

# Transcription of Interview on the Early History of UUFHC

January 6, 1991

## Abstract

On January 6, 1991 four members of the early Fellowship sat down for a videotaped interview to discuss the Fellowship's early history. The members were Fred Bennet, Mary Woodward, Art Woodward, and Henry Wills. The interviewer was member Patty Bashar. The video was made into a DVD and was subsequently transcribed in the form you see here.



**Patty:** Hi, this is Patty Bashar speaking with you from the Fellowship meeting hall of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County.

Thirty years ago, Harford County was quite a different place than it is today. For one thing, it was much less crowded because there were many more farms. Into this rural community moved several young families, all eager to find good religious education for their families. One of the things they started doing to promote their children's education was to attend the First Unitarian Church in downtown Baltimore. After a while, they got tired of commuting back and forth and decided they wanted something closer to home. So, they decided to found the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Harford County. Tonight, we're going to hear a little bit of their story.

Before we begin, I'd like to introduce some of the early members to you. Right here, right next to me is Fred Bennett. Fred has been an on-and-off active member for over 30 years. He joined the Fellowship in about 1957. Next to Fred is Mary Woodward. Mary Woodward was the original founding member of the Fellowship. She and her family moved to Harford County in 1953, and they've been active ever since. Mary, by the way, is a 17th generation Unitarian Universalist. Now, Art, her husband, was not a Unitarian Universalist, but Mary talked him into it, and he's been active since. Dr. Henry Wills, coming to us from Bethesda tonight, was also one of our early members, joining the Fellowship in 1958. Dr. Wills and his wife were responsible for some of the windows in the Fellowship meeting room. They, in fact, donated them to our Fellowship.

And now, without further hesitation, I'd like to

go on ahead and ask some of the questions that we've prepared for this evening.

To generally anyone of you to get this opened up, what was the climate in the town of Bel Air back in the 1950s? What was Bel Air like when you first came here?

**Art:** Rural.

**Fred:** Oh, I think it was a lawyer's town. There was an over-stratum of families who were more or less predominant, and the interlopers who were associated with government laboratories found niches and crannies and so on, and gradually grew into them like plants on a wall.

**Art:** Horses and cattle came before people in those days; that sums up the county.

**Patty:** Okay, okay.

**Fred:** The climate was very much as it is today.

**Patty:** You had the same kind of winter as us.

And now you've all moved to Harford County, and you've decided that you want to find the Unitarian Church, and so you've decided to go downtown first. Is that how it worked? And then you decided to come back here because you didn't like the commuting?

**Mary:** Well, we had come from St. Louis here, and we belonged to the Unitarian Church there. And the first thing I did was grab the phone book when we moved into our apartment in Edgewood. I ripped through the phone book and looked for a Unitarian Church, and found it was the only one in Baltimore. And the next best choice when you move to a new community is to go to League of Women Voters, and so I immediately joined that. Found five Unitarians, per se, and then we started talking.

After we had moved to Bel Air, we started going into Baltimore, Baltimore Church, with our two children, Ann and Amos, and the Reeds went with Laurie and David and Susan and Michael, and the Marzullis went with their two children, and Mary Lucas didn't start coming until later. But she was a member of the League of Women Voters, so she was one of the first people that

got together. We had our first meeting on March 15th of 1955. We had our first meeting at our house. The names came from the Church of the Greater Fellowship, larger Fellowship in Boston, through Monroe Husbands, who gave me a very long list of people in this community other than those that we knew from the Baltimore Church. And so, with the help of Colonel Elton, Norman Elton and Wilman Elton, we got a list going, and I called over about 30 or 40 people, and that first night we had a meeting, I think it was 12 people who came to our house, and if you're interested in the names, because some of them still are here, we can tell you.

**Patty:** Maybe a few of the names of those who are still here.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Fred:** What was that date again?

**Mary:** March 15th, 1955, at 730 North Hickory Avenue in Bel Air.

**Art:** March 13th, it says there.

**Mary:** Yes, okay, March 13th. I'll accept that. Anyway, Charlie Reed and Lois Reed, Mary Lucas, Ted Stephens, and Comte Pipkin, and Florence and Frances Marsouli, and the Eltons, both the Eltons come, and Mrs. Elton, and Mary and Annie Lucas, too.

**Patty:** And when you had this first meeting, do you remember what it was like?

**Mary:** Yes, it was fun. It was fun.

**Patty:** How was it fun? What did you do?

**Mary:** Well, we decided first that we would have discussion meetings, and then we went forward and had three meetings in fairly short order, and fundamentally the same people came, although others were added. Through the League of Women Voters, Audrey Case and Jim Case came, and Steve Wills came, because Mary Lucas met you, and then Ted and Grace Stearns came, and that was from the League of Women Voters, and began to build that way. And we had three of these meetings with discussions in the evenings, and then in 1950...

**Art:** We had three meetings in which we have records. A lot of records have been lost, unfortunately.

**Patty:** What happened?

**Mary:** We talked about the need for something for our children. We talked about the need of getting together and talking about our craving for a liberal religion.

I had tried one of the other churches and had a rather unfortunate experience having been called a heathen, and that really bothered me.

**Art:** Well, you were one.

**Mary:** But it was said openly by the minister, you may not touch any of these things because you are a heathen.

**Art:** You were worse than a heathen. You were a judge . . .

**Mary:** Anyway, that's past, isn't it? Anyway, our greatest need was for our young people.

And I love the Baltimore church, and we made it into an adventure. Every time we'd go in, we'd take a picnic lunch, and we'd go into different parts of Baltimore, the memorials and the towers and the museums, and Anne and Amos Robin enjoyed that. But after a while, it got to be a pain in the neck to take that phone call.

**Patty:** So when you decided then that you had to have a place closer to home, what did you do? You talked about it in these meetings?

