

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

Q: Monday, April 15th, right? Tax day. Okay, and an interview with Lynn Edwards. Um, Lynn, I was --

A: I would like you put "interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards."

Q: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay.

A: I've been married, Joe died, Joe Mathews died in '77, I remarried six years later. And my second husband died. So, widowed twice over.

Q: Could you start by giving me some of the background of the institute and how you got started?

A: Yes. Um, the beginning of all this, began with Joe Mathews. He was a chaplain in World War II, assigned to the mid-Pacific. And, he came home when the war -- he was over there three and a half years -- he came home a very, um, what is the correct adjective? Broken man, I guess. Or, one that had a lot of questions, because, the way he put it briefly was -- and he was a Methodist minister, having been trained at Drew Graduate at Union [?] -- um, the way he put it was, "I discovered that when I was sending my men out to die, knowing that uh, just a very few of that unit would ever come back," he said, "I didn't have anything to say to them." And so, with that kind of quandary, and a deep love and care and gratitude, because of his bringing up, for the church, he decided to, well we as a family decided to go back to Yale, where Joe went to the Yale divinity school, and began to work in the field of philosophical, theological, and sociological ethics. And I think ethics really became his discipline. He was very fortunate there to come under the mentorship of H. Richard Neiber [?], who is the brother of Rhinehold Neiber. Rhinehold much more well-known, he's more known than Richard Neiber, but Richard Neiber was a deep scholar. Very great man. And Joe studied under him, and uh, Richard Neiber took a great interest in Joe. And that was a very rewarding relationship. Both academically, and personally, really. So after Joe got through with that, he began to write a doctoral dissertation, which we never finished, it's sitting up there in 20 big boxes, on John Wessely, the Methodist founder. Um, his, we went to Colgate University, in Hamilton, New York. That's a small little arts, all-male college. And I think it still is all-male, I'm not sure. And it was there Joe began to build curricula to be able to talk about the word symbols, language, of the Christian faith, in a way that made sense, yet not taking away from it any of the aspect of the mystery which it finally is. So, but it was there that he began to work on curriculum on God, Christ, Holy Spirit and the church, ethics. After four years, he was called, and during that time he began to do an awful lot of speaking. We have five file cabinets full of Joe's speaking folders, his engagements. So it became sort of an, um, he was asked to come and join the faculty of Perkin's [?] School of Theology, at Southern Methodist University, which we did. And um, ... there, the curriculum building and working with the professional, uh, church, um, namely the training of ministers, he furthered that curriculum. And ... we stayed -- at the end of the third year, uh, Perkin's was a very lively seminary at that point, because so many of the old men, old professors, had reached retirement, and they had a very energetic, young dean, Merriman Cunningham, who later became the had of the Danforth Foundation, he was the dean, and he brought young men in like Joe, like Ed Hobbs [?], like some others. So it was a very lively, intellectually and practically challenging place to be. After the third year, once again, as a family, um, we decided that our passion was uh, more directed toward the laymen than the clergy. So, we went in and gave our notice that we would stay one more year and move on from there. As I say, Joe had done a lot of speaking, and he had -- he did a lot of religious emphasis weeks. And he had done one at the University of Texas. And when they heard that he had done, that he

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

was going to leave Perkins, they got very busy and began to see if it would be possible for Joe and the family to join a sort of beginning ministry there, on the campus, called the Christian Faith and Life Community. And that was headed by a very fine Presbyterian minister, W. Jack Lewis, who later went on to Cornell University to be head of their religious program there. But Jack was a Presbyterian minister, had been in the war, and had a very similar experience to Joe, relative to the language and the theological statement of the church, which was in very much 19th century language, and uh, world view. So, uh, the upshot of that was that they invited us to come, and we decided to go. And um, ... we spent six years there. And um, worked, we had a men's residence, that was our first experiment with corporate living. Although we didn't live in the residences, we had our own private home, but the students lived corporately, so it was a time of experimentation with corporate structures -- worship, study, um, discipline, leadership development and all that. And we began with a men's residence, and we opened a women's residence, and then we opened what is known as the Laos House, which was a huge, beautiful mansion in Austin, Texas, and it was there that we launched our programs for ministers and adult laymen, and did weekend seminars.

Q: And did you live there as well?

