



The Books for Birmingham Project, March 20, 2014

Title

“Miles of Books for Miles!”

Date

March 20, 2014

Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Rader and Olson convey their memories of campus life at OSU, including their favorite professors and their recollections of the Kerr Library. They then participate in a detailed discussion of the Books for Birmingham project, including its genesis, campus support for the project, and the visit to the OSU campus of Miles College President Dr. Lucius Pitts. Rader and Olson also relay their recollections of the trip to deliver 14,000 books to the Miles College library, the warm reception that they received upon arrival, and their sense of the African American community in Birmingham during their stay.

The remainder of the session focuses on subsequent activism in which Rader and Olson engaged. Topics include their involvement supporting voter registration and the Voter Rights Act; engagement with US-China friendship groups and anti-Vietnam War groups; and advocacy of Native American rights, peace in Central America and the womens movement. Olson also shares his memories of working with Students for a Democratic Society, both on the OSU campus and on the national stage, particularly during periods of mid-1960s unrest in Chicago and elsewhere.

Interviewees

Carlton Olson, Alice Rader

Interviewer

Mike Dicianna

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/birmingham/>

Transcript

Mike Dicianna: Okay today is March 20th 2014. We're here at the Oregon State University Valley Library to do an Oral History with alumni from the Books from Birmingham Project fifty years ago today. My name is Mike Dicianna, oral historian for the Oregon State Archives. In the room also is Marisa Chappell, Oregon State History Department and Chris Petersen, part of the Oregon State OH150 Project. And with group, you guys are a group, what I'd like to do is go ahead and let you guys introduce yourselves, rather than me being kind of formal about it. And I've given you some, you know a couple of little ideas but give you a chance to say hi Oregon State.

Alice Rader: Hi Oregon State! Hi Beavers! I like the old Beaver with the nice smiley face, I don't like the angry Beaver, okay because I believe in peace and justice.

MD: And your name?

AR: And my name is Alice [Elle] back then but I aided the name Rader. I have a really cool husband, Mark Rader, yes.

Carlton Olson: And I'm Carlton Olson. I went to college here for a long time, I was part of Books for Birmingham back in 64'. I'm from Corvallis and I lived here for a long time and I'm now in Portland.

AR: He went to school here for twelve years. He loves studying. He loves OSU.

MD: As do we all. Anyway let's talk a little bit about your time here at OSU. Where did you guys live, what kind of classes did you enjoy, social activities, some campus life stories?

AR: Well I started out in Sackett C and that was like an army barracks. And I think I was actually on the third bucker up. I remember one time I was having a dream and I jumped out of my bed and "ow" did it hurt to land on my feet. So that was my memory as a freshman but I gradually got into Snell which was like cool. My favorite classes were Dr. Hovland's, Warren Hovland's religion classes and Carlton and I both took his classes. I absolutely loved his religion classes so I took every one of them. So that was my favorite memory there. I worked in the library here and I joined the Y. I just happened by it and it looked like an interesting place because it was young Christian... Christianity has been an important part of my upbringing and I felt comfortable to start hanging out there. Then I had no idea about civil rights and the civil rights movement but the people at the Y were looking at those issues and became involved. And so I kind of fell into this environment of the Books for Birmingham. But one of my claims to fame is that I played the clarinet and I got to go the Rose Bowl, I got to march in the Rose Bowl Parade. And Terry Baker got the Heisman Trophy Award so any time you'd see him on campus "that's him, that's him!" you know so that was like really exciting to go to the Rose Bowl back then. And then the most important thing I think that happened at Oregon State was actually the Books for Birmingham and going down south, that was absolutely... I've always thought the most pivotal experience in my life, in terms of social consciousness.

