in high

school that I told you about -- they, by then, were all in the military at a variety of places. One had already been killed.

So I got to Egypt.

L: I'm curious about what happened. Were you actually drafted?

D: I was drafted later.

L: So you hadn't gotten a draft notice.

D: No, I didn't get a draft notice. I feel like Clinton, trying to recall.. (laughter)

L: You don't have to be that accurate.

D: I don't have to feel so guilty about it as Clinton. I had a wife and a very small baby and so being married and with child, they were still deferring people. I kind of honestly came by a lower draft registration. Anyway, but I had to notify them. I think you had to if you were going to leave the country. You had to tell them, which I did. Somebody said no problem and I took off and went to Egypt and I never heard from them again until later. I might as well carry this through. Later, I had been in Egypt and it was late 1944, and by that time here I was living in the midst of a branch of the army, there was an army camp outside of Cairo. British soldiers were everywhere. I had set up, built and ran a large kind of canteen, entertainment place and restaurant for troops. Here I was of exactly the same age as all of them. Every now and then somebody would ask me, "How come you're not in the military?" I felt the pressure of that, not being in the military. So in late '44 I wrote to the draft board in Milwaukee and said, "If you want to draft me, go ahead. I don't mind my status changing." I'm not exactly sure how I heard from them, whether I heard from them before I went back, but I went back in 1945 early in the spring and got a draft notice to report, which I did, and got into the army. I was in the army a very short time. It was a matter of months before they discovered, somewhere, that I knew Arabic, some Arabic. They assigned me to Beirut in the military attaché's office. I was there for a brief time. As soon as I was eligible to get out, in 1946, in September or October, I did and I left Beirut. So I was in Cairo..

L: When you were in Cairo working for the Y, where was your family?

D: They were home. I was all alone. My wife had whatever income I could send her or I had the Y send part of my salary to her. I took Arabic lessons then. After I got out of the military in late 1940 we went back to Cairo as a family in February, 1947. We had one child

already; another child was born not long after that in Cairo. We lived in Cairo until 1952, then. During that time the AFSC got the job of Gaza. I don't know who told them about me. I had no idea. I didn't even know they were going to be there. Somebody called on me and said, "We'd like to have you with us up there." I thought it was a great chance to do something like that. I already had strong feelings about Palestinians. So the Y people -- and it was the Egyptian YMCA -- they all agreed to my going but said that I couldn't stay there forever. I had to come back occasionally, and that's what I did from.. We got up there at the very end of 1948, and I came and went practically all of the year. I think I was there 10 months out of the year of 1949. Something like that.

L: I had your appointment date as 1/49, but that's not always accurate.

D: We were on a train for 4 days with a load of blankets from Egypt. As I remember we got into Rafah the night of December 28th. I didn't have Christmas _____.

L: Do you remember any controversy about your being hired at all?

D: No. Was there?

L: Okay. This will be news 42 years late. There was, in one of the letters, a concern that because you were coming from the Y and because of your religious background, I guess, that you might be feeling inclined to proselytize while you were there. They were a little concerned about that. I guess somebody assured them that you weren't the proselytizing type.

D: Proselytizing to become..

L: Christianity.

D: I was already becoming quite a dissident Christian.

L: It was obviously somebody who didn't know you. You don't ever remember being warned about non-partisan, non-sectarian sort of...

D: No, no.

L: Your train ride in was an interesting ride. You want to talk about that a little bit?

D: I don't remember an awful lot about it, but there were four of us. A Mr. Keen, I remember him. One of the French persons, and it could have been Michaux or... he's on our list.

L: What was his position, do you remember?

D: No, but if you have that list of biographies there that we all got in our packet...

L: I don't have those biographies.

D: Chapel. It's my impression, but I've forgotten, that Chapel and possibly Hausemann and I and Keen, and maybe Keen had an assistant or aid, I'm not sure, and an Egyptian Captain by the name of Wahid something or other. For a large part of that we rode out in the open cars because they were loaded with blankets and the train was stopping all the time across Sinai. Here and there there were people, Bedouins, and they could have stolen stuff. So we just sat there for four days. We got to Rafah and it was late in the day and as we got there Egyptian troops were all running in one direction. Somebody said, "They Egyptian guns are going to start to fire." I said, "What are the Egyptians gunning for? Because Jews will answer them immediately after they get done." They said, "You've got to find a trench or something." There will slip trenches that were all of this deep or something. Then the artillery rode through, we could see it a hundred yards away, and they started firing guns. They were called 25 pounders, heavy guns. They went on for a matter of 15 minutes or something like that. Then the Egyptian captain with us said, "And now we're going to get it." Sure enough, these mortars started flying around us and we were flat in this. You could just feel your back crawling. The shrapnel just whizzed over the top of us, all around, cut wires straight above us. Nobody was hurt and then it was all over. The moment it stopped the Egyptian troops appeared because they knew how long they fire, and it was over. So that was my introduction to the Gaza Strip. I think then, that we slept there that night. We didn't go up to Gaza until the next morning.

L: Was that the first time you'd ever been in any kind of warfare?

D: Yes. It scared me. You wanted to go to the toilet. (laughs)

L: Okay, so the next morning you arrived in Gaza feeling like maybe you might be safer there. What were your first impressions of Gaza?

D: Well, of course I didn't know anybody. I'd never been to Gaza. The misery of the people struck me immediately, a shocker. The friendliness of the team. I think the friendliness as much as anything, and the energy of getting up very early in the morning. I remember eating breakfast, eating handfuls of vitamin C because Myra Hallin, a nurse from Finland, said if we did that then we wouldn't have to have vitamin C shots. But she loved to give vitamin C shots to people anyway. (chuckles) Somehow we all sort of fit into places to do things. Although I was listed as education I didn't do that. We helped with everything. We had blankets and I remember standing on piles and bales of blankets while we were issuing

blankets, partially as a means to registering people. We didn't have everybody counted and the counting was getting very difficult because you'd say, "Where's the head of the family." And the man would stand up and say, "I am." And sometimes two men would jump up and they would argue about who was the head of the family. You'd figure out which family it was. I was the only person in that whole team that could speak any Arabic at all, I think, except very shortly after that there were Palestinians. But this was so early we hardly had anybody organized, hardly had anyone there.

L: So you were really there when they were opening the camps to the Quakers. It was the first. Do you recall how the system was developed so that things got done in some orderly fashion? I understand that when the first, for example, blanket distribution began that they thought they were going to drive up in a truck and people would queue up and they would hand out blankets, when in fact they drove up in the truck and people descended on it. Do you remember trying to work out that kind of a...

D: Well, I think we realized very soon that it was very easy to give away blankets. You could give away ten blankets to a family if you didn't watch out what you were doing. So one of the problems of registration was trying to sort out families. As somebody indicated last night, you tried to sort them out on the basis of where they came from. "Everybody from Rafah." Everybody from the various villages. You had names of all kinds of villages because people said they were from these villages. Generally, if they'd been issued tents there was a family in the tent, or an expanded family in the tent. Family didn't mean simply father and mother, children. It could be brothers, sisters, in-laws, cousins and who knows who all. Counting them was very difficult. To some extent we were dependent on the Egyptian military helping because a family learned very quickly that their ration was going to depend on how many people they had in the family. All of the sudden people who had two kids had ten kids or four kids, you know. It wasn't until some people doing the counting, and by then it was Palestinians and others -- it wasn't just a day I'm thinking of, this was over a period of time -- they began to recognize some of the same children who had crawled in under the tent from next door, standing there as one more member of the family. Desperate people, of course. If it meant a little more flour, well good. More bread. The registration itself was a harem scarem affair. But since I wasn't a part of the administrative

side of things I don't know how these things were sorted out back in the offices. I think maybe Al Holtz would be a little better at telling you about that.

L: What camp did you go to first?

D: The closest one was Breige. I seem to have initial contacts there more than.. that's the one that sticks in my mind. By that time, or very early on, we recognized that it was going to be important to use up the time of some these, otherwise they were going to get into trouble and get in each others' way. They needed to use up some energy. So we began to get them.. One of the things I did was help them fix up soccer fields, remove the stones.

L: Had they played soccer before?

D: Oh yes. Sure. Everybody had. Little kids, big kids. I had been in the Y in recreation and stuff, so I knew something about all kinds of games. So the first one was somewhere on that Breige compound, a nice flat area. Once we did that they did it in more than one place. I'd just walk into the camp and say, "I'm the Quaker that does the soccer" and I always had a great following of kids and fellows around me willing to do something. I also had a soccer ball, which was precious.