A: No, we all, these were all three separate. At the end of those very exciting years, great years of creativity, because it was there that we really pulled together what we call our basic curriculum of 14 courses -- 7 courses theological, 7 courses cultural -- and um, that happened at the community, and we began to teach those courses to laymen, and also of course in the university setting. At the end -- and during that time, we constructed, uh, the lead course on the cultural side, called Cultural Studies I. Which was dealt with the three revolutions of the 20th century -- the scientific, the urban, and the cultural, which was rites and symbols. And we got very interested in the urban revolution. Plus the fact that we had grown from -- Joe was the first person to come on the staff of the Christian faith and life community that Jack hired. We had grown to a faculty of ten families in those six years. We became very interested in the cultural revolution. Well, I might say that it was here that we also forged the basic, um, ritual of the community, which was known as the daily office. And we built a chapel. Never got a roof on this chapel, but we built it, the students, out in back of the men's residence, and every morning at six o'clock, we would gather in that chapel under the daily office. Used to get up -- at that point we had three sons -- it was quite a chore to get them up there anyway. But we became interested in the urban revolution, and then we also became interested in the whole discipline, or not discipline, in what we're calling now, "intentional community." We became very interested in the corporate. And, ... Joe, uh, was uh, approached to come and be the dean of the Ecumenical Institute. Which was located in Chicago, and that's what David was telling you about. Um, the Ecumenical Institute was founded out of the World Council of Churches meeting in 1954, I think it was, or resolution was made at that meeting. There is an Ecumenical Institute in Europe, uh, at Bossy [?], in Switzerland, that does weekend seminars for vocational groups of all kinds of things, and as a matter of fact, the first thing that Jack Lewis did with Joe and me, when we arrived, and this showed how forward looking a man he was, was he sent us to Europe, to look at all of the communities that had arisen out after World War II. And the Ecumenical Institute, in Geneva, Switzerland, we went and stayed there for 2 weeks, and then we went to the Agape Community, the Taze [?] Community, all the communities, many of them, to get ideas on our own community, back here in the States. Well, we'd become interested in the corporate, and Joe was

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

approached to come and replace Dr. Walter Librect [?], who was a German theologian, who stayed just one year as dean -- they brought him over because he was a part of the Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland, and he was familiar with the academic, the rise of all these "lay academies" they called them. And, but the dear man had more than he could possibly do, because he couldn't run an academy program and courses, raise money and, he was overwhelmed. And decided that this was not where he needed to put his life. And he went back to the seminary to teach in Germany. And so that's why they were looking. And they asked Joe to come. And we decided to do it. When that decision was made, seven families, six other families, asked if they could come with us . Well, we said yes. So, at that point, what we referred to, I think a bit euphemistically, an anevic [?] split, took place with the Christian Faith and Life Community. Jack Lewis was not, he was a great developer and fund-raiser and an extrovert type of person, but he really wasn't finally as pastorally interested in curriculum building and all that kind of stuff. Um, so six families did come with us to Evanston, which the Ecumenical Institute was headquartered in this old Kanab mansion. Well, we of course, that's where our corporate life really began. Because we were all under one roof. We were all saddled with debts, to get ourselves up there. So I always say that our corporate life was a practical solution to a host of practical problems. And so we began -- so we pooled all our money, and paid off all our debts, and that began our corporate economic life. Uh, which of course, on the social process triangles over here is the foundational pole -- it is that without which -- we discover that all the time don't we, move it down to economics. Um, so we started, and all the women went out to work, and the men began to grid Chicago, to see what could happen in Chicago, or -- yes, relative to the urban revolution. Well after six months of sitting in Evanston, which is a lovely, beautiful university town, where Northwestern is, and I think it has one of the highest income levels per capita of any place in the United States, a very wealthy community. Well we, after six months, we said, "Gosh, we came to do the urban revolution. We're not going to do it in Evanston here. " So we began to look around for some other place to go, in Chicago proper. We wanted to be in the city. Well, we looked at abandoned hotels, old houses, and all. And then on the west side of Chicago, 3400 West, uh, there was this old abandoned campus, which was the National Seminary of the United Church of the Brethren. This was a community that had become, or was becoming, a Black ghetto. So they had moved. They had left the campus, and had built a beautiful, new, seminary location in one of the suburbs. I forget where it is now. But that was sitting over there, and we went over and looked at it, and looked at the neighborhood, which was certainly something quite different than we were used to. And we really didn't give it too much serious thought until, and I will never forget the night, we were sitting around the living room, up in Evanston, and a member of our group, Joe Pierce, who before he came to us was a radio announcer and was a very creative, talented man, who died a couple years ago, um he said, "Well, why don't we look at that old campus again?" And we said, "Well, why not?" So we went over, at which point we got in touch with the board of the church, and they said, "Well, if you will move in there, we'll let you have this campus for a dollar a year. " It was to their advantage, because it became a tax write-off, and it meant that the campus would not be vandalized. So we moved over there one year later. We moved to Chicago in August of '62, we moved to the campus on the west side in August of '63. And um, there was never a more naïve bunch of people to move into that situation than we were. In one of my -- the rude awakening happened in the first week we were there. We had, as part of our staff, um, a young couple, and they had just been married, and they had arrived in Chicago with a huge amount of wedding gifts -- sterling silver, crystal dishes, just a lot, and we put all those boxes in the basement. And the first