CO: I took several of Dr. Hovland's grad classes so I did like them too. I'm from Corvallis so I went all through high school here and lived at home most of my life in Corvallis, except for the last few years when I didn't live at home. I've always been kind of active, I came from a family that was... my folks had a nursing home, so we were in... she had a lot of African wives working for her and so I was... early on I was around international students. At that time, most of the international students were Iranians and Africans so I could never hate them, no matter what they are trying to make us do in the world or in the country today. So I came from a background where I wasn't quite as narrow as some people could have been at the time. [0:05:06] It was the early sixties and before the sixties really got exciting, even here at Oregon State. I took a lot of courses, probably have the record number of undergraduate hours on campus. Not always that successful but I really enjoyed school and that's about it.

[0:05:32]

MD: Well the library then was known as the Kerr Library and it was brand new in 1964, this library here is 50 years old this year. It was a new innovative place, and I know that you worked there but what were some of your other memories of the library during your time here?

AR: My memory was working here and the president, Waldron, he was a wonderful man...

CO: Maybe the director?

AR: The director of the library

CO: Yeah, Rod Waldron.

AR: And I just remember that when the last time I saw him he just said "you know life isn't fair" and that year two people had died. One woman worked in our center and then there was a woman coming and she had a car accident and didn't make it to work. And that's why he said to me life isn't fair but there have been many times in my life since then that I'll think of him and those words because I think they were very wise.

CO: My best memories of this new library which isn't new anymore was the hours and hours in a reserved book room because, Marisa and I were talking about this the other day, one of my instructors did a lot of original material that he would have mimeographed and you know it would be on reserve, so we didn't have textbooks, we'd have to do all this original research and write papers every two weeks and it was probably one of the hardest courses I took but also one of the most enjoyable. It was colonial history and it's one of the few courses I took on American History because at that time Vietnam was getting pretty exciting and I pretty much shut down on what the US was doing so I was branching into third worlds. So I was... every course on Asia and Latin American and Africa, you know, were interesting to me. I broadened out.

MD: Well what we're really here for today, other than hearing your stories about OSU is the Books for Birmingham Project. Its celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and I understand that today is the 50th anniversary of when you guys actually left to deliver the 14,000 books to Alabama. You know it's a huge story for this college and it really needs to have the story of the people who were there, which is kind of your memories of your involvement with the project and how did you get involved with the project.

AR: I was involved because I belonged to the Y and I see that it began January 20th to February 2nd but it went beyond that. What I think was exciting that Dr. Pitts from Miles College, and Miles College is a black college near Birmingham, in Fairfield, Alabama. And they were very active in the Civil Rights Movement so "Bull" Connor was not happy with students who were getting students out and, you know, facing the hoses and the dogs. And that was also the time when the church was bombed and young children were killed in Birmingham. Birmingham was known as Bombingham and it made big news about the Civil Rights Movement. And so Faith Norris who was an English professor brought it to the attention of the Y round table that this colleague needed books. So John Wooster was a student chairman along with Dennis Crawford who was the Y director and less people who are in here, who were a part of that book drive and enlisted the whole campus and the whole community and even on here the state to participate and collect books. So I just happen to be at the right place at the right time to be invited to participate.

[0:10:06]

CO: And I'd had already been a member of the Y, apparently the Y round table doesn't exist anymore but it was an affiliate of the national YW and YMCA so it had a lot of different things it did, like big brother and big sister but it also had a lot of noon discussion groups. So it was doing various things, looking at the world, having activities around and events around things going on in the day. So I was there at a discussion when Dr. Norris did come in with a *Time* magazine and so we kind of discussed it over the next few weeks and Yale University immediately after discovering had their own book drive and raised 6,000 books. So that was part of our discussion here at Oregon State that you know "we can't let some Ivy League school beat us because we're Oregon State!" So we made some initial plans and we contacted Dr. Pitts and the school people in Miles and set the goal at 10,000 books even though we unfortunately far exceeded it but we scheduled it for winter term but we let people know about it, we started announcing it in November and December. And people could come back from home bringing books with them, provided they brought it into the community so it wouldn't just be a gown versus town thing so the local churches, the Westminster? House and the Wesley Foundation and the other churches around town got involved and I just read an article the other day, my alma mater Corvallis High School also donated books and money and I hadn't realized that but so a lot of stuff happening, everybody working on, we didn't realize how many tentacles were out there working on this book drive.