L: Did you keep possession of the soccer ball yourself?

D: No, it was up to them. Also that meant.. One thing I remember, I first started out saying, "You've got to give each other time. Little kids need to have a chance to play." I don't know if I ever said girls had the right to play soccer. I suppose I didn't. But I found out the first time I came back to each of these places that the little kids hadn't had any time to play at all and the big guys were playing all day long. There were all kinds of team and too many out on the court. It was chaos. So I had to sit down with them and say, "Look, I don't want to have to get the Egyptian army out here to make you do this, but these little kids have a right to play too." That sort of thing worked.

L: Was there anything besides soccer that was part of their recreation.

D: Soccer was the main game that I recall. When they weren't playing with the actual ball they were kicking rags around for balls. I guess they had other games but I don't recall what they were.

L: There is some mention of a man named Gray and his Rover Boys. They talk about setting up recreational activities as well. Some of the things that I've seen in there seemed to indicate that they might be Boy Scouts. Do you remember anything about this man?

D: No, I don't recall him. Maybe it was after ...

L: It was in May. Actually, I think you, in one of your letters.. let me see if I have that letter here... no I don't.

They extended your own leave somewhere between then and July. You had a couple of extensions from the Y, didn't you? Where they said you could stay a little longer?

D: Yes. I was all for working there because it was all very exciting, but I didn't mind doing that. It was kind of hard on my family, leaving them back. But ______ had people in, and even Betty Peckham stayed at the apartment for a month. So it wasn't that she was just absolutely alone. She knew people in Cairo. So I don't recall how long I stayed in any one particular time, but I know I came and went.

L: Do you recall any of the discussions about extending the AFSC work beyond July or August? There was, in July...

D: No, I don't.

L: You weren't part of that?

D: No.

L: In September, then, the Y released you for the duration of the project. That was the agreement that finally came in September of '49. For the duration of the AFSC project. We have a lot of letters saying how thrilled staff was to get you, finally, for good. Then it looks like there were a series of teachers' strikes. First of all, were you involved in setting up the schools at all?

D: I was only peripheral to this. I knew _________ who was from the Cairo school of social work. It's my impression -- you probably know better than I do -- it's my impression that one of the problems of education was "Who's education is it going to be?" We didn't have Palestinian books and "We don't want those" the Palestinians said. "They're all British and imperialistic." On the other hand, they didn't want Jordanians and the kings over there. There was a king on the other side, Farouk. But there was no time to write books for a whole school system. SO it seems to me that they used.. The Egyptians had available books and copy books and pencils. All that kind of thing you could do it with. They also had teachers. The Egyptians became -- since politically the Egyptians were involved in administering the territory -- they also became the educators, which meant they had an influence in the lives of people to some extent, from a very early age. I'm not answering you

question, I realize, but I can't answer you question. As to my connection to this, I was peripheral. I quickly became more involved in being useful here and there. But also I was mainly recreational. If you've got records, tell me what you did.

L: What I have are reports that you wrote as education director. In one of those reports -- and this is really a question about the camps as well as the schools -- there were at least three distinct populations that Quakers were working with in Gaza. That would be the local people who were there originally, the refugees, and the refugees were broken down into the Palestinian refugee villagers and the Bedouins. I'm wondering if there was any unusual kind of dynamic in having so many people in the camp that made it difficult or interesting or...

D: Much of this would be extrapolation from my later experience. Up until Gaza and some years afterwards I lived in Egypt. My knowledge of the Arab world was out of the eyes of Egyptians. The Arabic I spoke was with an Egyptian accent.

L: Well, for example, were there different recreational requirements for the Bedouins? Or did they not take part in that at all?

D: The Bedou are separate and have been separate. That's a changing matter even still, but to a large extent the Bedouins are a dying society. The Bedou are generally, to a large extent, looked down upon by villagers, city people and others. Bedouin have different accents, use a language that many, many people in Iraq say they can hardly understand. They're customs prevailed over a much longer period of time. Having to do with marriage, theft, murder, rape and all of these things, the Bedouins had a different set of codes, very strict, understood and accepted. To a large degree the court system in the city of Gaza that was there in place, when there was a murder among the Bedouin, about all they would do -- and when the Egyptians were there -- was to assign an Egyptian officer to the trial. The trial would be in a Bedouin setting, in a tent somewhere. It would be a local judge, but it would be the Bedouin decision that would prevail and everybody accepted that. The Egyptians accepted it. The village court accepted it. If they hadn't the Bedouin would have carried out their own justice anyway. So while they were different, there nevertheless was a kind of symbiotic arrangement. They lived together and worked it out. I don't recall specifically doing anything for Bedouin. If I were in the reports it would be interesting to read that. Living in Arab countries ever since that time, for twenty years after that, I now can guess what this

would mean with these kinds of relationships. I know the Bedouin kids are just like any other children. I know the Bedou like to drive cars, they don't like camels if they..

L: Did they keep themselves pretty separate?

D: They didn't live in settled cities, they moved. They were still Bedouin nomads, so there were times in the wintertime when it was raining all over the place when they could live further and further into desert places where there was rain. In the winter when they'd been able to plant some things wheat would grow and they could harvest small crops.

L: What about the government within the camps. What was the government system?

D: I know that there was some carry over from the villages. That is people came from certain areas that had a village mukhtar. Mukhtar means "chosen". A chosen person. So that authority, to some extent, carried over. The Quaker team paid some attention to that by giving the mukhtar the right of some distribution which helped preserve a traditional government and was, to a large extent perhaps, systems in keeping some stable society even in the midst of this chaos.

L: Did they have grievance authority?

D: I think they did but I never saw it operating. Normally they would, and if the mukhtar still had some kind of status then the mukhtar would have some status in a judgment.

L: Did they play soccer?

D: The mukhtar is usually an older fellow, always a man.

L: There was mention in the fall of '49 that you brought to the attention of Philadelphia -- it's just your general monthly report -- that there was a Bedouin who was starting a private school in the area who had come to ask you for Quaker assistance. Your opinion at the time was that you felt that the education program was already spread too thin. You didn't feel like we ought to be branching out into private schools. Later you changed your mind and said that you thought it probably was a worthwhile thing to lend assistance to. Do you remember any of that?

D: I don't. I don't remember any of that at all. (chuckles) It's interesting that while you were telling me this, I'm glad you came to the part where you said I changed my mind because I think I wouldn't make up my mind that easily by saying, "They've got to fit into the system."

L: When the schools were turned over finally in the end, when the UN came back and took over the operation, there was a lot of discussion about the schools, about whether or not a Quaker

should remain heading up the schools or whether it should be turned over to local people. Half the people said, "No, no, it has to have a Quaker head. It will not be the same, it will not be education as we know it." Other people said, "No, the local people need to be responsible for their own educational system." Do you recall those conversations?

D: No, I don't. I can't comment. I have an idea now.

L: What's your idea now?

D: I think the sooner an outside element could leave probably the better. Once the Quakers or whoever it was decided that it was going to be a staff that could carry on, let them do it.

L: You had language, which makes you pretty different from almost everybody there. One of the questions I'm asking is about personal relationships with the refugees, if there were any friendships developed or any socializing. DO you recall any refugees that you particularly...

D: No. That's a very interesting thing and I don't know if it would be interesting to Quakers or not. Maybe. But in the Arab world, I have found that one of the things that [tape ends mid-sentence]

[Tape 1, Side A ends, Side B begins]

D: One of the things that sets a person apart is if he does know some Arabic. In my experience with embassies and consulates, I discovered very early on that if you have a pretty good accent and you sound as if you know the language, and perhaps if you even come from the area, there's an immediate suspicion.. who are you? I had that experience. To some extent there was a feeling that since US policy is not represented by people like Quakers and others, who's this ringer they've got there that doesn't belong? "Is he a spy? Where'd you learn Arabic? What's you mother's name?" That kind of thing over and over and over. I used to get this in that part of the world. "You sound like an Egyptian. You've got partly an Egyptian accent." I lost that for years in Iraq. So the knowledge of the language is an odd thing. If you get to be extremely good at Arabic, classical and that kind of thing -- which I didn't, I didn't have any training in that -- then there's a real appreciation of being a foreign scholar which is quite different. But I found that in the embassy people very soon picked me out and were sure I was CIA. I didn't know that CIA people learned the language any better than people in the state department did, but since people had reason enough to doubt Americans as representing someone who's taking advantage of them, they doubted your bona fide-ness. This little incident on the field which I mentioned yesterday... I had a

meeting which was a very scary one. I came out to a place which is just north of Gaza. It may have been Gevalia at that time, I'm not too sure. We hadn't given them any sports yet or anything like that, but they were told that I was going to come out. So I went out with a soccer ball and first wanted them to get the stones cleared. "Clear the stones off this place and we'll make a field." It was a soccer pitch. I drove the jeep. I was alone and I saw a big crowd waiting out there for me. So I walked over to them and they were mostly young men. As usual, I was in the midst of them, a whole crowd of them, maybe 50 guys. Somebody said, "Shalom" to me. I just kept on speaking. Then somebody said something else to me in Hebrew which I don't know. So I said, "I don't understand Hebrew". Somebody said, "Your father owns a shop in Haifa, we know you." I said, "Do I sound like I come from Haifa because I talk like an Egyptian?" It was a bad time for a while in convincing these guys. I said, "I don't have to come up any more." By that time I was beginning to wonder how far away the jeep was. I was scared. I braved it out by telling them that I didn't have to give them a soccer ball or anything else, that I could go somewhere else. I finally convinced them. Whether I convinced them or not, at least they accepted me and got on with cleaning up the field. But I went home shaking. I remember that day.