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

week, it was all burglarized. So, we knew we were in a different um, we were in a new place. Um, but that's where we began our work on saying "What does it mean to re-energize, recreate a human community?" And we delineated 20 square blocks, and we called it, we gave it a name, Fifth City. Now that, Fifth City was not on the city maps when we started. Today, this city is on the city maps. It shows. And we began to work with the residents in that community, come together and talk. And, as to what it would mean to build a very comprehensive, inclusive, futuristic, integrated model of community development. And that is what we did. It took ten years. The first thing we started on over there, and hence was the first thing we did, when we went global with this model, that we had after ten years, were the preschools. We would start a preschool. Number one, it was easy to do. And number two, you got the parents. And you got hold of the adult community, and could enlist from them some sense of commitment and envisioning. So, with ten years we took to build that model. During that time, Joe was invited ... out to many places to speak, one of which was Australia. Um, I went with him on that trip, and we both did it, we went out and taught a two-week course at the University of Sydney, Australia, just doing our curriculum that we had created. And um, and ... uh, we began to get requests um, to export the Fifth City model of community development. The first place ... well I might say, the first place we exported our um, contextual re-education kind of work, was to um, we called it an international training institute, that was in '69, we did in Singapore. The first human development export was in the Marshall Islands [?] in the Pacific, on an island called Majaro [?]. And um, ... I went out on that one. Uh, ... and ... we developed there, that was sort of the experiment, the laboratory experiment on developing what it would mean to have a two-week consult in any community, where the residents gather, and begin to build a vision for their community, what needed to happen. What are the blocks, or the contradictions? What's the major contradiction? Like, in this city, we decided the major contradiction in that community was in the realm of victim image. All the people in the Black ghetto, they were victims of the city, they were victims of the government, they were victims of American history -- they were victims. And you had to change that image so that they would see themselves as creators of their own future. Well anyway, the major contradiction, and then a strategic plan, an action plan. And then, well, what are the tactics under the plan. And then, what are the implementaries: who's going to do it, when are we going to do it, what's the time line, and all that kind of -- so that you went from a vision down to a very practical level of getting started. Now this is a real digression, but I just looked, last night, at a tape, um, called sense of place, that's put out by the Foundation for Global Community, and a man was on there, they had four different person talk. But this one man talked, he called himself a "community activator. " And he goes around and consults with communities. They lifted up this community in Fairfield, Iowa, where they, he went out and worked with the community -- it was another way of community development. I thought what he did was wonderful, because they were, they just said they couldn't -- they had identified 14 things that needed to happen in their community, and they said, "We can't do any of them." I mean, they were just absolutely, had no sense after, being able to do anything. He started them out with having them list, "What are the assets of this community?" And they came up with 144 different assets in that community. Then he raised the question, he said, "What are two things that we can do?" And they started out, just two little things we could do, and they did them, and it went on and on from there. Um, it was just beautiful community development. If you, that would be a good thing for Tim and you all to see, it's called Sense of Place. It's peripheral, but very related. So, after starting Marjiro, where we really did our experimentation on what it meant to do this consult, I will never forget

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

it because we didn't know from one day to the next what we were doing. We'd be up all night figuring out what we were going to do the next day with the people, but it, out of that came the model. We decided to do it globally, and we have had many requests. We never went into any village that um, didn't ask us to come in. Part of it, so. But we did decided on this model that's on that symbol, that we do one demonstration project in every time zone in the 24 hours, and we did that. Those were exciting days. By this time I might say, by this time we um, ... had grown. Our staff had grown from the seven families to about 1,000. I'm not sure of my dates, but we can get them on this time line. We have two time lines here that it would help if we did look at, one of which we have on paper that we can give you a copy of it. Now what were you asking?

Q: Oh, I was just wondering if these demonstration projects took place primarily during the sixties?