**Mary:** Yes, and we met in houses for a long time, and Arthur really is better at remembering all this. But we finally got Monroe Husbands to come down from Boston, and we had a big meeting at the county health department. They had a big meeting room downstairs in the health department at that time. They also had a meeting room in the library, which was in a very, very old Methodist church, which was long since gone, which was where Harrison's paint store is. We met there, and we met in different public places. And after Monroe Husbands came down, he appointed a temporary steering committee and appointed Ed, Lois and two other people and said,

you're the temporary chair. So she called a meeting together, and then we had the meeting at the Bel Air Library. And at that time, we were quite considerable, a lot more people. We had Derek and Jenny Royal, and we had the cases, and you were there at that meeting. And we had an election, and Charlie Reed was nominated president, and Deb Royal was treasurer and secretary. And then we proceeded to decide that we wanted to join the AUA in Boston and propose that we pay our dues, which at that time was \$10. And so after we passed our By laws, the next meeting, after much, much, much discussion, we joined the AUA, which was then the American Unitarian Association.

**Patty:** So at this time, then, did you decide to start meeting regularly in the Methodist church in the meeting room, or you were still going around to different houses?

**Mary:** We were going to the Library, the bottom of the Library, houses, and then we set up a committee in the office to look into it.

**Art:** Well, we had a look-out for Adventists. No problem that they met on Saturdays, so we could meet on Sunday as long as if somebody came there early enough, we wanted to turn them around. The Methodist church later on said, well, you know, get your overflow over here, you can have it for nothing. They were very kind to us.

**Patty:** Did you have a lot of people coming in those early days, when you were meeting in these different places?

**Art:** A couple dozen maybe.

**Mary:** It seemed like a lot then.

**Art:** It's hard. Well, the predominant number of people that have joined us over the years, up until the League of Relative Wood recently, were mostly from everything through the ground, what was then known as Army Chemical Center at Edgewood, and Bainbridge, which is an active naval station now, and then Martins, which is Quasize. But the point is, this was a floating population. We've had a lot of military people.

They don't stay around forever. So people have come and gone, and if you had totaled up all the names of those who joined, it's quite a mob.

**Patty:** And so during these early meetings, did you have structure similar to what we do now?

**Art:** No, discussion groups.

**Fred:** Could I make an insertion here? Since I have to explain that I did not join this group in order to give my children the benefit of religious education, I joined mostly as a discussion, the discussion sessions in the evening. And I joined for reasons that I believe others would admit they joined, because it was a fine group, and it met the spiritual needs of the Fellowship. I was already going to the Friends meeting in Fallston, and that was taking care of religious education for the children.

But I wanted to point out this short list that I made of the 1957-58 signers. There were six Ph.D.s, maybe seven. Seven Ph.D.s, and it was pretty much more like a university faculty than it was like your everyday church. And I think it's maintained that characteristic almost up to present time.

**Patty:** And what did you discuss in the early days? Very philosophical things. With all those Ph.D.s, I imagine it would get pretty philosophical, but can you recall any of the early issues that you were dealing with, other than getting yourself a building and getting started that way?

**Fred:** I heard Henry give several lectures on molecular biology that were just outstanding. I think I tackled subjects like existentialism.

**Mary:** And death!

**Fred:** Yes. Yes, that was one of my favorites. Yes, it was.

**Mary:** I remember. It really made an impression.

**Fred:** So, and Arthur was, everybody had a chance to lead one of these groups.

**Art:** Well, you had to have a chance, because we didn't have the money to pay speakers with.

**Mary:** We had Albronsen Wood come down from Boston and talk about religious education. She met with the Dunnings by that time had joined, and she was very much interested in the religious education part of our Fellowship. But we were still only meeting every other Sunday, and I think that's hard to realize. Then at that time we also had a joining because the Human Relations Commission was established, and a lot of our members were in that Human Relations Commission that was started in Harford County. And we had a joint worship service at least every year with the Union United Methodist Church up in Avenue. And we had a relationship with that. Then we also, and I remember it was by unanimous vote, and Fred Bennett was the one that brought it up. We had an integrated Bible school with the Quakers, and he proposed it, and we unanimously supported that. And I know Lois Reed and I both taught art at that integrated Bible school. It was the first in Harford County ever. And that was... Yeah. And it was really a very beautiful experience, and I'll never forget it. And that was a long time ago. That was back in '62, I think.

**Art:** Well, that led to the connection to work. Yeah.

Going back to the thing you probed Fred about, I just remember one of the very earliest minutes were just meetings in homes. But there was a formally proposed resolution that passed unanimously that a business meeting part of that session could not last more than three quarters of an hour. Oh, yes. That's right. Otherwise, it messed up the discussion.

**Mary:** I remember some of the minutes said, we had no discussion, we had no meeting, we just went right to the discussion. We didn't have any business.

**Art:** We, of course, broke the resolution. Regularly, it was all written.

**Mary:** Arthur, you had some comments about a lovely budget.

**Art:** Yeah, one of the earliest copies of budget I could find and a lot of missing stuff was the \$729

for the year. That included payments on the lot. That's great.

**Patty:** Henry, how long were you members, you and your wife? Do you remember how many years you came?

**Henry:** No, not accurately. I would say probably...

**Patty:** So it was long enough for you to get a feel for the Fellowship and what... We didn't even go to New York that long ago. You could get a feel for the Fellowship and what was going on. Can you think back to any particular thing that went on in the Fellowship at that time that you're really proud of or that really made an impression on you that you would want to share now? I know I sprung that one on you. If you want to think about it a little bit, I can answer another question and then maybe just open it up to the other thing and come back to you. It's like a proud time.