L: So there was no one else in the camp at all?

D: No. I didn't have to take a translator along with me anywhere to talk to people.

L: Did you change your method? Did you take people with you after that?

D: No, it wouldn't have done any good. A Palestinian working for us could be looked upon as somebody who was already co-opted by us.

L: Is this to say, then, that you felt people were relatively suspicious of you because of your...

D: Well, I've experienced that, so that's a kind of extreme example of that sort of thing. It's always been an interesting thing to think about. Here you go out of your way to learn the language so you can use it, and then become a source of suspicion because you know the language. You're somehow more credible if you don't know the language.

L: Do you recall any riots happening in the camps?

D: I wouldn't call them riots. I didn't.. I don't recall the experience of being in it, or next to one, or watching it. But knowing about complaints of people, yes. To some extent, some of the situations would look like riots. I remember a very moving scene where Cordelia Trimble had just organized a milk distribution center. Women descended on this place, they

couldn't wait to get milk. A woman who looked to me like an old woman forced her way up to in front of Cordelia and I guess I was helping her. That must be the only reason I could be there. Maybe translating or something. She pulled her breast out, which was flat, and said, "I haven't any milk" and she cried. [Dinsmore is overcome with emotion, pauses]

L: She had babies?

D: End of story.

L: You were involved in cutting the ration lists at all? The UN at one point said "Too many rations."

D: No, I don't recall that. If I was it would be in my reports.

L: I don't see it in any of your reports. Do you remember Colin Bell's visit in July?

D: So vaguely that I wouldn't dare comment on it.

L: Did you feel at all connected with the Philadelphia office while you were there?

D: No I didn't. That was one thing I was.. I felt myself somewhat of an outsider.

L: How about staff meetings. Did you go to staff meetings and take part in them?

D: Yes. I never felt myself not accepted by the group. I felt a part of that group completely, but as to being part of the AFSC and knowing something about the bureaucracy of AFSC the way I did the International Committee of the YMCA, I didn't know that. I wasn't part of it and so I was an outsider to that extent. That's all. I perhaps thought that I may not be taken that seriously, or maybe I shouldn't be making strong remarks about things since I'm not a part of this organization. I think I had that feeling occasionally, but it had nothing to do with the team itself or with colleagues. It was just that I felt I was a temporary person going back to something else.

L: Certainly you were seconded for the project, but you weren't the only non-Quaker there. You knew that at the time?

D: Yes.

L: A lot of people actually came in on the spur of the moment without really having much information about it.

D: Yes, I realized that.

L: Did you get up to Acre at all?

D: No.

L: One of the things that I'm curious about, and maybe you can give me some information on this since you had the Arabic and were probably able to interpret a lot of it.. There were an awful lot of discussions and controversies about the Quaker relations with the military in the region. In fact, there was even a committee set up to develop policy around the military. Do you recall anything about the military -- Quaker relations?

D: Only vaguely. I don't recall specifics. I think that there was just a prevalence of pragmatism and I think we wanted the police, this was a tinder box situation. There had to be a certain stability in the area. The fact is that we were dependent upon the Egyptians. Without the Egyptians administering a place there and justice and everything else, police supervision, it would be something we couldn't do. Whether it was an uncomfortable thing, being part of the military in effect, having the military make it possible for us to do things, I think there may have been some.. I just think that the objective forced people. What could we do? We aren't the police and we can't manage this. There are criminals among the Palestinians. Some of them were in jail.

L: I won't go into the transition period and all because that's a whole other interview. I guess you stayed on with the UN afterwards?

D: No.

L: Oh you didn't. You went back to the Y in 1950?

D: Yes.

L: How was that, going back to Cairo?

D: Well, it was nice to go back to family. Cairo was familiar, but by 1950 I was beginning to think of something else and by 1952 I left the YMCA.

L: Have you kept your connections up with Friends?

D: I only have a connection with a few individuals in the YMCA. I have no real connection to the Middle East, but I get back regularly.

L: Okay, do you have anything you want to add at this point?

D: No.

L: Well, I appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW

AFSC Oral History Interview #612
Narrator: VERN PINGS (P)
Interviewer: Paula Goldberg (G)
September 19, 1992

G: My name is Paula Goldberg and I'm interviewing Vern Pings at the 4H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. It's September 19th, 1992 we're doing this for an oral history project regarding the Gaza relief, AFSC's Gaza relief program in 1949. Can you just restate your name and date of birth?

P: Vern Pings, born on the 10th of April in 1923. Here I am outside of Washington DC, September 1992. Where I grew up and how I got there?

G: Right. If you could just tell us where you grew up and..

P: I grew up in South Central, Wisconsin in a farming community. From there I went to the _________ Brothers' Hospital School of Nursing where I went and where they had a CPS camp. I went through their nursing school, became a registered nurse, then went on to the school at the University of Chicago, then Wisconsin, then I came back to Chicago to teach in a nursing school and I said, "Well, that may be my future." So I was off to Columbia to work on a Masters Degree. One of the persons who was in the CPS camp at _______ Brothers was George Mattews who had just come back from an overseas stint with CARE. I guess the AFSC asked him to recruit for the Gaza program. About three or four days before Christmas I got a call from him inviting me over to his parents' house for Christmas, which I thought was a very friendly and nice thing to do. I went over there. But before he hung he said, "You know, you're going to Gaza." I thought that was a bar or something that we were going to go to. I didn't know anything about Gaza. Well, I was there for Christmas and he really didn't talk about anything. He said he was recruiting for the American Friends Service Committee and didn't say much. But after Christmas, on the 26th, he said, "Well, we've got to get you ready to go to Gaza." Away we went. I arrived in Gaza, then..

G: Before we get into Gaza I want to know more of your history and how you got up to this point. Tell me a little bit about your family, about what your parents were involved with.

P: My parents were farmers in South Central, Wisconsin. I grew up on a farm where there was no electricity, no running water. We didn't have a radio in our home until about 1935. I went to a small town high school and the class I started off with finally graduated with 16. But I decided the high school was a waste of time, so I went to the principal and said that I

would take extra courses just before my junior year and, I said, "I want to graduate this year and if you don't let me graduate I'll go to another school where I have enough credits and I can graduate in a year." At those kinds of environments a high school.. the township I lived in had no high school so they had to pay, and he didn't want to lose the money. So he let me graduate. Then, of course, I graduated in 1939 and it was very difficult getting a job. I was not going to be a farmer, to the disappointment of my father. So what I then did was go into the Civilian Conservation Corps for a year, which was partly in Wisconsin, partly outside of Chicago, and then up in Isle Royal, Michigan where we were, as a camp, very isolated on this island. That was another kind of experience. Coming off the farm where, certainly in the summer time it was work. We would not always get to church on Sunday. Maybe there was once a week when you went to go get groceries and staples, and I may or may not have gone along on those trips. So all it was my father and mother, and my younger sister.. well, I had already left home by the time she was born because I had to work my way through high school. So it was just my sister, my parents and myself. That was our only communication. So I went to the CCC and there were all these boys. I had to learn how to get along with them and this was a new experience. That certainly effected my life because the group that I finally wound up with on Isle Royal, where there was no outlet and a boat that came once a week, the most of them came from St. Charles reformatory school. If they would join the CCC then they are on probation or they could get out. Well the background of these Urban kids .. What can I say? It was a whole different world as far as I was concerned. From there I applied to go to this nursing school because I had earned enough money to pay for my way in nursing school. Back in those days you were paid while you were a nursing school student in your second and third year. So I had enough money to go to school because I couldn't afford to go to the University of Wisconsin even though there was no tuition at the time. There were fees. I went there in September of 1940, and in 1941 the hospital had arranged with Selective Service to set up a Civilian Public Service camp. Here was another group who was quite different from my kind of existence. Those of us who were in the nursing school came from various backgrounds, but we were sharing an experience. But with the CPS group, you know, they were—they're all pretty old now—a strange group. George Matthews was one of them and he and I got to be pretty good friends.