MD: You talk a little bit about this but the support on campus with students and everything like that, was it kind of a universal thing or was there two factions or did everybody get behind this project; the students, the teachers, the administration of the college? Were they really supportive?

AR: I think it was wonderfully supported. I say that hesitatingly because our history in our country is of racism and division and blacks on campuses were not really integrated into mainstream campus life. And there really was not much celebration of diversity back then. And it was really controversial to even have black friends, you know. So I think Jim Crow sort of seeped through our society in general so the idea of black and white really coming together, I think to some extent was still controversial. But I think there was that moral strength that was really underpinning things and we went to take higher ground and when Miles College President Dr. Pitts came, I was reading that it just electrified the audience and it was overcrowded standing room there and they probably needed a bigger room but he really inspired people to give more books. And so there was a momentum that was created, I mean if you look at the papers it would say "okay, seven-thousand books, now its nine-thousand, now we made our ten, now its twelve!" and it ends up being fourteen-thousand so I think there was a momentum that was just electrifying. And I don't think I had a sense of it back then, I had kind of a small world where I was coming from but I look back at it and I'm really excited. In fact Buxton Hall, we were just reading had this pancake contest and they had twenty people see who could eat the most pancakes in ten minutes. And the charge to go and watch this was one book or fifteen cents and they also had a dance and the admission was a book or pay a dollar after a Stanford-OSU football game.

[0:14:53]

CO: It was pretty big, it wasn't universally big but there wasn't any opposition. Oregon State has always had a reputation with anybody that's not white so it's only white people come here so it's something that's taken forever to get over even though it could just be a rumor that things are not as bad as they always have been. But yeah I think our only black students from the United States were football players probably and we had a lot foreign students, mostly West Africa but I know there were a few Kenyans. But yeah there was no opposition organized to the book drive but we'd have collection boxes in most of the major buildings on campus and the freshman officially helped collect and bring them down to the basement of the old Kerr Library where we were storing and sorting the books. And the teamsters kicked in \$200 to help transport them so there was pretty broad support what there was.

MD: You mention Dr. Lucius Pitts who was the president of Miles College at the time that he came and addressed the student body. I mean what were your personal... I know that you guys got to meet him because you were part of the committee and so you might have gotten a little more personal with him. What were your impressions of this man? Was he really that dynamic?

AR: Extremely dynamic person and I just heard students being so inspired by him and he really supported students in the Civil Rights Movement in a really delicate time and we were invited into his house and I remember him being concerned about how upset students were with what was going and asking us what was our opinion. You know and he wasn't afraid to speak out. When he was here, there's a certain quote about how he would be happy to give a eulogy for Bull Connor...

CO: No it was George Wallace.

AR: Oh was it George Wallace?

CO: Yeah, Governor George Wallace.

AR: ...A eulogy and it was in a certain context but it made national news. And Birmingham when they heard about it...

CO: They...

AR: They were going to investigate him and the New York Times was following the story. So what happened here became even a more dramatic story.

CO: I spent the next, you know, the summer of 65' at Miles working on their voter registration project so yeah I ran into him more often. He was sick part of the summer so he was staying at home but yeah I had chances to interact with

him but most of the time I'd be up with local Birmingham people knocking on doors most of the days. But he was pretty impressive to me.

MD: Well this project, the Books for Birmingham project was a huge success, we've heard. There were 14,000 books. Now this boggles the mind, the volume of books that we're talking and that you guys took a trip across the United States to deliver them and I'm really wondering how'd you pack all those books? I mean what kind of a project was moving this volume of books?

AR: He was a part of that.

CO: Yeah a lot of the packing boxes were donated by moving companies, as I said the Teamsters did donate some money. I think, I didn't know the exact cause of what... we did send them by a moving van. We didn't actually put them in our trunks or anything but that was somewhat more professional. So I think it might have cost \$1000 of shipping and \$1000 was like real money back then. It's not like you know a term's books or something nowadays. That could be a year's salary for some people.