A: Yes, uh, you know, I don't know when we started that. I don't know when we went out and did Majiro, that was the first one, we can look that one up. But my memory, which I've discovered is getting a little overworked, or something, is that it took us about ten years to get this model where we felt we really had a model. But we can look up those dates. But we moved to the city on um, in '63. We ought to check when we did the Majiro. We will. And, because we celebrated the uh, ... the finishing, it must have been 1972, because I remember we were doing 8 of these demonstration projects, or 6, a year. And, uh, I will never forget, in one of the summer assemblies, which we started in '65 with school teachers, bringing together a summer program that would last six weeks or so. We called them Global Research Assemblies, finally. We were having them all along the way, working on these social process triangles, working on this stuff. Some summers we'd have a thousand people come and gather. You got an awful lot of work done. Now I'm digressing. Well I was going to say I will never forget the summer, one of our colleagues got up and said, "Why don't we finish the 24?" And we had projected it would take us 2 years, and we said, "Why not?" and we did it. But in 1975 we celebrated the completion of the band of 24. And we had an international exposition of rural development on Jesu Island, in Korea, which was where one of our projects was located. And we celebrated the completion, and then raised the question of replication. And replication was worked on, first of all in India. We had a very fine project, we have a very fine project. Its name is Molly Water [?]. People, in '94, we had our global meeting in India, and some, I didn't get over to Molly Water, but some did, and they just couldn't get over what had happened in Molly Water, because whereas it was an economically depressed village, no one had any work when the project started, they now were employing people from other villages around them. They had, their economy had gone, and they had built schools and had doctors, it was very exciting. But we did our depth replication work, we had a lot of replication work going on now, in Kenya, um, and in Portugal, in Egypt -- that's one reason why we're having our conference out there this year. And um, and India. Anyway, the project work, at this point of course, has all been, the staff has stepped back, the ICA staff, because the leadership, a large component of doing a project was leadership training. Like in Fifth City. The people who lived over there, they had no way of even accessing the resources of the city that was available to them, so a lot of training, very practical and leadership training, and eventually the ICA staff stepped back, and so all these projects go ahead on just the local leadership. Very exciting place to visit -- how long are you going to be in town?

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

Q: About a week.

A: Well we ought to see that you get over to Fifth City, and see that preschool over there. It would be exciting. But that could be arranged. Um, alright, now, in '72, we um, were given this building, by the Kemper Insurance Company, although it has out on the Mutual Insurance of something or other. But it was the Kemper Insurance Company, and they gave us this building as a tax write-off for them, so we didn't pay anything for it. We have done an awful lot of build out in it, because -- and it was at that time, in '72, nine years later, ten years since we came to Chicago, that the bulk of the staff, most of us, I don't know what the number was, but it was a lot, moved from Fifth City, to this building, and we left just a skeleton staff to make the final transition out of Fifth City, turning it over totally to local leadership. And so we moved over here. When we moved, we all, we were I think on the seventh or eight floor, we had file cabinets for walls. Everything, it's just huge floors and empty space with plugs where all the electric typewriters had been plugged in. So we of course built out. Now we have a residential staff -- I don't live here now. I, uh, moved out three years ago and am living in a long-term old people's home, out here on Foster Ave. A feature of which is long-term health care. But the staff, Marge and Phil still live here. David is here from Dallas, Texas, he's come in for just, David LeCusky [?], for six months to work on a [unintelligible]. But I don't know how many staff, I guess there are about 35 or 40 staff that live on the seventh and eight floors. We had the -- before '84, which was when, oh -- on our corporate life, which I probably need to talk about a little bit, we called ourselves the Order: Ecumenical. And built structures of our intellectual life, or symbolic life, our external mission, and um, of course our economic life, our decision-making mode, which is consensus. We were, had a very lively and wonderful corporate life as an intentional community. Which is why you're here. Oh dear, I'd better get off all this. Um, so ... but after '84 we really dissolved the Order: Ecumenical. Final dissolution took place in '88. Now I like to say that the intentional community is still very alive, in a different form. The network we have across the globe of people who still see their, who still live their lives in the context of the word of possibility, which is the big "yes" to life, still see themselves to be people who have committed their lives to caring for this universe, um, we're very much in touch, and there are a lot of off-shoots, so, these are very fascinating times for the defunct in name Order: Ecumenical. And I think, where did I leave off, '84? Well, we moved here, after '84, up to then, the whole globe, all these all these religious houses, oh we put religious houses out. I don't know how many we had at one point, I'll have to check that. And part of every global research assembly was assignment commission, well all of this is more intentional community. At '84, we were left with, this place was supported by the Globe. We were left, Chicago was left with this huge building on its hands, so the question was, "What do we do with it? Do we move out? Sell it?" Well we decided to stay and it's now a very self-supporting and we're very excited about this building, because we have a -- if you look at the directory up there -- a very culturally diverse groups of nonprofit organizations are officed in this building. The Department of Healing Services is in this building, and so it's meeting, it's a real wonderful thing to have in this community. The community looks at this building as being a very special place. Um, ... so, ... then we opened a conference center, the International Conference Center. People can come and stay, have their meals and sleep here, at a very nominal cost compared to the Marriot Hotel. So that's the way it's supported. Now back to the intentional community -- have you any questions?