**Henry:** There were a lot of developments along the way. The correction of the buildings, the painting of the buildings and the direction, the painting and fixing up and so on that went on. This was quite impressive. Gradually, we got more or less formal theologians to come in from time to time. I don't know what has developed since the time that we left. At the time that we left, there was no 100% theological guidance. But we did have people come in perhaps once a month or something like that.

**Patty:** Who picked the people that came in? Was that a joint venture?

**Henry:** The whole group.

**Patty:** Do you remember some of the early speakers and were they addressing issues of the day like in the 60s? There were a lot of civil rights issues going on. I'm sure you must have had those kinds of discussions here.

**Henry:** Yes, there was large involvement in civil rights. My wife used to take groups and arrange to meet with groups of black people in various establishments. Sometimes they'd get thrown out.

Eventually, they reached the point of not getting thrown out.

**Patty:** So in those early years in the '60s, there was still segregation.

**Henry:** Oh, yeah.

**Art:** Right in the middle of it, yes. That's when the schools got not integrated, well, desegregated. I think if Charlie and Lois were here, they'd be submitting pieces to this puzzle.

**Fred:** Isn't it true that Charlie was on the school board at the time that desegregation occurred?

**Mary:** Yes, that's right. We wrote a letter to the Board of Education, and that's in the files. And asked that the schools become integrated. This Fellowship was moving in that direction almost as soon as anyone else on the county did not.

**Fred:** Furthermore, wasn't it true that Charlie, through his connections in the city of Bel Air, was able to find and purchase this property?

**Mary:** Right.

**Art:** We already erected the building. Another lawyer. Yes.

**Mary:** We already had the building up. Yes, Henry had the building up.

**Patty:** We also spent a minute on that, just a minute on how the building came about. I don't want to take a lot of time on it, but how did you decide to get the funding? And was it a unanimous thing, we're all going to contribute, and then we're going to find money for it? You never worried about this funding?

**Mary:** We didn't get the money before we found the land first, and then we got the money. That was the way the building was.

**Art:** The building basically came because we had a piece of land. What to do about it was a problem, and all of a sudden, one of our members, Ben Cap and Al Tank, came in and said they were cleaning a whole area of World War II vintage basic training structures off Aberdeen

Proving Ground, and there were two left that were suitable shells for the building.

**Henry:** They were obtainable for no cost, except the cost of hauling them.

**Art:** Away from the Proving Ground. 1500 bucks a piece, which is a fantastic bargain, even in 1961.

**Patty:** How did you go about finding someone to haul them off?

**Art:** There was a guy who was a contractor to clear all these old buildings out, and his profit came from the salaries of the wood. But if anyone wanted to buy a shell, and made extra money, he didn't have to pay labor to pull the boards off neatly so he could sell them.

**Mary:** We all sat out under the oak tree, which is now gone, and were having a party as it came down the road, and we all leapt to our feet, and cheered, and clapped, and set up balloons. It was really an occasion.

**Art:** Tell the whole truth, maybe you were giving Charlie and me the worst for drinking beer on a church watch. It was a hot day. Charlie and I could both vote for that.

**Mary:** Charlie knew somebody who had this land in it. It just came available very suddenly, and we got the mortgage on the land, right Henry? And then we mortgaged that.

**Patty:** How many of you got the mortgage for the land?

**Art:** Oh, a little more on that. It gets hard to count bodies, because the records are a little... I would suppose there were a couple of dozen bodies. Yeah, counting couples of two people.

**Mary:** When you have this chance, then we got the money.

**Art:** We floated around 25 or 30 for quite a while. We had a land acquisition fund at the time, but until we actually saw a piece of land and could smell its availability, it wasn't growing much. It was about, I think, a year before we bought the piece of land. It was probably

about \$300 accumulated, \$10 a share. When we actually got the land, got the loan to buy it, then the money came in and it matched. And then the same thing happened all over again. We started a building fund, and nothing much happened until Al Tank found these building shells.

**Patty:** Once you knew you had it, then you could go ahead and get the money for it.

**Art:** Well, we had a mortgage at the bank, and we would lose our lot if we didn't pay. It was a stimulus.

In memory of our earliest meetings, when we stopped meeting at home, we met in the old Library, which is gone now, but it was the old, abandoned, second Methodist church, where George Harrison's paint store is, well, where the woodworker shop is really, and we were not allowed to meet in the Library proper upstairs on the main floor of the building where the old Sunday school was, but down in the basement, and given the fact that the building had a leaky roof and the basement had a dirt floor, it was dank and it was crowded, that's why they bound books, you had to push the bound books aside to get elbows on the table to have a meeting.

**Patty:** So there was a lot of incentives because of the conditions you were meeting in and also because of the fact that this was available to go ahead.

**Art:** We could meet, but we couldn't have a Sunday school.

**Mary:** And remember, we did try other churches, but we did not get accepted.

**Patty:** So once you moved into this building, how long would you say it took for you to get settled and get meetings going regularly and have members start coming in?

**Art:** It seemed to take forever. We moved in as of those pictures in June, and we started meeting in the following September. We had cement flowing and everything else. The building was functional, it just took us a summer to clean it up and paint it.

**Patty:** And then when you finally were in your building, your new home, did the services then evolve into what we sort of do now, or were you still kind of basically having meetings or discussion groups rather than a set pattern of worship?

**Art:** We had a Sunday school already going. We just had more place to do it with that whole building, what we had before. Up to the time we was here, we'd met on the Wilna Sunday Adventist church. That was an old two-room schoolhouse with a service going on one side of some folding partition doors, which were not sound-proof, and four Sunday school classes. And the other half was a two-room schoolhouse. And then younger kids and very old kids moved over and met for this church. It was a bit of a mess.

**Patty:** So it was much better here because you had everything localized. Did you all take turns teaching in the Sunday school?