AR: 24,000 pounds is what heard.

CO: They went on ahead of us before we left. So I think they actually... I think they arrived about the same time we did and we kind of meandered three days or something staying at various places, you know, to get to Birmingham. I think when we got there to the assembly I think the books had arrived that day or something too.

[0:20:00]

MD: So let's hear about the trip, the trip to there and then we'll talk about your time at Birmingham. What are your memories of the road trip?

AR: Well when I read my diary it sounds like it was really kind of boring. It was hours in the car, you know, hours going. And one morning I think we got to bed at twelve and had to get up at four the next morning. So when I read about it, it sounds a little bit tedious but I think one thing that I really liked, John and Nicky singing of songs, and they sang freedom songs. And I remember "last night, I had the strangest dream I ever had before, I dreamed the world had all agreed to put an end to war" and I learned that through them. And they also sang that wonderful song "give me a pallet on the floor" and they harmonized. And music became a big thing, even when we got there and we started learning more songs so by the time we were going back we were probably singing "if you miss me on the back of the bus, you can't find me nowhere, come on over to the front of the bus, I'll be sitting right there." You know like "if you miss me in the ol' Mississippi, you can't find me anywhere, come on over to the swimming pool, I'll be swimming right there." So I think music really kind of emphasized the story of the Civil Rights Movement and "we shall overcome" was just a powerful anthem too that I was introduced there as well. So I'd say that the most positive thing maybe was when we could sing.

MD: Did you do some of the driving?

CO: Yeah we shared driving, I think we were all drivers, weren't we?

AR: Not me.

CO: I remember a detour in Colorado at night or something and I just about missed it so I knew I was too sleepy and traded off right after that. But I can't remember, we stayed in Colorado, we stayed... yeah its been a while.

AR: Well we stayed in three places.

CO: Yeah. But the music was always an important part of the movement and the summer I went back in 65' a lot of the young people I was working with had had them part of the Children Crusade. Initially the 16th street Baptist church was bombed in September or something, after the march on Washington. And that was an attempt... you know that was when it was still "Bombingham," that was an attempt to scare people off and after that, you know it was... some of the older people decided maybe we shouldn't do as much and that's when the Children Crusade began and the children started coming out in the streets and saw all the fire hoses and the dogs in Kelly Ingram Park. And when we were and I don't

know if you went down to Kelly Ingram, but it was right downtown by the gas and motel, you could still see some of the bark off the trees in the park where the powerful water hoses that had knocked the bark off of trees. And this is what their aiming at people and knocking people against the storefronts and things. A lot of the people with, a lot of the young people had... they'd come out in droves on marches and be arrested and the next phalanx of young people would come out. So they'd house them in fairgrounds and there are like a thousand people in the fairgrounds at one point, all young people, and they finally had to release them but a lot of these people were the ones that were still active and still working on voter registration. Very inspirational.

MD: Yeah because really you guys, the OSC, the OSU students that went, I'm planning on calling them the freedom riders for knowledge, taking the books to Miles College. It's just a huge thing. How was your reception in Birmingham by the students and the city of Birmingham? We see a lot coverage in the *Barometer* and the OSU newspaper and the *Gazette-Times* and the *Oregonian* as well. We see a lot of coverage about it but it was pretty bland. What's your feelings? I mean what was it like? And I know that you have something to read, which we'll probably just spend some time with, but what was it like in Birmingham?

[0:24:54]

CO: Well the people we met with were excited to have us there. I mean it was surprising to us because I had people say "how nice of you to give up Easter to be here with us" and I said "Easter? This is spring vacation!" Yeah I'm less religious than they apparently were but yeah I mean it was the book drive and I think it was an important book drive but I'd have that connotation that there was something about giving up a holiday for it. It didn't really feel like we were going out of our way, we were just doing what we should be doing.