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

Q: I'd like to know a little bit about your corporate life, because you talked about having some rituals, like in the morning, and I'm curious about that.

A: Alright. Um, as I say, our corporate life was a very practical solution to a practical problem. We had already started our corporate worship life, and our corporate study life, in Austin, Texas, because it was our staff down there who met regularly, to do the curriculum. I mean, we just read books and created curriculum, and created the programs that we were offering. So that required a study, or an intellectual discipline. And we used the word "discipline". Our symbolic life was daily office. Then we did a lot of experimentation on ritual. We created offices on T.S. Eliot poetry, um, we created solitary offices, just a lot, and you can look at all of them if you are interested in looking in files and things, but there was a lot of experimentation. And that, the daily office became probably the most important dimension of our life. It was a place where we declared to one another each day who we understood ourselves to be and what we were out to do. And so that was a very important part. Um, ... a lot of study. At one time we studied -- we have a list of them -- 500 books. And um, and have all book reviews on them in a big volume. And this had to do with programmatic work, the kinds of programs that we all created. Our decision-making, our program, what we did, was really condensed upon [unintelligible] research assemblies. It would be the gathered, larger gathered group, who decided what we were going to do, for instance in 1976, the town meeting campaign. It was the larger group along the way that decided that we would to the band of 24. And so, even though the Order: Ecumenical as a staff was 100% ... time-wise, committed to these goals, the extended order -- we talked about the order in three parts. Symbolic order -- those were those of us who lived in a residence together and shared a corporate economic and political and symbolic life. And then there was the Extended order, who were committed to say, when we were doing town meetings, they were the ones who would go out and do the town meetings. I mean, our staff wouldn't do all those town meetings. They were committed to do the programs, do recruitment, do fund-raising or whatever. Support the local religious house. Then, the Movemental order was a just larger group of thousands of people, for who the ICA, the Order, the Ecumenical Institute were a very significant part of their history, but they were more removed. We called the Movement order. We called it the Spirit Movement. I can give you a document on the construct, for instance, of the Spirit Movement. Then, my memory is not so -- David would be better on this intentional community than I at this point, relative to when we started these -- we started out after being this one religious house, we went to five, and then we went, I mean, and I don't know, I don't have it in my head the progression. I think we ended up with 65 houses globally. And those assignments would be made every summer. Part of the Global Research Assembly is some people will be assigned to be the assignment commission. And they'd go out and they decided where you were going to go. And they'd get up and read, at the end of the assembly, they'd get up and read these assignments. And, um, ... most often, everybody said yes to their assignments. There were be very few occasions where someone would say, "No, I just won't take that assignment." Everyone [unintelligible] ... family. Because the kids were all in on this. I mean, part of our intentional community was our emerging generation structures. We had a, um, ... well they -- gosh... anyway, I mean, you can imagine, every weekend, we were, the adult staff was sent out to teach courses all over the nation. So the kids were in just corporate structures. So there was a lot of work on just what we called the emerging generation. On Friday mornings, you'd get your assignment. Every morning as part of our intentional community, we met at six o'clock for one hour, and we had what we call a codigiv [?]. And it was there that we would work on

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

models, issues, programs, whatever, and these are to be worked on corporately. And uh, at one point, over on the west side, I think we had about 150 people living in that building, we would all meet down in this beautiful bloome [?] we called it. Then we would all go over and do daily office together. Then, we'd all come back and have breakfast together, around which we would always have a scripture news conversation. We'd have, oh and we'd have a, what do you call when you have a scripture for each day? Daily reading, lexicon or something. We'd have that, and we'd discuss a Bible verse, and then we'd look at the news, what was going on in the world, and then we'd say, "What is the relationship between what we've been talking about out of the Scriptures, and what's going on in the world." So that was sort of our breakfast, that was an hour long. Then we'd all, people who -- now some of us would be assigned to work in-house, to work in the offices. Others would be assigned to go out and work. They were called the permeators. And they'd go out and get jobs. And they would bring their paychecks back at the end of the month and turn them over to our internal finance office, and then we'd all get monthly stipends. [tape ends.] ... health fund, we had an education fund, to take care of the kids' education when they got to college. Um, annuity, there was six of them -- we had a missional fund, I'd have to look up the sixth one, but we had six corporate funds, so that part of this money that would come in from our permeators, a part of it would go in a percentage basis, into the funds, and the others would be our stipends.

Q: And who was making the decisions? Like, the assignments, the work assignments?