G: This is the time of the draft? What is CPS?

P: Civilian Public Service, which was an alternative to military service if you draft board allowed it. Or you went to prison. If you were a pacifist there was one other course, you could go into the ambulance service or into the medical corps where you didn't have to carry a weapon.

G: How many years did you spend in CPS?

P:` I wasn't in the CPS. But there was this camp in the same institution that I was in. When I say camp, that's what they called them. They lived in the hospital where I lived.

G: Why weren't you a part of the CPS?

P: Because I had gone into their educational program at the time, before the CPS got started.

G: Did you know other people from the Gaza program from there, because I know Kelly and Al Holtz were..

P: No, I didn't. Not from that particular camp. There were several others who were CPS. But that's how I knew George and he's the one who recruited and got me there.

G: Did you have any other acquaintances with the Quakers?

P: Only with another CPSer who's name was John Marshall. I think he's still living. He decided to leave the CPS and he was going to go to prison. Here was this tall, handsome Texan, about 6 foot 5, and from the time he resigned from CPS to the time he had his court date so that he would go to prison, he went into the South Side of Chicago. Friends already had some sort of community program trying to build playgrounds.. This wasn't a continual program, this was sort of on weekends or something. I didn't know much about it but John was helping with this and I would go down on my days off. But that's my only real contact with the Friends until George called me up and sent me. I was recruited, sent to Pendle Hill..

G: Was this the first time you heard about this program and the American Friends too?

P: Yep.

G: Why did he choose you?

P: Well, I had an RN and one of the things that they needed was for health care of some kind or another. There were the refugees sitting on sand dunes, and some sort of medical care had to be given. I was someone who he knew who had someone who he knew who had some sort of, quote, medical training.

G: So after you found out that Gaza wasn't a bar, what was your impression of going there? What was your reaction to his offer?

P: I just thought it was all very exciting. here was an opportunity to go abroad to do something. However I grew up, I guess I had a vague feeling of always being a do gooder. Here was an opportunity to go and help a group of people. I didn't what refugees meant, really. But, you know, it was a program to help people and that's pretty exciting. I went there in 1949, so I was 25. I just went not knowing what was going to happen.

G: How did your family and friends react to you telling them you were going to go overseas?

P: Well, they didn't know anything about Gaza and they really didn't know about Israel or even the Arab Israeli war. I just announced I was going to go abroad. They didn't know who the Friends were or anything. Besides, you see, I had left home, essentially, in my freshman year in high school. I don't consider myself as growing up poor. I never had any new clothes really until I got to high school where I earned some money to buy some. All the rest were hand me downs from relatives. Again, we always had food on the farm, and it was good food; milk, eggs, meat, butter, all the rest. We had good food. I just came from an environment where all of this was not known and so my parents.. how could they object? Or even approve? They didn't know what it was any more than I did at the time.

G: Were you given any kind of orientation by the Friends?

P: Oh yes, I spend whatever it was, four or five days at Pendle Hill and discovered about the Friends. Their one great sin, as far as I'm concerned, which makes it impossible for me to be a Friend is their tolerance.. they will tolerate anything. I'm just not that way. There are times at which I cannot just accept situations and assume that whoever works things out will work it out. Even if I can't act and can't succeed, I'll go off on something else. But Pendle Hill taught me that in a matter of four or five days. This is in retrospect, but that's what I observed, because here they were, they'd have these meetings and people would talk back and forth to one another in ways that I had not seen people talk back and forth to one another. They did things that were very odd. One of the things that was under discussion was.. Here was this group of about seventy or so who were at Pendle Hill and someone's conscience bothered him about all of the starving people all over the world. So somehow he or she decided that "all right, one day all we will have is soup and the money we save we'll give to some organization." Well, they did that, except the kind of soup that they ate was more expensive because they bought the beef and bought all this stuff. It was more expensive than if they had their regular meals. So they didn't save any money. Of course,

you can imagine what kind of a conversation that was. Then I had to spend time because I was going to school and the semester wasn't going to be over until the middle of January. So I went to my teachers and said, "Could I take my exams early because this is what I'm going to do." Fortunately I was taking two classes from the same instructor and he arranged that the other two courses I was taking I could take the test early. So I had to do that in Colombia. Then I had to get a passport. None of these things did I know about, the bureaucracy of travel abroad. I can tell a rather exciting story about this. My passport was sent to Washington and the American Friends Service Committee had already purchased tickets for Adele Holtz, Betty Peckham and me to be there at four o'clock on whatever the date was, about the 7th of January. I'm not quite sure of the exact dates so we'll just use those dates. On the morning of the 6th my passport still hadn't come. Shipley, I don't know what her first name is, she was head of the passport division in Washington—a Quaker. Somebody in Philadelphia called her up and said, "We must have this passport!" Somehow she spent the day for someone to keep looking until they found my application. They issued it on the morning of the 7th when we were going to leave on the afternoon of the 7th. So the arrangements they made was that there was going to be somebody from the AFSC office in Washington to bring my passport up to Philadelphia. I was to meet her at the train, then I was to get on the train. This was also with Betty Peckham and Adele Holtz's passport because they didn't have an Egyptian visa. I was then to go to New York to the Egyptian consulate to get visas. I didn't even know what a visa was before and why one had to have one. I was a simple country boy. I arrive in New York, take this taxi to the Egyptian consulate where someone had called up because they were to be closed at 1:30 and I wasn't arriving in Penn Station until 2:00. But I got on the door and rapped and rapped and rapped and they said, "Oh, yes, you're the one." So they issued the visas. I did not know who Adele and Betty were, but I arrived at whatever the airport was and had to find them with their passports. Of course they were sitting there. Adele and Betty and my relationship started up badly. There they were at the airport and I wasn't showing up either with the tickets nor with passports or visas. Well, it was all my fault. Here I am, trying to be humble. We arrived in Cairo. It was the days before jets. We left about 4:30 and we arrived in Cairo about 5:00 or 6:00, tired. Al Holtz and Kelly Peckham were already in Gaza. They'd only seen them two weeks before, you understand, but they just had to see their

husbands so we had to leave the next morning. I wanted to stay in Cairo for a day at least, but no, we had to go. Somebody in the AFSC office there got us train tickets to get to Gaza. I was objecting to this. I was tired, but Betty and Adele had to go. So we got onto this train and we get in first class, really nice compartment. It was clean and there were these ______. We were comfortable and we were going to go to Gaza, except they didn't know any more than I did. You get to the Suez canal and that's where first class stops and there are no more trains except military trains that go from Suez to Gaza. We're on one side of the canal and the military train is on the other and you have to take the ferry across. These two women brought all sorts of stuff; duffel bags and I don't know if it was toilet paper or what. We arrived in Cantara and I couldn't find a person who spoke English. Again, Adele and Betty were "oh we've got to get over to the train! Do something, do something!!" I do not remember how we got our luggage onto a ferry and across the way and then to the railroad station. I don't remember how that was done.

G: Did you need exit visas and... to get out of Egypt?

P: Well, we had the Egyptian visa to get in and that included Gaza, you see.

G: But that was all set up. You had no problems getting into Gaza.

P: Just the physical thing. There's no reason for you to know this, but the military train was not a train—the car we were in—of officers. These were for the most part almost illiterate Egyptian fahaleen and it was crowded. We finally got seats for the women, but then they had to use the facilities, the necessary houses as we called them. You can imagine illiterate Egyptian fahaleen who are not acquainted with toilets, what that looked like. And then these two women unveiled, white compared to their sallow complexion.. well there was giggles and peering. So I had to take them to the toilet and stand guard. Then the place was so filthy, and of again that was my fault. I should go and clean the latrine! Betty and Adele thought I should be able to do something. These two independent women, you know...

G: What was going through your head when you were on the train in a very foreign reality here? You're in the desert, you're going to a place you've never seen before. What was your reaction?