AR: I had written "arriving..." this is from my diary, "arriving at Miles was the most exciting, enthralling experience I've had in my life. At the gates was welcome to Miles, Oregonians! Miles of books for Miles! They escorted us in and as we came, many came up and spoke to us." I wrote "I am in love." And I remember when I returned to OSU just feeling that I had been basked in love, that there was just this powerful experience of being welcomed. And that living with an African American family, Betty Knight, and I still correspond with her. And I was telling her about being with you today and asking her if all those rules I had from her father were because they wanted me to be safe. And she said "oh no, he was a stern father, that was for all of the seven children and you." So I got that story straight and that's what's nice about revisiting these stories. One thing she said was that there were white people on campus that were some professors, we were probably the largest group that integrated Miles College. But that Miles College and black people were welcoming of us and she said "the black community welcomed you" but she said "if I had walked into the white community, they would not welcome me." And she said that to me just that last week and it hit me like a bomb shell, that reality. That we were really loved there and kind of this shame of being white and privileged and Jim Crow. You know the reality of that continues to bubble up and I continue to learn about that, even through a book that was written recently. We were sequestered at Miles and it was surrounded with guards, six or seven guards with guns. And we did do one thing when we went to hear... in Birmingham, Legion Field was integrated for the first time. It was a big integration, like thirty thousand some people there and there were policemen all through the top and all below because of the integrated crowd.

CO: It's for a Billy Graham crusade.

AR: So that was a big, historic event that took us outside of our zone but the other thing that students did, we had a couple days of voter registration drives. And the students took us to various economic classes within the black community so I would see very poor, very middle class families and we'd do some voter registration work. And we had this big form that people had to fill out back then.

MD: Yeah, I've looked at that form, its chilling. That's one of the things that I was really interested in was this whole idea that you guys not only went to just deliver books and to be ambassadors for Oregon State University but you got involved. You went and did voter registration, you were basically in the trenches with your fellow students and tell us a little more about that form? It'll be part of our coverage.

AR: Well Carlton, I'll let you talk about it because he did more of that than I did when he went back.

[0:30:00]

CO: I spent about two and a half months or something up to the passage in 65' of the voter rights act which was allegedly put an end to-. They couldn't have the restrictions on voting but last part of it was interpretation of the Constitution, it was always, you couldn't really prepare people for it because you didn't know what they'd give you. But part of it was like a spelling test or they'd have them read it back in an actual written part, and if they skipped a word or had trouble on a word, the registrar is supposed to make a note of what they had trouble reading. So therefore they didn't weren't really ready to be voters, so it was all arbitrary. The first part was just name and address and marital history and "have you been kicked out military" or anything. So there were other reasons to disqualify people but it was all surprising who didn't get that third part or automatically passed the test and yeah that we'll probably never know.

MD: Well I'd dare say that there's probably forty percent of the students on this campus today that probably would fail this test, asking questions about the constitution, and I can dare say that they would not have the right to vote.

CO: Yeah I knew more when I was here at school. I'd be a little muddled now probably.

MD: But when you got to go out on the voter registration, I mean are we talking the full day, spending a day out in the community just talking to people. Did you get to interact with the community at large?

AR: I just remember seeing poverty for the first time, someone who was somewhat bedfast and I think was afraid of electricity being turned off or you know some destitute story. And for me I think that was one moment that was like "someone help her!" you know "help! help!" because I hadn't seen anything quite like that before. You know, so I think that was the impression that stuck with me because it was opening my eyes to poverty that I hadn't seen before.