A: Well, we, they would come out, every week, on Friday, um, ... gosh, I forget. It would be the group of people, like we had in the house, working as a staff, who were doing the programs, making arrangements -- you'd better ask David that, you'd better talk to David on this, because his memory is much better than mine, I'm discovering. Um, but I think they would make the weekend assignments, and part of that would be emerging generation structures. And eight of us would be assigned to go take care of the kids, take them to the programs, do curriculum with them --

Q: So they were home schooled? The children?

A: Oh, no, they went to school, public schools. They went to the public schools in the area, which in and of itself was a liberal education, because they were the only White kids in an all-Black school. And, in fact, with our boys, who were older, we put them in Marshall High School, which is the Black high school on the west side, and after about three months we took them out, because we decided they weren't safe! I mean, they were just beat up coming home, and they were just too much of, they were the only White kids in the school, so we put them into a Catholic school for their high school. But these assignments would have the emerging generation, they'd have the teaching assignments, they'd have the kitchen assignments -- who was going to do the cooking. And we all did the cooking. Part of the weekly assignments were the cooking the meals, getting the meals on the table. Um, it would be interesting to look up some of those assignments. And then each year, at the global research assembly, we would publish an assignment book, and it showed all of our vocations around the globe, and who was assigned there. Now I never, because of Joe, he was always in Chicago. I mean, he travelled most of the times, but his headquarters was in Chicago. So I was never assigned -- I did a lot of travelling -- but never was assigned to a religious overseas. Marge and Phil were, and they could give you another aspect of that. And uh, and they've had several assignments. Many of our people lived in three, four, five

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

different places on the globe for periods of time. Um, the youth, oh we had, every summer we had a camp. The first camp was in Canada. I'll never forget that. We decided we were going to have this camp, I got the location and all, and then we had to decide as to who was going to be the main, run this game, would be the dean of the camp. And we assigned this girl, her name was, well I don't think you need to know her name in particular, but she just about died when she got this assignment, she was just overwhelmed was the thoughts of going up to Canada with all these kids. But she did it, and they had a great time. Each summer we would have a camp for the kids, to get them out of the inner city. Um, and those camps would be attended also by Ecumenical children, and children of extended orders. And we still have, in the state of Washington, what they call, um, the rites of passage. And um, ... we can show you some, our, at least North American publication, called Initiatives, which would tell you, give you a glimpse now, of what's going on, since we're in such dispersion, the intentional communities. Um, ... so that would be on a weekly assignment basis. Um, it, see, with our education fund, it was for the kids, but we also, if one of the adult members, if we decided corporately that someone ought to go and take a course, we'd send them to do it, pay the tuition, and see that that got done. I mean, ... I think our economic life, we really never felt poor, even though our stipends I don't think ever exceeded \$100 a month. And that had to do for all our clothes, and what entertainment we did, and vacation plans and stuff like that. But we never felt deprived, economically deprived. But I think mainly because we were so ... committed to what we were doing. I mean, we really did operate out of a very deep and strong commitment. And one time we had a corporate wedding and we married six couples all at once. All the brides had their wedding gowns, and our chapel was in the gymnasium -- this campus we inherited had administration building, a residence, a chapel, and a gymnasium. And we did our daily office in the gymnasium. We ran our preschool, for all of our kids and the neighborhood kids, -- some neighborhoods. At the beginning we did neighborhood, because, then we started this preschool, which I think you really should go over and see. And also meet Lela Mosely -- but this is not the intentional community, it would be just a matter of interest. I mean, Tim wants intentional community.

Q: But this is something that the intentional community created, so it's still of value to what we are studying.

A: They're doing, over at, we bought, very cheaply I might add, from a labor union, over in this city, their huge office building and started a community center when we were there. And then we left, we turned it over to the community. And they're still running it. And um, now it looks as though they're starting a home for abused women, a place for abused women to come and get their feet on the ground. Also, people, uh, you know, women who have been on drug addiction, that kind of thing. And I just saw a letter the other day where it looks like the city's going to fund that whole thing, taking the whole second floor of that building over there, and doing it. They've already started it, doing it just on our own shoe-string budget, but it looks as though the city's going to give them funds to do it right, which is wonderful. Wonderful people. Lela Mosely and Minnie Dunlap [?], and Helen Escerage[?], are the three women over there that just, they were in on the Fifth City model from the beginning, and their whole lives have been devoted to it, and they're just wonderful women, just really great.

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

Q: Now I'm curious about um, why you decided to have a corporate community with a common purse. Did you feel that that was necessary to do your community development, or were there scriptural reasons?