P: Well, this was Adele and Betty with their insistence that they should receive some sort of attention. The real problem was that Betty Peckham.. I don't know whether... Well, we arrived in Gaza at 10:00 at night and no message had been received from Cairo to the group

in Gaza that we were arriving. So we get off the train, it had been raining, and I remember I jumped into a puddle. But there were Betty and Adele. We were sitting in this dark train because it was still a blackout then. The Israelis were still bombing or something. Well they were sitting with no one to meet us and I was supposed to do something. As far as I could see we were just going to camp there for the rest of the night. I was just to tired. In Gaza there were people who spoke English and somebody already know about the Friend because by then they'd been there two weeks already. A message got to them and then they came. I don't know whether it was later that morning or the next day that Betty Peckham went to the hospital because she had an ectopic pregnancy. None of this was communicated to me and why the two women were especially upset. Betty couldn't understand what was happening to her. I don't know.. they didn't share this with me and all they did was have their irritation and frustration out on me. So my thoughts about all that, because I couldn't see Cairo, there was this plane trip and these two women.. I didn't.. I remember we arrived at this house and Ruth Van Aken, about 12:30 or so, made us some French toast. I thought it was so great. I went to sleep. It was raining and when it's raining it's high humidity and there was no heat in this house. It was cold. The sheets seemed to be wet and you had to heat the sheets with your body temperature. I was there trying to do something about the health care system.

G: You arrived in Gaza when? In January of 1948.

P: About the second week in January.

G: So it had just started. This was the very beginning of the program. How was it to arrive in a place where maybe they had seen some Quakers.. What was your perception of the people towards you? Towards the Quakers?

P: They needed help. There was so much work to do, and that was true for almost a year. With no background in Friends philosophy or organization, or what happens in a meeting, I didn't know what to do and no one who was there knew what to do. Somebody must have said something to some physicians in Gaza who were there. The idea was that we'd find someplace so that physicians could come for a certain amount of time during the week to see people who were ill, and also the Church Missionary Society of Anglicans had a hospital that had run, at that time, for over 100 years. There were two.. one fabulous surgeon and physician. He did everything. This is how, I suppose, the contact began. What it felt like.. First of all, I didn't know what to do, nor did anybody else. There was a language problem.

I picked up somewhere.. some kid came along who's name was Mohammed. He spoke some English and had worked as a santiarian or something under the British ______. So it was Jabalya, north of Gaza. Somehow we got a room and set up equipment. WE kept that open every day and a physician came twice a week.

G: This was in Jabalya? Were you based in Jabalya?

P: No. I don't know what our transportation was, we had some jeeps and got up there and back.

G: But you mostly worked in Jabalya?

P: No, no. You asked me my impression. I knew there was a clinic. I did not know what kind of drugs we had. I did not know the physicians. The physicians spoke English and everything was translated through Mohammed. There were illnesses that I did not know about. The thing that I remember—I was only involved with this for about two weeks—was seeing babies in swaddling clothes lying there, with their eyes rimmed with flies. The flies wanted moisture and that was one place they could get moisture. I wanted to go and shoo all those flies off those children's eyes. I kept doing this and somewhere I realized I could not sweep the flies off of tens of thousands of children. I guess that was my first big adjustment. Whatever I was going to do, I had to do something where I could accomplish it. I can't sweep the flies off of children's eyes. I supposed within that month or three weeks there will still lots of people just sitting on sand dunes and we had to get them some sort of shelter. I'm not quite sure about this but we were going to set up camps. Well, once you set up camps then you've got to have other facilities. You've got to have water and all that. Somehow I moved into this and became the sanitary expert. So then we had latrines and water. I was locating somebody who could get water and negotiating with people who had wells to allow our refugees to get water. We'd have to make arrangements for them to have fuel to run their pumps. Then their pumps would collapse and we'd have to arrange with somebody to repair the pumps. I got acquainted with an absolutely fascinating man who ran a shop. He had a whole group of people and somehow he would actually make diesel cylinders. Well, these are things that occupied.. that was ongoing. At the same time food came and we had to have a food distribution system. We had to have a place to do this. Feeding a couple hundred thousand people with supplies that come in and no place to warehouse it.. I guess the first place that we built an actual distribution center was in

Jabalya. Now there was a petroleum company IPC—I don't know what it stands for. They had a sort of warehouse in Gaza and the war had stopped. There were all these supplies and somebody must have arranged for us to use those supplies. You went there and they had a great deal of lumber and corrugated.. I don't know if you've seen pictures of Gaza, but you'll see red corrugated iron buildings. We needed a distribution center so I found someone to build a shed. Once we had one up then pretty soon I got into the whole construction business of setting up distribution centers all through the Gaza area, and training people, the refugees, so they wouldn't steal lumber and wouldn't steal the sheets to make their own home.

Then we had milk distribution and UNICEF came in.

G: Did you also work with the food distribution?

P: I never gave out food. All I had was planning how to get the distribution centers. I'm very irritated. The one person in the whole number of people that I was with in Gaza, the one person I had arguments with was Cordelia Trimble. I don't know why she isn't here. She just lives up the road a piece according to her address. But she decided she was going to work with the Egyptian army. Somehow the Friends team—I guess it was with Emmett Gulley—decided that we were there to assist the refugees and the Egyptian military had to keep their hands off. But Cordelia, no. She was going to work with the Egyptian military and I discovered that she was, in quotes, stealing my lumbar that IPC had given us. This was a big fight. She wrote in her notes that she set up all these distribution centers.

G: What was she stealing it to do?

P: To set up distribution centers for the UNICEF milk.

G: What you did?

P: No, this was another program, the flour and other things... The UNICEF sent powdered milk which had to be mixed. You had to have the water and a place to have this mixed. Well, she said she got all of this through the Egyptian army. Well she didn't. She got one and the rest my crew built. But she says it was her relationship with the Egyptian army. That was in her notes.

G: What was your impression of the Egyptian army? Were they cooperative or were there conflicts?

P: Well, I had one difficulty with the Egyptian army, only one. Well, I had two conflicts. It started with Emmett Gulley and I don't know who else did this. The Egyptians were not to deal with any kind of relief to the refugees. They were to keep law and order, but that was it. One of them was in a camp and I heard this teenager screaming. Here was an Egyptian officer just beating.. I just grabbed a hold of that Egyptian officer. The guy, I think, was insane or almost insane, the officer. I told him he had to quit. His English was very limited. I look back at this and I think he was as scared of me as I was of him. Anyway, he quit beating him. That was a direct confrontation. The other was that there was a Captain who's name was Baremi. There was some tuberculosis in Gaza and so what he wanted to do was to build a tuberculosis center. Since I did all the building—the Egyptians didn't have any building materials—I had control of this, except when Cordelia went and stole it. I didn't know that I was really in charge except they didn't have anything and so he went through channels in the office and said he wanted materials to build this TB center. I talked with the health people and they said, 'That's not what we need. We don't need a TB Sanitarium. If we need anything it's a maternity hospital." So I said, "NO, you can't have it." Oh, there was a big fuss. I don't know how they solved it but I just said no. This went on for a couple of weeks. Then I guess he was still there and they caused me to be kicked out of Gaza. The problem was that.. how should I put this.. in the middle of the day I was accused of indecency with a man. A Palestinian got into jail and the Egyptian military said I could no longer stay in Gaza.

G: What was your perception of what was going on?

P: All I could think of was this Bareeni and the Egyptian military didn't want me. I said no to them in a very forceful and nasty way, I guess he interpreted it as nasty. So I was set up. This was already during the period when Friends had left.

G: This was at the end?

P: The end, yes. It had already been transferred to the United Nations. I was already working for the United Nations then, and I went off to Beirut. Well, what else do you want me to tell you?

G: A book by Howard Wriggens, he mentions Jabalya as being the worst camp in terms of conditions. Had you been to any of the other camps?

P: Oh yes! As time went on my work went up and down the Gaza Strip. We had plumbing works and sanitation, we had buildings to do, building repairs to do. So first of all, it was seven days a week and it got down to six, then finally five. Once in a while there was an emergency. I can't say that Jabalya was the worst because there really wasn't a camp that I know of, unless it came later... When was he there?

G: I'm not sure.