CO: And the next summer when I was there we did a little more. That week we spent there in 64' we'd do like three hours or three and a half hours or something in one particular neighborhood which is what we did the summer I went back too. And we did hop around to different communities. Things were pretty red-lined in Birmingham it didn't really feel dangerous because you're in a black community and there was a lot of safety in being in a black community. But yeah we saw... I ran across a man living in a trailer, a cargo container trainer in the backyard of somebodies house and he obviously had some mental problems but we were trying to get him to vote. We were getting other people... there were rich areas of town too in black communities. Yeah it was a whole cross section, we really had no measure of our effectiveness too because it would be up to people later, I mean we would try and prepare them and we give them phone numbers with Miles College Project if they wanted more information or something to get hold of them. But we would basically leave it in people's hands to go down and register. And sometimes their churches or something would organize so a group would go but we were initial or the shock troops or something, trying to get information out to people that you can and you should register and if you don't... because there usually weren't repercussions if you tried and they didn't like your answers then you could try again and there were several people that tried four times and the fifth time they got in. So there were successes that we heard about. Hopefully I did some good.

[0:35:00]

MD: Well before we move on a little bit, is there any other thoughts, inspirations, things that you want to add about your experience with this wonderful project that's, you know, a big part of OSU history. I'll give you your chance to...

AR: I just know that reading this note and they had an assembly where all the students were and they called each of us up to stand up before everybody and they gave us a standing ovation. And Carlton and I both felt like "we're not worthy of that, we're these students from OSU who are coming to learn and we're learning so much" and they're welcoming us so much and thanking us so much and one of the songs that they embraced then was "climb every mountain." "Climb every mountain, ford every stream, and follow every rainbow, till you find your dream" and the power of the music and I think another one was "when you walk through a storm, hold your head up high and don't be afraid of the dark." You know, and these powerful words and the powerful voices that I continue to be inspired of through the African American community today.

CO: Yeah. It was all good. Yeah it didn't make so much sense of them thinking we really did something more important than we thought we did but we did. If it wasn't for them and especially the young people, there a lot of... the following summer I met a lot of ministers and stuff. Part of what I did the next year was every Sunday I'd go around at churches and speak. So we'd go to these three hour services, so I'd do a little talk that was sandwiched somewhere in the schedule about

trying to get people to go and register. But just the feeling in the services and the fellowship there and the music, it was... yeah we're back to the music and that was the spirituals and everything and that was so important.

MD: I've been in the south it's a different world.

CO: Yeah.

AR: Come in.

MD: It really is. It's wonderful, but it's a different world. You guys are alumni of Oregon State University and I know that this experience through the books for Birmingham project had a profound experience on your time here and your life but did you carry what you got from this experience and your time at OSU on later in life? How did it affect you where you are today?

CO: Yeah I think it spurred me to be more active. It is a sentinel event for me and I've had other ones since then. I was one of the first people to travel to China after Nixon went there but I was part of a friendship organization we had here at Oregon State, US-China People's Friendship. So we arranged trips because it was friendship between the Chinese and American people and it wasn't with the governments. And that was important for me because I'd done a lot of studying about China and just to travel all over the country for a month and see everything that I thought was just water and brush paintings and actually fly over terrace hillsides that had been that way for thousands of years and it was so moving. But Birmingham was definitely, you know, set me on the right direction and I've been active... right after that of course opposition to the Vietnam War came and the Women's Movement and the Anti-Apartheid Movement and yeah.

MD: And what did you do for the anti-war movement?

CO: We had at least three groups here on campus. We had student-faculty committee to end the war in Vietnam but we also had an SDS group and then we had a study group that grew out and went beyond the war. But yeah I'm sure it's written on a side of the buildings and stuff around here, how active we were.

MD: And Alice?

AR: Oh my gosh, well I felt like when I came back, it was like my life turned 180 degrees upside down because suddenly I saw things through a different lens. I was always rose colored before but suddenly there... when there was prejudice I became aware of it and I became sometimes a victim, and I try not to be a victim, but how do I address conflict because I wasn't raised to be addressing conflict. So I think a big part of my life is learning to address conflicts in a personal way but also social justice. So I did go back to Jacksonville, Florida and did a summer of school desegregation. And one of the girls in that group was Candis Cousins, whose father, Cousins, was editor to the *Saturday Review*.

CO: Norman.