A: No, no that's why I say it was a practical, a very practical thing, because we had this vision of doing all this, and then the question comes, "How in the world economically can we do this?" I mean, and with all these families? And so, and of course we stumbled into doing it, and we moved up to Evanston and we had all these debts, and some of us had more money than others, but we said, "Well, let's just corporately, get ourselves free, to begin the move." And so in a way it had nothing to do with intentional community. But then we began to talk about what it meant for us as seven families, to be doing what we were doing. I don't know when we began, and probably David would know, to call ourselves "the Order: Ecumenical" and to see ourselves as being one of three things. Order: Ecumenical, Ecumenical Institute, the Institute of Cultural Affairs. Now the Institute of Cultural Affairs began as a program on of the Ecumenical Institute. The reason we went legal on it, and now we fly under that flag -- like in that book, we're the Institute of Cultural Affairs -- was because when we tried to go into Malaysia, they wouldn't touch us with the name "Ecumenical Institute," because it had for them religious barnacles -- Western Christianity. And so we said, "Well, we'll do all this under ICA." Now, this is my own -- I would, and I think the day is coming, when maybe we can, where the Ecumenical Institute will be the flagship. I don't know. I remember in one of our lectures in one of the courses, we used to say, "Some day we will raise the flag of the Ecumenical Institute!" Because I think we are, at root, we are religious people. Now, ... that doesn't mean that we are institutional religious people. I mean, our aim, relative to the local church, was to ... revolutionize it, theologically, and every other way, I guess. And that's one of the big things we did -- the local church experiment. And, we did 36 tactics for a local congregation. We have these books on each -- 36 tactic books, on different aspects on the life of the congregation. And, we have churches, -- and we would take that work, and work with ministers. And even today, there are churches still doing their local church experiment. Still figuring out the tactics each year, and operating out of that model. We meet with them all the time, it seems. Another thing about our corporate life which was spiritually, spirit-wise, very important, was our singing. Our, wonderful -- we started out in the Christian Faith and Life Community with our singing, and we took [sings a traditional hymn tune] "Grace and peace be unto you, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be unto you, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen." And then we took the creed, and put it to "Mace the Knife [?]." And we would sing these things in the liturgy, you know, [sings an upbeat tune] "Praise God from whom all blessing flow, praise him from --" anyway, that was our beginning singing, was from those rubrics of the daily office. But then, ... oh, we have a lot of project songs, we have the Fifth City Love Song. We can show you some of our song books, we have a whole drawer full of them. Then we had a year where we did the love songs, like, "I Don't Know Why I Love You Like I Do," and "It Had to Be You." These were just the popular songs. Then we have the other world songs, that go along with this? Like, [sings] "When you are away, the whole world is a mountain of care." "A Mountain of Care", you know? We did all of those. Wonderful songs, our singing, people who had touched us remember the singing. I can remember one time when we sat down and we sang for one hour straight without stopping, with just people, we'd sing one song, and a person would pick up on another one. Our basic -- I told you that our basic, on this 14 course curriculum, basic curriculum, seven cultural, seven theological, the basic course on the cultural, Cultural Studies I, that's when we did the scientific, urban,