P: The tragedy there was that people showed up in this village and the Jabalya residents were all crowded into houses. Maybe later on there were some tents, but it wasn't a very big camp. It was really an overcrowded village. The other camps had set up tents and it looked like it was orderly. But here you'd see kids running around with no clothes on. It looked pretty awful. But they had better shelter. That was the first real distribution center that was set up on a regular basis. We had a building and got it set up. Again, I don't know how this was done. The land was owned by people and this was an empty plot. I don't remember who distributed food, who was responsible. We had to have a distribution center and I don't know why I was even asked to do this. We met every day in the early days, in the evening. That was the one contribution I can say was Emmett Gulley's. I don't know what else he did. I never talked with him and he was only there for about two months, but those first two months were very important. We met every evening and he kept the meeting.. He ran the meeting, presided at the meeting. I don't think Emmett Gulley really knew what was going on but he allowed us all to communicate and express our feelings, and we got to know each other and how to depend upon each other to get something done. How I got into this business I don't know. Some of the problems were where to build this. The property was all owned. I can remember talking with someone and we found a piece of land that was sort of empty. I don't know who owned it. I can remember negotiating with someone, "Is it all right to build out here." He gave it to us to build on. All this was still going to be temporary, understand. That was 40 some years ago. He thought we'd build a building on it, it would be his land, we'd leave and he'd have a building. I have no idea what his motive was or how we succeeded in getting the land. That's one of the first..

G: Was there much interaction or involvement of the local residents to help the refugees? Did they help them with relief work as well as integrating them into society?

P: Well, communication was cut off with the rest of Palestine. The native Gaza people were unemployed. WE hired a few. The person I worked with most was named Jusef _______. He and I were together..

G: Was he an interpreter?

P: He was an interpreter and did all sorts of stuff with me. We were together 12 or 14 hours a day and that went on for about a year, seven days a week. He was a thief. It was one of these kinds of things where I'd catch him on petty things. I had grown so dependent on him for interpreting.. [Side A ends mid-sentence]

[Side B begins]

P: ... that we would forgive this transgression. Well, he worked with me until my last month when I gave up on sanitation and moved on to some sort of job in administration, one that Al Holtz had designed. Then Jusef took over by himself. This must have been late '70s or early '80s that I got a long letter from Jusef who, at that time, was in Kuwait. The letter essentially thanked me for teaching him that one must have integrity and be honest because if you are that way you get greater rewards rather than constantly fearing that you're going to get caught. I don't remember his words in this, but that was 30 years later that I got this letter.

G: You made some impression on him!

P: Yes. I don't know anyone else in the team that I know of who had such an interdependent relationship with a Palestinian who wasn't even a refugee. Now I'm sure that there are those like Jusef Kashadurian who is here.. Too bad you're not doing him. I'm sure that there were relationships that were dependent and all this, but this.. I won't say it got in any way emotional. I left Gaza and went to Beirut and ____ he was working. There was a great sad parting, but we had worked so continuously and closely for those many, many months. I'm sure we had arguments but there were only two in which he threatened to resign. Once he actually did. It took me two or three days to convince him that he should come back.

G: With the different groups in Gaza at the time, groups of refugees, groups of locals that lived there, and then other groups of Bedouins, did you see a difference in the groups in the way you related to them, expectations?

P: All of us, as I visualize this, there were just so few of us.. It's partly the fact that the Friends built up—compared to the other agencies—we had more people for the whole of Jordan, the

whole of Syria. There were a lot of people there compared to the other relief programs. Because there were so many of us and there were so many things to do, and because we were geographically more confined than the other places, we could get things done. Each one of us had his own agenda, his own program. We had the support of each other and we didn't really argue about what anybody did, that it was wrong or right. We had the various distribution centers for food and each one ran it in his own way. Each one hired his own staff.

G: How did you see the different groups, personally?

P: All of my work was, essentially, within the camp. There was no Bedouin camp that was separate. Bedouins would go off, they disappeared. There were a couple of Bedouins, the Ababa Mundane family was very prominent in Gaza but I didn't have contact with them. I learned a lot about them, how they lived, but this was not in my work. This was just a curiosity of cross cultural situations. The Egyptian army, except for my conflicts, they were just policemen or whatever they were and somewhat of an irritant because they set up curfews and you couldn't move. I didn't see any communication, even among the Friends team. Don't misunderstand me, we did talk to one another and we learned how to use each other and how to tolerate each other. But to say that there was anything cohesive about this that we had. I never saw it. I heard this morning people kind of admitting.. We had no communication between us except on a one to one basis, other than these early meetings. We finally wound up with a meeting one day a week on Sunday. That, towards the end, just involved administrative problems for the most part. Then those who wanted some sort of.. the identity of being a Quaker, it would be a Sunday morning meeting.. That was very late in the project. I don't know if I answered your question or not. The interrelationship with groups I knew was there, but it wasn't my responsibility to get them together, to resolve things. I do know—and I can't remember what the occasion was—the mayor of Gaza sat up in his house smoking his hubbly bubbly, and I was negotiating with him on something for a long time. I don't remember what it was. There were so many little things you had to do. So there was, I know, a Gaza administration. There was a Gaza sewer system. I knew those things but it wasn't my job to resolve any conflict between groups. I had to use them and I was certainly given the authority to go to the mayor of Gaza or the Egyptian army, or go off to see the mukhtar or leader in any community. I was supposed to see that things got done

and in order to do it I did them. I suppose because of our nightly meetings in the beginning I knew what my limits were. One of my limits was I could work without _____the team. I was constantly learning what the team said I could not do. It was never spelled out in a negative way, but from people talking to each other I knew this was not practical, we shouldn't do this. When I would talk with people, whether it was getting them to pump more water, arrange to get them fuel, whatever negotiations I had to do, I kind of knew how far I could go.

G: What was the reaction of the people you had to negotiate with, the residents. Did you have any antagonistic attitudes?

P: No. As I said, Gaza was cut off from Palestine. Gaza is at the top of the Sinai desert. So the only real income out of the few orange groves that were there was the refugee operation. It was the UN money, at least at that time, that kept all the people alive, the 50,000 natives of the area. No one ever said no to anything because they assumed they would get something out of it, they would also survive. The people who had the date groves in Jarabela, they would have to irrigate their dates and have to pump water. So they had to have water for his date groves. Well, you could also pump water for the refugees. They were trampling across his land so ____ would make arrangements for paths, etceteras, so they weren't after his dates or whatever, or his land for water. He got something out of it, either protection or there was a benefit that he could also survive. From my point, it took a lot of negotiation, and it took me a while. This is working with Jusef ____ as a translator. I tried to learn Arabic and the things that I dealt with specifically where he was translating, whether it was water or transportation or salaries, I finally got to where I was understanding, but to carry out a political or social conversation, I never had that competence. He was a native of Gaza and a manipulator, a crook. His technique, I later learned that he wasn't translating exactly what I was saying. That I learned after I was working with him for a year, which was very good because by him doing that we got things done. In other words, he understood what I was trying to accomplish, and he also understood what the people... In any communication you know whether you're getting across or not. I suppose Jusef and I would all at once have to stop a conversation. WE weren't getting anywhere. He just knew that was the end. We'd come back another day and drink their tea or coffee and carry on negotiation. Some of these things took weeks to do. There were all sorts of things that I had

to learn. One of them was that _____ Arabs, if they're going to talk to you so that you're really going to communicate, they have to touch you. You're sitting on the ground and you find a hand on your leg. Well, I didn't grow up that way. It took me a long time to understand that this was a necessary part of communicating and had nothing to do with where the hand was with respect to my anatomy. It was things like that which one had to learn.

G: In reading some of the reports I also heard that besides direct negotiations with people to get them to cooperate, there were other ways. One way I was reading was you'd go through the mukhtars and have them talk to the community. Did you find that?

P: No, that was mainly with food distribution. Any program that you had, you had to go to a leader. You didn't just go out there and announce. There were family loyalties and village loyalties. People who came from this village sort of settled in the same place. The things that I as doing had to cut across all of this.

G: Well, for sanitation you definitely needed the cooperation of the refugees and the people.

P: No, I was bringing them water and tried to find the easiest way to get them water. All I had to say was, "If you want water this is what I've got to do." No one in particular argued with me. Whereas if you're having food distribution obviously people wanted more food. You had to identify who the people were, who were the cooks, who were doing all of this, and you had to work through various groups. I didn't have to do that. I'd go to camps and after a while I got to be known. Some people would want to meet me, there's be some mukhtar who wanted something or other, but it wasn't something that I had to do. I wasn't doing anything that from day to day meant survival. You needed water but somehow you could get water if you had to walk great distances. But if you didn't have food and you didn't have shelter... you know. You had to work with the existing social organizations. Food distribution people had to do this.

G: One aspect of your work also was designing the latrines?

P: I didn't design them, I built them.

G: Did you actually build them?