AR: And Norman Cousins. And I remember her reading letters about Vietnam from her dad. And that started my awakening of Vietnam because if we could be so wrong in what's going down south in civil rights, it made me question what is our government doing in Vietnam. My roommate lost a good friend who was from Oregon State who went to Vietnam and they never found him and I remember seeing her absolutely devastated.

MD: Well later in life, I know that you've been active. I found you on Grannys for Peace in Philadelphia. So you've lived a life of activism I think and I think you lived in with the Navajo.

AR: Yeah I lived with the Navajo but I did go and live two years in Central America. And when I was in Central America, a war broke out. I was aware that both El Salvador and Honduras had guns that were provided by the United States. And then I got involved in the Sanctuary Movement and helped Allentown become a sanctuary city. And went back during that war to El Salvador and Nicaragua and I met the priest who was later assassinated, Nacho was his nickname, Ignacio Martín-Baró. I heard him speak and I was a part of that movement the Sanctuary Movement and its interesting because I went counseling because I actually realized that I post-traumatic syndrome from being in that war and just the pain of that reality of Central America. And I think that this also goes through today, like the Granny Peace Brigade are against killer drones. We're trying to, you know, stop killer drones that kill innocent people so that

the message of peace is sometimes is like "what's going on?" you know "why are we still so uncivilized?" And I think back when I was in college I felt like "oh my goodness, we are going to make this big change" you know, the big chains still exist. So part of my activism is being an artist and involved in dance and I got a masters in dance and I'm interested in dance as a tool of transformation and chanting different sacred phases, their called dances of universal peace. So I use movement, I've used them at environmental events, on the reservation. Different places where I can lead people just moving together and using movement, Native American chants, to bring people together so that we can feel a unity that this is important for our healing that we come together. And very simply, the song back then "what the world needs now, is love, sweet love."

[0:45:04]

MD: Well as we close I'd like to allow you a chance, if you have anything that's burning that you'd like to... Dr. Chappell that you'd like to... Dr. Chappell you can ask some questions if you would like.

Marisa Chappell: Thank you. I'm interested, I teach women's history here, and I'm interested in hearing was there an impact of feminism on campus and in your lives, working through activism or other parts of your life? How did that influence you I guess? Feminism?

AR: Feminism wasn't even a word back then, any more than racism was for me when I started college. And I was such a non-feminist, it was ridiculous. So that word wasn't... I wouldn't have even thought of that word back in college. It all happened later. Isn't that sad? That that was the way it was?

MC: How did it shape your life as it did-?

AR: My mom was a very strong, I would say, woman. My grandmother I think I mentioned was a suffragette and my mom was a teacher and I think a very perspective that came from being very poor and valuing education and I think in a sense person who my mother really modeled goodness and a special person to me. So that's what I think of for a model for me would be my mother.

CO: Well I was on campus longer than almost anybody alive so the Women's Movement did come to Oregon State. And it came along right after the Vietnam Movement and I know we opened a Women's Center that used to be a glass-wine building or something or I don't know if it's still here even. I see the little bit, yeah, so yeah, that was a good thing and I don't know it just kind of morphed into... it made sense. You can't choose your oppression to support or not support or something. I know I'm not married... the woman that I married at the time was one of the strongest feminists on campus at the time. I didn't see it as a struggle, is it? The women were the ones running all the groups you know and doing all the cooking and the cleaning and chairing the meetings and doing all the work.

MD: You were just along for the ride.

CO: Yeah, I was like "what am I doing here."

MD: Now one of the things I was, I just got a peripheral little idea about from somebody else was talking about you. You were in Chicago during the protest of the war?

CO: I was... yeah. But the year after the Democratic convention, it was with the SDS but I was there and it was partly because of the arrest from the Democratic convention, you know the Chicago Eight. And they had chained Bobby to the chair and they eventually eliminated him as one of the defendants of what became the Chicago Seven so there were protests the following summer. It was during the trials of 65'...

AR: And you happened to be put in jail.