**Art:** Yeah. We usually ran for half a year.

**Mary:** I ran two or three years, you know, the way down.

**Patty:** Okay, and you then started having guest speakers regularly? Or were you still kind of carrying the people yourself? Mostly do it yourself.

**Mary:** One person took a turn.

**Patty:** And how long did that go on?

**Mary:** Quite a long time.

**Art:** Till, for practical purposes, about the time that... What's the name of the man whose students came down? Extension minister program. From near Hingham.

**Mary:** Oh, Dick Fuchs.

**Art:** Dick Fuchs. It was called an extension minister, or minister on loan program, something like that. And we had a Unitarian minister who spent two weeks here with us, full-time, intensive. And that got us over the hump of a 20-year argument about whether we would ever go for a minister or not, with strong resistance against the idea of maintaining it throughout the 20 years.

**Mary:** We really discussed that forever and ever.

**Art:** Ever, yes.

**Patty:** Why? Why did you have to?

**Mary:** Because some people were really against it, and as I remember, and I guess I can say this to these and ourselves, were very much for having a minister. And there was some on the other side which just didn't want it because they liked it, you know, coming from us. Just them coming from us and meeting our needs rather than bringing someone in.

**Fred:** I'd like to mention that, in my view, that this Fellowship has always had a very high standard of music. And from early on, Dirk Reuyl was playing piano. He did Bach very well, in fact. And Inez Buis is in the same tradition, and he has been with us almost from the start. And others have come and gone. I don't know, just too long. Do you have any recollections?

**Art:** Dirk and Inez have come for most of the years, actually.

**Fred:** I think Dirk and Inez are the principal movers and shakers in the music for this Fellowship.

**Art:** A burden on them because they didn't have many relievers.

**Mary:** Charlie played a lot, too.

**Art:** Yeah, but Charlie would still take a piano lesson.

**Fred:** Yeah, he was coming later.

**Mary:** He was playing when he had piano lessons or not, making mistakes, and he just did it.

**Patty:** Did you have a choir, too?

**Mary:** Yes.

**Art:** No. No, we didn't. We had a slight... Inez organized the first choir that had any continuity to it. That was, what, ten years ago when Arnold kind of faded.

**Patty:** And did you sing hymns during your worship service?

**Mary:** Oh, we did.

**Patty:** Did you sing the hymnals?

**Mary:** And we had an upright piano that the Reeds brought in, and then that got pushed down the hall and into the Sunday school, and we had a piano down there because we had our worship services for the children in the big room. And then we had Jenny Royer would come down and then lead the hymns for the children.

**Art:** Oh, that's right. She used to play music.

**Mary:** Yes, she played a lot of music down there. She played some sang.

**Patty:** Well, I want to ask something else.

And then we got this other piano, by the way. It's a beautiful piano. From Charlie Reed.

**Patty:** I wanted to ask something else, and I asked it of Dr. Wills, and maybe now I can open it up to the other three. What would you say is the proudest moment of the Fellowship? What were the best years? Can you remember anything that you early people accomplished that you're especially proud of and you want to share with everyone else now?

**Art:** That's kind of hard to answer.

**Patty:** I know. It's very general. If you could just come up with...

**Mary:** It's horrible to say, but I guess you would say the people. The people that came here were just always just wonderful. Then next we had this building, and that meant a lot to all of us. It made a place for us to come together. But I think that we could have met in a barn or we could have met in a haystack or wherever. I think that the people that came here came for a need and because we loved each other. That was the greatest thing. It was really special when you feel alone, because I remember when Lois and I had an integrated art school here, that the neighbors were very resentful for that. I was going out the door, and the kids came over and

threw rocks at me and threw rocks at the building. It was very distressing, but I felt that we were together and we stood together and that we could take anything.

**Patty:** That was generally your feeling throughout that time?

**Mary:** We were very supportive.

**Patty:** You said that you wrote letters to the School Board asking for desegregation, and then you had an integrated Art School here. Do you remember any other things that you did at that time?

**Art:** Regulations, in general, we were involved in.

**Mary:** Then we were very much involved in the Vietnam War, and we had people sleeping here almost every week, two or three times a year. We had marches the way the Continental March left here. We fed people for years.

**Fred:** When did Frank and Mary Tittle join the Fellowship?

**Art:** Oh boy, pretty early on. I would guess maybe in the late 60s, early 70s, so just guessing.

**Fred:** We had a few others from the black community. The Rodgers. The Rodgers were members.

**Fred:** When did they marry?

**Mary:** Not way after Mary Tittle. Mary Tittle and Frank came in after the dialogues.

**Patty:** We had dialogues about race relations that brought people in?

**Mary:** This was separate from homegrown.

**Henry:** Mary Tittle came in in 1965. They were members by the time that we left.

**Art:** There were never a large number of people in this Fellowship who were native Harford Countians.

**Mary:** Janie Elliott. Janie Elliott and Charlie come immediately to mind, and then you start



thinking.

**Art:** Janie Graybeal is Charlie's sister. He's not very likely to migrate in the way I did. Mason-Dixon lines up there to the north. This is Southern Bible. Basically it's the northern fringe of it, but it's noticeable here. That's why we got spurned by almost all the churches. We asked if we could use their buildings for meetings. Well, it wasn't on the race issue. That was always hidden. We had a bad reputation that way. No, it was all on the basis of contaminating the sanctuary with our religious notions.

**Fred:** Does anybody have anything on the remembrance of our relationships with the Presbyterians and Dick Schreffler?

**Art:** Was Dick Schreffler positive? Were the Presbyterians, as church, negative? Well, Mrs. Reed, Charlie's mother, was a Presbyterian.

**Fred:** We had, I thought, some roots there and possibly some contacts.

**Art:** Dick Schreffler was very active in the whole array of civil liberties, black and white stuff, but he got censured by the church. Not all members of the church. There were people like Charlie's mother and many others in that church who supported Dick, but the majority gave him a business for getting involved in the [H.] Rap Brown Trial Affair, for instance.