P: Yes, yes, and placing them. Bathroom culture, you know, all cultures have their own habits and traditions. There is a picture downstairs which shows one of my great heirs, culturally. I've finally gotten to the point where I'm building buildings and then building latrines. You

build a hole and then you put in on there with a door on it. I grew up on a farm where we didn't have running water, we had an outhouse. These were just outhouses. You look at the picture and here you see this row of outhouses along the top of this sand dune. What a ridiculous thing to have done. First of all, with the culture with women veiled, etceteras, are they going to walk up this sand dune and go into this sort of isolated latrine? They just wouldn't. You're not aware, really.. you know that they're going to have to use something. You'd see the women go off to the sand dunes and because they wore big skirts they'd just pull their skirts around them. They weren't about to use a latrine. Fortunately in Gaza it's desert and even in the winter time the sun is enough so we didn't have typhoid epidemics. We did have worm infestation with the kids and I'm sure the adults too. Hook worms and things like that go through your skin from your feet. It was things like this you had to learn, where to place them, how to place them. Some are cultural.

G: Was one set up, finally, that was accepted?

P: Oh yes. Don't forget, we had 200,000 people who were living in camps and they had to be used. You had staff in each one of the camps who was supposed to keep the camps clean, streets swept in front of the paths, that sort of thing. There was a latrine duty. They had to be cleaned because people didn't quite know how to use the latrines. The latrine would get filled up and that meant you had to dig another hole. Digging another hole is a lot of work. They weren't lazy but it was not a pleasant task to do, and the idea of being related to the latrine.. It was months and months before I learned that they'd be all filled up until they couldn't be used any more. I didn't go into them. Nobody told me! Well, you finally learn these things and then you have to have an inspector to go around and see if they're filled up or not. Then you have to plan to get them moved and so on. Things like that. It took a while. But when you talk about negotiating, one doesn't negotiate about where to put a latrine. Later on as I knew about these things you just ask anybody in the community. Walk into a refugee camp and ask, "where's the best place to put a latrine." You ask the question a few times and it becomes pretty obvious where to put the latrine. If you couldn't make a private one for each tent, where does the communal one go?

G: There was another problem you mentioned. There was also a big flea problem. Lice of fleas?

P: No, lice. It wasn't a big problem.

G: It says, "Vernon tends to attack the flea situation.

P: Well, it should have been lice. Wherever we set up detox...

G: Were you in charge of this?

P: Yes. The other thing—and I don't know where the funds came from—but there were mosquitoes and there were people with malaria. The idea was to get rid of the mosquitoes. We literally sprayed the whole of the Gaza Strip with DDT. We did get rid of the mosquitoes. I just did this. There was the DDT and they said, "How much DDT do you need?" I calculated this and said, "This is how much DDT we need, this is how many sprayers we need, this is the area and how many people we have to hire in order to cover this." I suppose this was the one time I got recognized, not by the Egyptian military but by the Egyptian public health service. There was an Egyptian epidemiologist physician. Why he can up, I don't know. To inspect something. The one compliment I can remember of all of my work while I was in Gaza was only from this epidemiologist who was absolutely amazed at how we could have gotten all of this organized for this 40 mile strip, 10 miles wide. We got every puddle. We really didn't get every puddle, but we hired camels to go along areas of the beach, some places it was donkeys. Somehow we got this done all in a matter of about six weeks. It was just.. we got rid of the mosquitoes. I don't know whether they did that the following year or not. This delousing program.. It got into the schools and I don't know if the school program had anything to do with this. We started this.

G: I think it was pretty successful too.

P: But this was handed over. I didn't go to school _____ like that. There was one insect problem that had absolutely no solution. This only occurred as far as I know in Rafa. The refugee camps, for the most part, were sitting on sand. In Rafa it was more clay than sand. People lived in tents but their food and water, whatever, got into the soil and it got so contaminated with edible stuff, flies were laying eggs and the grubs would be in there. As they hatched the tents just swarmed with flies. You couldn't live in it during the day. The only solution was to move the tent and get another patch to get infested. If you moved the tent, except in winter time, the sun would desiccate the soil and kill the grubs.

G: That's a lot of moving people.

P: I tried that in one camp and the fuss... I realized people had to work this thing out on their own. As a refugee, I got my tent up and the tent is only so far from somebody else's tent.

Then there's the space in front and the space in back. You have your territory. There wasn't much space to move and if you moved someplace you're moving into somebody else's territory. Then this had to be negotiated between individuals. There was no way I could set up an organization so that every tent owner and his neighbor could negotiate. I didn't know how to do this. I do know that in Rafa the person I had in charge of sanitation, I _____. I had tried to move people in another camp and knew this didn't work. We've got people set up in tents and then they moved and scattered all over. There was no path. There I am. This is now a year old and we still have the refugee camp, it's not going to be temporary. WE have to look for something a little.. Let's have order out of this chaos. Let's move people so their tent won't have grubs and we can... Well, trying to move people and their tents.. The weeping and wailing. The first half day I thought this was just being rebellious, until I understood about territory. You just don't take my bed away and move it. I had already tried that and I knew that was no way to treat human beings. I could see that there was a person I could explain what the problem was. People would either solve this with their neighbors or they wouldn't. That was my second summer and I didn't learn about that until July or August. One of the last things that I did was try to find out _________. More than a year and a half, the tents were just going into shreds because of the sun beating down. We had to get something more permanent because we were trying to see if we could make some mud brick, which is what most villages were made of. So we started making mud bricks. Then I left. I have seen pictures of Gaza now and whether they're mud bricks or cement blocks, I don't know.

G: They're cement blocks now.

P: Well, however, it was started.

G: You mentioned in one of your reports something about scavenger lists? Do you remember anything like that? I'm just wondering what they were, what was being scavenged and who were the scavengers?

P: People are living in these camps in tents and it isn't like our society where everything is wrapped up in a package. The streets had to be swept in front to prevent disease. The fact that we made the effort to see to it that camp areas were, in the military term, policed. We had scavenger crews. They were also the latrine crews. They were also to see to it that there

were always latrines available. Shame on me for calling them scavengers. They were environmental protectors. [chuckles] You mean you have reports I wrote way back then?

G: Yeah, sure.

P: I remember writing one or two. I didn't have time for this.

G: You were there during the transition period. You were there the whole time. What transposed at this time? What were the main changes? How did you feel about the changes from it being a Quaker project to a UN project.

P: I guess I just accepted the Friends and the other two relief agencies that were, in a sense, hired by the UN. There was going to be the emergency relief and then we were going to leave and everything would be taken care of, all the people would go back home. Somewhere it was realized it was going to be more permanent. Who recognized this permanence so we actually created.. I guess UNRWA was the agency that was created who first hired the Friends and the Red Crosses. Somebody made the decision that things were sufficiently organized in each of the areas that the United Nations could administer it themselves rather than have the outside agencies come in. I guess, certainly with the Friends there was a contract and the United Nations said, "We'll take over." There was no protest.

G: I didn't mean a protest, I just meant how did the transition go and how did the Quaker relief workers feel at the time.

P: It was Paul Johnson who was the last director of the Friends and the first one to work for the United Nations. There was no real transition. We were still all doing the same things. I left. The Friends started in December..

G: And stayed until April 1950.

P: I thought it was later than that.

G: No, that's when it changed.

P: How come I didn't get more money then? [laughter] I stayed on with the United Nations. Paul wasn't going to change his personality or change his administration. We were still distributing food and doing all these things.

G: What about either spiritual or practical changes? Was it administered differently? Were you paid differently?

P: Oh yes, we got enormous salaries and when we first started distributing we had no funds. People were paid in rations, so much more flour etceteras that they could sell. Finally our

sanitation workers, our scavengers, we paid them 3 Palestinian pounds a month. A pound at that time must have been worth about 4 dollars. $12 a month, $.50 a day. I don't know how we survived on this and we even got the clothes. We provided them with no clothes or anything. So when the United Nations took over I do not know... While I was there we still kept the same sort of "salary scheme". I don't know how that got changed, but that was after my time. WE came there as volunteers. Most of the people who worked with us in the distribution center or any place else, they in a sense were also volunteers. Even though we paid them 3 pounds a month, they were volunteers. We worked so hard to set up that kind of spirit and work that there was no one around who really wanted to change it. It was only, I'm sure, when new UN people came in, but I don't know what they did. It was Paul Johnson, and then it was AJ Meyer. And AJ Meyer didn't know what was going on. He came down as a very important man, and he just left us continually. I left before AJ even ______. I've heard tales after I stayed in Beirut with the United Nations then, of people.. Their way of living was different. We lived in communal houses. We were a commune, really. That all broke up, but that was still going on when I was there.