CO: I was one of the preventative arrests because there was a major demonstration and Judge Hoffman lived through it so the next day they rounded up people who happened to be in the Methodist Church in Evanston and they kind of busted in the door and brought us down to a station house downtown and figured out charges for us and we got court appointed lawyers that had five hundred cases a piece and they suggested we take one of the misdemeanors instead of the felonies and it was all bogus. So I served about a month in Cook County jail and one of the other good experiences in my life.

There were a lot of us there together, with a lot of local people that shouldn't have been there either. And it was a good time, it was antique... Cook County jail had a population of probably five thousand, it was a whole fortress. Another sentinel experience in my life that keeps popping up. And you get rid of your fear of jail. Go for the big one first then you can spit on the sidewalk or something.

[0:50:44]

MD: Now the campus had a chapter of the Students for Democratic Society and you were involved with that and so tell us a little bit about how big of an organization it was, here on campus, and how did it fit in with the national work.

CO: It was... the major SDS chapters were in the Ivy League and the California coast and were a lot closer and more organized. We would get the new luck notes and then know what was going on nationally but it was... we were pretty much allowed to do whatever we wanted to. So we would have meetings and movies and you know maybe protests if there was something but there wasn't a whole lot of top down steering of us.

MD: You didn't take over any buildings on campus or not like Berkeley?

CO: Well we actually did participate in... there were some situations where we like... some English faculty who were just employed on contracts for three years or something and were let go and we thought they should be here because they were excellent instructors but they all left. But we did have sit-ins and small things.

AR: You know, I...

CO: You know tied up buildings for days or so.

AR: I wasn't a part of SDS but what I think is interesting was that I had this introduction that this English professor, Jones, do you remember his first name? English professor who introduced Malcolm Boyd was a famous poet and activist and he came to Oregon State to talk about the civil rights movement and from there we went to the University of Oregon and this was in 1965. So he was speaking on campus there but that was before a lot of people knew about Vietnam and were protesting and there were a lot of fraternity that were yelling and shouting down at this speak out at the University of Oregon and Malcolm Boyd was supposed to speak but people were throwing things on the stage so we left. And so I always felt that when I was involved in the Civil Rights Movement it was purely civil rights but at that point it tipped to be more that Vietnam focus. I thought that was interesting.

MD: Well as we kind of wrap this up a little bit, I'll give you guys a chance for thoughts, insights, knowledge that you many have to impart to students of the future and people that are going to be watching this interview and kind of being nostalgic. What do you guys feel about your time here at OSU and what it did for you the rest of your lives?

AR: Well, this Books for Birmingham whole experience was, I always felt, the most important experience of my life. And one of the symbols I really like is the butterfly and I think what we need is transformation. We need to... I have a butterfly dance I do... so I start out like in this sheet and I'm like trying to get out of that sheet, I'm like the egg and I got to birth out and then I'm the caterpillar and you're like experiencing life and taking in all this stuff that's not all pretty. So then I wrap up into my cocoon, right? And that that time of internal work. So I think we always have that outer work and then the internal work and then I come out of... oh by the way I go upside down in a headstand and wrap in the cocoon... so I'm in a head stand in my cocoon. I did this on capital steps once. Anyways then the sheet comes down and I fold it and I hold it up and it's a butterfly. And the butterfly, there is a book about butterflies that the symbol of the butterfly flying and it's about love, really. And I think that, it's difficult, but I do think we need to work on bringing that light into dark spaces or merging from the dark spaces to the light. So God bless you all, heavens bless you, Buddha bless you, all creation bless you.

[0:55:55]

CO: And of all the most important things in my life, I think would probably be my Birmingham experience. It was the most important one because it was the first big that I ever did and you know I think it set me on a course of questioning. And luckily I got a chance to come back to Oregon State and luckily it was affordable so I could keep taking all kinds of

courses I was interested in so I kept at it. And it's been... I'll never forget the experience of the Books for Birmingham had on me and you know the life long course it set me on.

AR: That's why we are here today! Yes, fifty years ago.

MD: We thank you both.

AR: Thank you I appreciate it.

[0:56:51]