**Patty:** What was that? Did his Fellowship get involved in that?

**Art:** Yes.

**Patty:** And what did you do? Tell me a little bit.

**Mary:** We organized something called K.I.T.T. and David Reed and Arthur were co-chairs of that, and we saw that the counselor, Mr. Kunstler and all his staff and [H.] Rap Brown could get meals because they couldn't be fed in Harford County too easily. So we joined with the Ames United and we went to every church in Bel Air trying to get places and we found Ames United, this Fellowship, and New Hope Baptist Church. Yeah. That was all the places that would take

him in, and Kunstler and [H.] Rap Brown came here one of the days for lunch, and we gave lunch to everybody that was in there.

*[H. Rap Brown's trial was originally to take place in Cambridge, Maryland but there was a change of venue and the trial was moved to Bel Air to start in March 1970. -Ed.]*

**Patty:** And did you receive a lot of flack from the communities that were in there?

**Mary:** They were very upset.

**Art:** Communities ready to blow, that was the lesson, because they passed the word around and closed all the restaurants, closed all the restrooms, and anyone black was followed by half the state police force in Maryland was here. Every individual was followed by a state police car until they left.

**Mary:** Dialogues. Because the dialogues had been going on before this, it made a basis because we were talking across racial lines before [H.] Rap Brown, and this helped because then we came all together and were able to do something about that. It was an amazing, amazing feeling.

**Patty:** And it was kind of an organizing factor for you. I mean, you were already together and this helped to bring you more together.

**Art:** Well, the real threat, I mean, if a riot had broken out, which was clearly just over the horizon of the possibility, the very first people, since predominantly the mobs that gathered were not black people, they were white. Black people who didn't want to get anywhere near Bel Air, they didn't have to, but the highly concentrated small ghetto of blacks in Bel Air were thoroughly outnumbered, they'd have been slaughtered.

**Mary:** Yeah, people started calling me early that morning and said, what did I think, you know, how did that feel, and what did they think would happen to them? So we had known from the dialogue. And there was one of the teachers at the high school, Del Brown, was with the principal most of the time trying to keep it calm in

the high school because, see, rumors get started and then...

**Art:** Well, some nastiness came out of it, we got it surfaced, but for instance, when you realize that violence could break out, well, it did, these guys were bombed to death, but a riot didn't follow, but one of the things that Dave and I did was say, well, okay, what if something does happen, what then? Well, I got ahold of Red Cross in Baltimore, and they said, no problem, no problem, we've got crews already loaded and ready to come, we realize it's a bad situation. The minute we get a call from the mayor, we'll be out there. They said, fine, what are you going to do when you get out here? So there's a riot, there's going to be people hurt, where are you going to treat them? No problem. I said, what do you mean no problem? Where are you going to go? Tell me one place. They said, well, just go in any church. They said, well, this is Bel Air, you don't know what you're talking about. And I circulated through all the churches within the town limits of Bel Air, roughly, and this church in St. Margaret's was the only one that says, yes, we don't mind for the Red Cross to set up an aid station even if you get blood on our gym floor. The rest of the churches said no, because they knew the blood on the New Methodist Church floor was going to be black blood and they wanted none of it. That's what you were facing.

**Patty:** And would you say that during this time period that all of the people that were active here believed strongly in what you were doing in supporting?

**Art:** There wasn't any controversy about that. I think some people were a little apprehensive, but something bad happened to the building. But we had plenty of experience with vandalism, so it wasn't any worse then.

**Fred:** What was the insurance rate? I'm sure Charlie anticipated some things after the first tomato started landing on the front wall.

**Art:** We probably had some form of insurance. At least it was addressed in the policy. We knew where we stood. I don't know explicitly. Policies

change over the years. These are little things that happen.

**Patty:** Well, as an outsider listening to you, because of course I wasn't here then, it sounds to me like the work you did during those years certainly meant a lot to this community and to the future of many of the people here. And the fact that you had the courage to do it says something also about the early members and how strongly they felt about their convictions and how they would fight for what they believed in. So I would say, from my point of view, that those were certainly some golden years for the Fellowship. Just looking at it. I mean, maybe not easy years for you, but certainly years where you were able to make some changes or to help make changes in the community. Then there are times when every group goes through trouble periods. Can you recall any times when there was a lot of diversity or a lot of not getting along or feeling like things were not going well and you had to work strongly to get back together?

**Art:** Within the Fellowship? No. **Patty:** Yes, within the Fellowship.

**Art:** I grew up over this strong period.

**Mary:** We had so many, I guess you'd call them open meetings where we sat down and talked things out together and whether we disagreed with each other or not. And you know, as Unitarians, they get to talk and argue for hours and hours. And sometimes these discussions would go on two or three meetings and we never resolved it in one time, but we still loved each other.

**Fred:** Yes, and there was a . . .

**Mary:** We used to have big arguments.

**Fred:** Each member was held in high esteem and that was an important factor in keeping the group together.

**Art:** Oh, yeah, you could flatly disagree but you didn't have to get mad about it.

**Patty:** And you don't ever remember really heated discussions where you're able to let go?

**Art:** Oh, sure, heated but not unkind.

**Fred:** We like saying vigorous. Vigorous.

**Art:** I used to face off against Francis regularly. I'm sure we were baiting one another just to see what would happen, but it was fun. And Fred would start a fight with me and I would kill his ass.

**Fred:** I was finished just at one of our high moments was when we stood tall under President Reagan.

**Patty:** Well, what did you do then?

**Fred:** Nobody laughed.

**Art:** We became a nuclear-free zone just to pull his tail a little bit.

**Mary:** Yeah, we did do that.

**Fred:** I had to give up my dream that he watched.

**Art:** It took us around six months by the time we formally decided we were, yes, going to go through the business of becoming Unitarian Fellowship, which took some machinery, until we could become eligible to join, which required submission of a copy of the bylaws. And all the bylaws were led by the statement, so Charlie and I got together in a couple of evenings, I think, but the first statement, the statement of purpose, it took six months on that one. Non-stop debate.