G: Were there problems at the time of transition, administrative or personnel problems that you remember?

P: I do remember Adele Holtz who was our caterer and kept our living arrangements. She got her funds from Friends _______ for our room and board. That, obviously, ended. She was going to continue our communal living, but she had to have money. She suddenly had no money and I do know that was a problem. Various people just assumed it was going to continue. Adele has done such a marvelous job, she's going to continue. I'm sure there were problems like that, but again, I had too many other things. The decision was made that if Adele said we needed more money I gave more money. Fortunately I had it. I don't remember how I got it, but I did. We're talking about $50 or $60 for my first month's room and board. SO the transition is.. I sort of assumed we were going to continue in the same kind of ______. IN terms of the spiritual end of this, I mentioned this before. We divided our administrative work that we had to do on Friday meetings and the spiritual community meeting was done on Sunday. So that could be separated just as it is here. Separation of church and state. We had set up the organization and it was working. WE were not there to proselytize or anything like that.

G: Do you feel that it was a uniquely Quaker relief project?

P: I have no idea. It's the only one I have really participated in other than things in Chicago and, of course, what I have read. I don't know if it was unique but it was a rather large relief operation,

G: I remember in one quote you said you didn't really see it as a Quaker unit, it was just a relief effort.

P: Well, yes. We were there to give relief, not there to espouse or proselytize or try to make anybody a Quaker. So far as I know there are no Gazawis or Palestinians who became Quakers because we were there. We were remembered for our actions and personalities, but at no point did I ever remember anyone trying to talk to Christian or Moslem or whatever bout what Quakers believed.

G: Did any of them come to you meetings on Sunday.

P: I don't know whether we didn't invite them or they weren't curious. There may have been one or two but I don't remember this. The Quaker thing was tolerance. You came there with attitudes about what you're going to do, how you're going to do it, and what the limits were. They had to be worked out, and how Quakerly they were, I have no way of judging. I don't know if anybody who was a birthright Quaker could say that this was a real Quaker enterprise. We started off with this is the way Quakers talk with one another and this is how we act. That was all there. This was quite different from the other relief organizations. The others were run by professionals. I went from Gaza to the Lebanese relief organization run by the League of Red Cross Societies. Well, there was a whole ____ organizations _____ what we did in Gaza. But that was also geographically different. And that was done by professional administrators, by French colonials in Lebanon. They knew how to run things. They did this well, and then the headquarters of UNRWA at the time was run by British colonials, the people that got kicked out of India as colonial bureaucrats. I'm overstating this but I wanted to show that there's a difference. I really don't know of any other major relief work that the Friends have done over that length of time. The emergency relief... are there some?

G: Some.

P: Bu t not of this scale.

G: Right, this was a big project.

P: There shouldn't be any question that the way the thing got set up and organized had a very Quaker attitude and orientation. I hear the people talk.. the birthright Quakers will come here had say, "Here was Quakerism expressed in action." So I'd be going to meetings and I'd hear about this thing. Now I'm not sure about this. You're asking the question and I'm assessing it in my own mind. Those of us who worked were just plain impressed with these people's attitudes and their willingness to work, the way of handling meetings and how things were assigned and distributed among ourselves or the people. There certainly was a Quaker attitude. [Side B ends]

[Start Tape 2, Side A]

G: Just ending, trying to get to some end.. You've finished your service now and one of the things you had to say was that AFSC should continue the work because you think it was useful, but under some conditions. They should get into more than just relief work. I'm just wondering what you meant by that. What other kinds of work did you think AFSC should have been doing at that time?

P: I don't know what they should have been doing. All I know is that most of us just did what we could. I think basically this is what... I'm not going to try to say what AFSC should or should not do, but what I got out of the experience and what I've heard people here say.. After I left I had administrative jobs and I would hire people who were Peace Corps graduates. I would listen to them talk. The Peace Corp.. I could relate to this. They would go into another culture and they would try to do something, change behavior. Well, the behavior that got changed was the Peace Corps participant and maybe not the village. We can justify our.. AFSC can set up environments internationally anywhere else, in the US, whatever. It should be done by young people who have to view themselves and their backgrounds that there is another world. It makes them grow. Now whether they're going to change a whole village or a whole area.. So long as the people who try realize that they can change their behavior and their attitudes, this is going to make them more successful people in whatever they do later. That's the important thing. It is not at the time, but that effect continues the rest of their lives and how they're going to approach the world and how they're going to solve problems, how they're going to live. Six months to a couple of years of learning about yourselves, and if you can help another person.. I talk about Jusef Haffa who writes this letter 25 or more years later. Well, it didn't have to be a Quaker

environment to do that, but that's not... My aim there was not to change Jusef. He was a thief and I wanted him to stop being a thief when he was working with me. If he wanted to continue to be a thief later I couldn't take responsibility for him. I observed how he manipulated people, how he schemed. IT's something that stayed with me the rest of my life. In the last year it's been brought to my attention again because I've been working with people with AIDS. The ones who wind up penniless with no family support. Some sort of welfare system, public assistance keeps them alive in such pitiful condition emotionally and socially. Physically our welfare system is taking care of them but certainly not treating them as individuals. I see these people who are desperate and if their not thieves they're trying to manipulate how to get more out of the system. I can recognize this and I don't judge them. I get irritated with them, but I'm not judging them. It's something that Jusef Haffa taught me. I could still accept him as a person even though I caught him in his thievery or machinations. He was still a very worthwhile person and I gather quite successful working in Kuwait. He's now old enough that if he got kicked out of Kuwait he should have enough funds for him and his family to go. He had property in Gaza and Palestine.

G: What do you think, looking back in retrospect, that you gave to the program.

P: Oh.... [long pause] All I can say is I did whatever I thought I could. The fact that I seem to have done quite a few things, different things, I guess it must have meant that operationally it was successful. But many other people could do it. I just got things done. Either I learned about them because of what I was doing or we found out that something had to be done in some sort of meeting and I said, "All right, I will try to do something." Whether they were the right things, I don't know and I don't know if anyone else can judge this either. I don't think it's a matter of whether it was right or wrong. WE were doing something that other people and ourselves could recognize. If the effort was really going to cause trouble we would change. WE weren't insisting that it had to be done our way.

G: How do you think experience has had an impact on your life?

P: Everything. The way I held meetings when I was an administrator. I suppose more because of the rewards I received in the Middle East where I got people together and saw that there were things that had to be done and let them see that they could share an objective and not worry about their separate prejudices. I didn't know I was doing that at the time. We got something done and that's followed me for the rest of my life because I didn't feel that if I

worked in an environment we had to go about changing it. Obviously you could make it better. It wasn't making a better bureaucracy by making a better form. It wasn't that I didn't make better forms, but that wasn't the objective. Certainly the last 20 years of my life I was a librarian and there's no reason for you to know about libraries but in the United States every one is a unique institution because there is somebody or some group who says, "We need a library." You can categorize these by company libraries or public libraries, but each one has its own community. By the time I got to be a librarian or shortly after it became very evident that the communications in this world are changed from what they were in the 1920s and '30s. Even since I have left and retired, these fax machines have utterly altered our way of getting things done. I spent a great deal of time working with different institutions trying to get them to work together on something, getting them so they could see that if they did something that was of common value to them, that was a good thing to do. There are three agencies that are surviving. One of them collapsed and I knew it would collapse because the federal government was going to give money for this and there as a time when the federal money would disappear. But the other two were ones where it was a grass roots thing. We had to work and find common purposes. Well, that takes a lot of meeting and talking and being patient. I may not sound like a patient person at all, but when you get a group together and you're going to insist upon them talking to each other—which is what I think Emmett Gulley did in his Quakerly way. We had to be there and talk and realize each other. Those are my contributions after the Middle East if I have any contributions. There are two organizations that are still surviving. One has become financially independent and the other is just sort of.. not financial but it has set up an organization in Detroit which has offshoots. They now have a computer network within the Detroit area that is unique in the US. That is because of the work that I know I started in different institutions, public libraries, community colleges, the university, companies, all contributing toward some common good. It's in their self interest to contribute to this.

G: I was wondering if you have any final comments regarding your experience.

P: No. My life would be all together different if I did not have this. My awareness of the world, what I read and how I read.. You ask the question, "what should AFSC do?" As far as I'm concerned they were the original Peace Corps and this is very important to continue.

To allow them to understand that we can change behavior in ourselves and ultimately in other people without doing it with force or being tyrannical. No need to do it this way.

END OF INTERVIEW