**Mary:** Finally, Grace had solve the whole thing. She said, let's use the one we wrote first, and then after a while, if we don't like it, we can always change it. And so we passed it.

**Patty:** And do you remember what the one was? I know it's there, but who remembers it? Who can say? Can you recite it? Is it like forever? Is it a whole paragraph? Oh, no, it's four or five lines, handwritten by Mary. But it took you six months to finally decide to use that one.

**Art:** What about the commas? What do you want to end over there?

**Patty:** That must have been real interesting.

**Mary:** It was. It was absolutely frightful.

**Fred:** Yeah. Would you like me to get it and read it into this proceeding?

**Art:** Yeah. After all that effort, it's probably worth it.

**Fred:** I hope I can find it.

**Mary:** And since I was the secretary, I had to write the first book. And Barbara Alcaraz, who was the originator of this rug, when we got it all finished, it was about, oh, it was well worn, but not disgusting. We poured a cup of coffee over the whole thing, and then we decided we'd better not leave the book out at coffee hour, so we moved it away from the table. A whole cup of coffee went all over the place.

**Fred:** Here we go.

**Mary:** That's not the original book. The original book...

**Art:** I know we had a long discussion about whether you want to use racial or ethnic over too.

**Fred:** I have to think of what he thinks. This may be something modified. Let me read it, see if you remember it. "The purpose of this Fellowship is to further individual freedom of belief, discipleship of advancing truth, the democratic process in human relationships, and brotherhood undivided by nation, race, or creed."

**Mary:** Right. That's what took six months.

**Art:** Every one of those words got argued.

**Patty:** Every one.

**Art:** Not the article.

**Mary:** You know, that really is beautiful.

**Fred:** I would have argued discipleship right to the bitter end. I don't think that's a word.

**Patty:** Did you each write it or did one person write it and then you argued about the language of it?

**Mary:** One person threw out the idea and then we argued.

**Art:** It evolved. And then finally, Grace during result after the six-month debate where we're getting nowhere but saying, why don't we go back to the original statement and just write it down and send it in. And everything else was worse.

**Patty:** And you kept it since. Have you ever wanted to change it?

**Art:** I don't think it's ever been modified. Not the statement of purpose.

**Mary:** I don't think we did. I made a lot of blood, sweat and tears went into it. I figured we could probably get it changed.

**Patty:** So that might have been considered a troubling period when you were trying to come up with, because it was fun doing all of this bickering and bantering back and forth to come up with a final product.

**Art:** The nature of Unitarians. Fred and Mary here were presenting the layman view on that as religious here. That's the way God designed Fellowship members to discuss things forever.

**Patty:** Well, now we're up to the point where maybe Dr. Wills wouldn't be a part of this because he isn't a part of this now, but maybe he would want to throw something in and I'd like to hear it. And I'm getting to the question you want to know.

**Fred:** I want a level playing field. You look at Henry and you say, Dr. Wills. Now, you could say Dr. Three other times.

**Mary:** I told her not to.

**Patty:** You see, it got into my head and I kept saying it. I'm sorry. Dr. Henry.

**Fred:** Call him Henry.

**Patty:** Henry, I'm sorry. I'll call you Henry. But I never called you Henry. What are your hopes for the future of the Fellowship? You know where we've come from. You were there. Where do you expect that we're going to go? We're in a new decade. We're in the decade of the 90s. What do you hope for us? I'll open it up to maybe

Fred first and then Mary and Art and then Dr. Henry if you want to throw something in. Well, maybe Henry's question could be where do you see humanitarian universalism going in the future based on your where the way you've been involved up to now? So Fred, I'll open it to you first.

**Fred:** To me? Okay. What are your hopes for the future?

**Fred:** Well, I like this article on Purpose. Individual freedom of belief, discipleship of things, and truth. I think we neglect that. The democratic process in human relationships is pretty good. And brotherhood undivided by nation, race, or creed. And I would hope that we would develop simple, austere, very high quality, reverent kind of worship. And I would hope that we would back off from from taking up political, ethnic, or gender related topics that come and go, as we've seen them come and go over the past 30 years. I hope we would let that recede to future discussion groups. Let me just come to it later.

**Mary:** Skip me. I'll do it later.

**Art:** You're talking about right now and more specific and general, we're sort of at a place where we were some time ago, which was, we were trying to get a Sunday school started and people were starting to show up at meetings and houses got too small, we didn't have a place. We needed a place, how do you get one? Well, we filled this building, which was that this might never happen. Mostly because we took the revolutionary step of acquiring a minister over two or three states, period. The building right now isn't very much longer big enough and we've got to do something about it. And it's not an easy process. We lucked out the first time because we got so many bargains. We bought the lot at no profit. The building was practically free. The structure, we had to spend \$2,000 to fix it up, but we got it. But we managed to grunt and groan and get over it, but it was a period of uncertainty. You didn't really know whether you were going to be able to pay the mortgage payments on the building investment, especially in the summertime when

people don't come. Don't have services. Nobody puts his checks in. That was a problem. We're going to have to go through some of that and there will be growing pains. I assume we'll survive them. I'm not agreeing with some of what Fred said, which is to say on that side of the coin, I think the traditions of Universalist Unitarians both involve a high degree of concern about the manners of social welfare politics to the extent that it affects social welfare. I don't think politics primarily. And I assume they always will be and I'm all in favor of it but I don't think that will stop. Where's the line you draw? We long ago repeatedly affirmed that we wanted to have, when we had a Sunday morning service, we got to doing that regularly with this building. The tenor of the Sunday morning service was primarily to be involved in discussion addressed to moral, ethical, and religious questions. And we used to resoundingly, we resolved that every year and then proceeded to ignore it for the rest of the year by going to church on Easter. You're purified, you don't have to worry about it after that. But I think that in talking about the progress of exploration of Gulf oil, which is one of the Sunday lectures I will remember. I'm with Fred on that one. That ain't what we should be meeting on Sunday about. But the discussion groups about manners of common interest to the people who want to spend an extra evening once in a while doing it, that's dropped to pretty low ebb. Unfortunately. I miss it. That is the proper forum for addressing all sorts of questions, which are just problems because they're interesting. I would like to see Unitarians across the nation be, for instance, much more concerned about medical ethics than they have been. There's some serious problems out there that we're ill-prepared to cope with, and certainly Christianity doesn't give you the means to deal with them. This technology has run too fast. But nobody's discussing the heart issues as far as I'm concerned.

**Fred:** I agree with that, and I would like to see that discussion again.

**Art:** Yeah, but not on Sunday morning.

**Fred:** Well, it's an ethical issue.

**Art:** Well, it is, but. . .

**Fred:** Do we have a foundation under which we could discuss and engulf some of these questions?

**Art:** The discussion is a question, but isn't the answer?

**Fred:** I don't want to discuss the question. I want to discuss whether we have the ethical foundation.

**Art:** Oh, okay. Well, that's part of the discussion.

**Fred:** Can we make a decision based on moral or ethical principles? Are our principles so broad and so vague that we can't bring them to bear?

**Patty:** Well, before we get into a philosophical discussion, I bet that will take the rest of the tape, I'd like to come back, but I want to hear Henry's feeling because I don't know how long we have to go. What do you think about the future?

**Henry:** Well, of course, I know nothing about the present status of the group. I think back to the time when I belonged to the group, at which time we had two meetings on Sundays, what might be called, I suppose, a worship service in the morning and a discussion group in the evening. As far as I was concerned, the discussion group in general was more useful to me personally than the worship service. I never believed that there was anything to worship. So there are things to be astonished at, perhaps, or to admire, but I never believed in anything to be worshipped. But the discussion groups, I always thought, were very interesting and not just interesting, but important because they started out as largely unprepared discussions where personal opinions were brought into the whole group and considered by the whole group, which either agreed or disagreed with them. And this was a very useful sort of guidance to the group, I thought. I personally would like to see that sort of thing capably emphasized. In the group that I belong to now in California, during the times that I'm there, similar discussion groups occur, and I think the whole group there considers them

very useful, too.

**Art:** I agree with that. I totally agree with what Henry said. The range of things discussed was truly amazing. There were no conclusions you were trying to reach, you're simply exchanging ideas. I can remember one Irwin Gibby gave on the moral and ethical substrate of science fiction.

**Patty:** So did you pick the topics yourselves, or did you just pick something you felt like talking about?

**Art:** Someone volunteered to handle the next discussion group and that was his problem. He rarely was able to finish his formal presentation, his or her problem. His or her, true.

**Mary:** And if you didn't listen to that discussion group, you didn't talk to anyone. Nothing was reported to you.

**Fred:** How many discussions did you see in a month?

**Mary:** Quite a few, really. Quite a few, and I was mad at you, Fred. I couldn't win. I couldn't win, so I just gave up. Don't worry about it.

**Fred:** You don't have to talk too much.

**Mary:** Well, I know. You've got to work hard. Patty, I was going to say this. You skipped me, so you'll let me come back?

**Patty:** I'll let you come back.

**Mary:** Do we have time?

**Patty:** Yeah, tell me.

**Mary:** Okay. I've belonged to six unitarian churches counting this, and I think the things that you remember the most are the people and the warmth or whatever it was in the church. And I think one of the most wonderful experiences that Arthur and I had when we were first married, we joined the First Unitarian Church in Philadelphia. Dr. Griffin was then the minister there. And we were very young, and the warmth and the love and the feeling that came from every single person's heart was, you know, when you first come into a church like that, you are aware of this feeling of other people towards

you. And I think the same thing is true here, and I hope that it will grow in that love and understanding. And I think it will. I think it will. The more I look around, the more I read, the more I see that Unitarianism is on the go. And I think people like that bonding together and that coming together.

**Patty:** Well, certainly as a member of two years, almost three years standing, I can say that when I first walked into this Fellowship, what you people started, that warmth and friendliness and kindness and concern for others, came through the first day I walked in here, and it's kept me ever since. So those dreams for the future, I can continue. And I feel it, and I appreciate that from all of you.

**Patty:** Is that why you burst forth in song almost as soon as you got here? You did.

**Patty:** Well, I have to say that I owe you a debt of gratitude for all that you've done for my generation. And I think that the kind of discussions you're saying we need are all too much lacking in our society today, and we're not really thinking people, because we don't often come out and debate issues, we often keep things to ourselves. And what you did then, it's sorely needed today, and hopefully that is a direction we can go. But I guess the world being as it is now, we're all so busy in the evenings, we don't have the kind of time maybe that you have, or is that a problem? I mean, when you were young, were you busy too? Or did you just make the time because it was important?

**Art:** When you have kids, you're always busy.

**Fred:** Sure, we were busy, but the meeting on Sunday allowed us to take some time, and we don't do that now. We could.

**Mary:** No, but we didn't have discussions every single Sunday. No, all our weeks mostly.

**Art:** The thing that was important to me, and not only to me, I'm sure, was. . . I'm sure we were busy. There weren't too many places kicking around this whole county where you could get into an environment where you could discuss

these things. You want to go to a men's Bible class on Sunday morning, and that's in every church in the county. There weren't too many fora available. Quaker meetings was one of them where you had freedom of view guaranteed when you were in the place. Then you have to start thinking. I know where there's one group that was stimulating just because people like to discuss that in the Chamber Music Society. There were a few little things like that. That was not like music, that was discussion.

**Mary:** Women's International League.

**Art:** Women's International League, yeah.

**Patty:** So you were unique for your time. You provided something that happened.

**Art:** Partly, so maybe it can be partly.

**Mary:** So that's what's great about it. Diversity is what makes us strong.

**Art:** Frequently I read about things being the most unique in the nation. I know, so we can at least be partially unique in that sense.

**Fred:** We're giving the committee something unique from this.

**Mary:** Yes. We're giving quite a bit to unique. Oh my God, this is where we work here.

One of the things you want unique is right at the beginning. When we got founded, there wasn't UUA, it was just U. In fact, one of the series of discussions we indulged in was to participate in the final births throws of the union of the Universalist Unitarian. We had gone on for 115 years. Good Unitarian discussion.

**Mary:** That one was hard for me.

**Patty:** Did you have a lot of trouble coming up with a name? Was there a lot of discussion about what to name yourself?

**Art:** No. Not really.

**Mary:** But joining a Universalist church had quite a bit of trauma for me.

**Patty:** Was there a way to change the name formally for that?

**Art:** No, it spelled itself by A, obviously the Bel Air had slightly more members than any other, but they were spread out all over the county and outside the county, so Harford County was a logical name for the Fellowship, but it was a Fellowship. In those days you were a Fellowship if you didn't have enough money to pay a minister, that was just the definition of it. It may still be, I don't know. And then to satisfy the state of Maryland, they had to incorporate, so it became Unitarian Fellowship of Harford County Incorporated. That was necessary, so you buy the lot, so you put a church on it. You can't own a piece of land unless you're a legal entity. We became one, thus.

**Patty:** Well, any final comments that you want to make that may be plausible? There have been some, I'm sure, but if you can think of anything else that you'd like to leave.

**Mary:** I think we all have to do a great many jobs and projects and programs and teaching and speaking in here and working in the kitchen and cleaning the place, and cleaning the place ourselves, we have to take turns cleaning it. We spent a lot of time physically.

**Art:** Probably the Army didn't use lead paint in this World War II vintage buildings, because if they had, we'd all been dead of lead poisoning a long time ago. We'd have stripped all the paint off of the bare wood.

**Mary:** And in between those two buildings, the heat in the summer with those torches, I don't know why we didn't collapse. It was just appalling.

**Fred:** Yeah, it's lucky we didn't.

**Henry:** We did get on fire, and we had to run and get water pitches.

**Mary:** Mary Lucas was back in here with me, and we had a fire one time when I forgot.

**Art:** Well, that's the biggest strength of the building. We were gone by then, but when the termites get in the corner of the kitchen.

**Fred:** There's one aspect I would like to mark

also about this. Before we stop, Mary and Arnie aren't here. Arnie is still alive, but not functioning in this circle. However, it seems to me this Fellowship, through Mary and some other members, had quite a bit of effect on the mental health society and the mental health picture here in Harvard and Cecil County. So that might go down as one of the worst **Henry**:hile accomplishments and possibly even one of the proud moments that you could find a moment when it had any particular peak. That was pretty early on.

**Mary:** And that we worked with the Retirement Center, too. Which is now called Harford Center.

**Fred:** Ask the editors to take that comment and put it in the middle of the right place.

**Mary:** Right.

**Art:** We've had our finger in the education pie, directly or indirectly, for quite some time. Partly because it was about the time this was all beginning to happen when the Supreme Court said, you will open the schools up. That's what I remember the first thing I did in the way of attending a public game. We moved to Bel Air a few days later. We go to the opening game in our elementary school. And a committee is sent to explore this, point out the Supreme Court had ruled and therefore the school was going to have black kids in them sooner or later. And if they had black kids in them, you're going to have black members in the PTA and half the people walked out of the room. That was the worst. And having people like Charlie on the board and Gene Grabeal, who's his brother-in-law, on the school board has made that a lot less painful than it might have been as an indirect involvement. We have been on the fringe of that kind of issue. In Harford County, we didn't have really violence out of control. There have been some attempts to, I have to think.

**Mary:** Well, about 15 years ago, we were cross-training at a friend of ours, Bill Barnes' house.

And Helen Reed and I organized with the other churches in this community an interfaith service, that's about 15 years ago, I believe, in Bel Air Methodist Church. And we had about three or four hundred people came. And it was interdenominational. And the ministers were from different churches and spoke. And Dick Rhodes was here then and he spoke to the Unitarians. And we had a very beautiful service and that was to oppose the cross-training of the Unitarians in Bel Air.

**Art:** It had its effect. Enough people showed up. Remember, the Methodist Church was probably the biggest one in town. The sheriff's office was willing to work together with the Human Relations Commission and formally adopt a policy to not ignore Ku Klux Klan signs of presence across branches or posters or anything.

**Mary:** Because there's still members of the Klan in Harford County. And people ran to the town. But there were a lot.

**Patty:** But there was a lot back in the 60s?

**Mary:** Well, they were on the fringe.

**Art:** Cecil County, most of the area. They would come down. Their brethren actually, they bombed places.

**Mary:** It blew, I think, all the lights.

Off Camera Nope, got a half a battery left.

**Art:** Well, you better get Henry. He's going to get out to California and try to start a marijuana fest before they've wiped it out.

**Mary:** What church did you go to in California?

**Henry:** Unitarian Church of Davis. Oh, Unitarian Church of what? Davis.

Off Camera Oh, Davis! It's my first day at Christmas. Today's one of my closest friends. Wonderful. That's funny. Anything else? I can't think of anything. Can you think of anything?

**Art:** I think we're wound down. ■