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

and cultural revolution, which took us to Chicago. On the other side is a basic course called Religious Studies I, which we're going to do the weekend after next, here. And I don't know how many, many -- it was our main course. Religious Studies I. And we took God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church, and we'd have a session around a meal. We'd have a corporate meal, just this weekend course, residential. One session of our course would begin with a meal, uh, where uh, we would have a conversation, a corporate conversation. Then we'd have a lecture on God: the God lecture, the Christ lecture, the Holy Spirit lecture -- we call that the "freedom lecture" -- and the Church lecture. And then we'd have a seminar, and we chose four papers, seminar papers, that are theologically just, very 20th century. The one on God is from Rudolf Bultmann [?], the one on Christ is from Paul Tillich [?], the one on freedom, or the Holy Spirit, is from Dietrich Bonhoeffer [?], and the one on the Church is from A. Church Neiber [?], where he describes the Church as a social dynamic. It has its institutional form, it has its movemental form, who never set forth, who put their feet through the church but who were doing the mission of the church, in terms of caring for the world. Anyway, great papers, just fantastic -- they really are. Oh, and then on Saturday nights we'd have a movie. We had been through God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and by Saturday night, we had this movie. And the movie we used was Anthony Quinn and Requiem for a Heavy-Weight. And we'd see this movie, and then we'd have a corporate conversation. One of our -- oh, we'd done a lot on, the intentional community has produced methods, methods, methods, methods. One of our foundational, basic methods is what they call the "art form conversation." And that's at four levels. You begin at the objective level, move to reflective, then interpretive, and then decisional. We'd have an art form conversation on that movie. And we'd tell participants that this was a test, as to whether or not they'd gotten what these papers were talking about. And so one of the questions is, "Where in Mountain" -- Anthony Quinn played a fighter, whose name was "Mountain," "Where in Mountain's life did you see the activity of God? Where did you see the Christ happening? Did he make a free decision at the end of that movie, or was he still in bondage?" One great conversation. We recently, we stopped, in '84, all this just stopped. Well it's getting resurrected. I've done three course up in Canada now, I'm going down to Phoenix in May, and we're doing one here the weekend after next. So we've been experimenting with other movies, and sort of a different mode of presentation. It was very, in the beginning, very pedagogical. Now, we've moved it more toward the participatory, engaging the participants, doing a workshop and a Neiber seminar rather than just straight seminar study. And it's sort of exciting. And we've been experimenting on the movies, but that Requiem for a Heavy-Weight is hard to beat, because it takes one man's life, it doesn't get to mixed up. But we did do Paul Newman in Nobody's Fool. Did you see that? We used that. It worked pretty well. We might use that next week. But that RS1 course is, I would say if there's any one instrument that we created, that we did as a people, the RS1 course was the thing that made us who we are. It changed people's lives! I mean, in that Tillich paper, you know, when you work on that part where he says, "Unless you know yourself to be an unconditionally forgiven human being, you can't possibly forgive other people." Well, and that got grounded in people's lives, in our methods, very much grounded. It wasn't academic study, it was very, um phenomenological, experiential study, where they would say, "Well, that goes on in my life," and talk about it. Anyway, it was, and I think, I don't know what will happen to that course, but ... I'm glad to see that it's being taught again. Um, I also think that our town meeting construct, um, ... I can show you some of the -- at the end of the town meeting, this was a day-long construct, where you go into a town - they'd have a document on their vision, their strategic plan. And we'd print up those documents, and

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

we just have hundreds, thousands of them in the file cabinets over here. But they would be handed a document with all the plans. We did, at one time we went back to check out, to see what the community has done, and it was amazing how people had carried out what they had decided to do. It was exciting. But that town meeting construct is another one that -- I wish I could go and talk to President Clinton about it, because um, ... our town meetings were more than just a conversation between the leader and the rest of the people. You know, it was a very corporate planning process.

Q: What happened in the mid-eighties that lead to the dissolution of the Order: Ecumenical?

A: Well, part of it was, and I don't want to say "all of it" at all, but Joe died in '77. And Joe, undoubtedly, was the spirit leader of us. We had, by that time, he had moved back, uh, I don't know when we created what we called the panchayat. That was a group of five persons, named by the total group, who assumed the symbolic leadership of the Order. The reason we did -- now the panchayat, is the form of governments that happens in an Indian Village. They always have a panchayat, five people, who are the symbolic leadership of the village. And so we picked up on that, and that's why we'd have this panchayat.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: P-A-N-C-H-A-Y-A-T. Panchayat. And so, the panchayat, I was on it a couple times. What we did when we were serving would be to go visit all of our places. In '84, ... where were we in '84? David can bring you up on this -- as David that question... . It just, all I can say, Deborah, is that it just became apparent that somehow or other we had come to the end run of our corporate life together. Now, I still like to say to myself and my colleagues -- oh, some people went into despair over the, David was one of them, he recovered a bit over the dissolution, and that's what it was, of the Order. It was in '84, or maybe finally in '88, and I'm not even sure on that, in Mexico, that we took out of being, the global structures. The global panchayat went out of being. We took all the money in the corporate funds and turned it all into an annuity fund, from which those of us were in the order, at the age of 65, begin to tap into, that's now an investment. I get a check each month from the Order. It's not very much, but it's wonderful that we did that. And it's threw a lot of people into a state of despair. Uh, but you can see how, and I wouldn't want to be quoted on this, Deborah, but you can see how, in an intentional community, the codependency can become a factor. Um, now there were others, many, many others who have went out and have started -- and we've still continued, every other year, our global meetings. There is an outfit, called the International Association of Facilitators, that started in Minneapolis, but it was all started in -- and I went to their last annual meeting, presented the archives to them. Even now, it is mainly Order people. But it is drawing in, well their membership list, people who never heard of the Order. But, ... the perspective on life, and how to operate, is very much that IAF. I see them, very much, a part of the on-going stream of the Order, you know, how that would ever go structurally, I don't know. But a lot of new people come to our global meetings, that never were a part of us -- it is not a reunion. Our global meetings are not reunions. And this time, for the week that we're together in Egypt, we're going to be working on the rise of the civil society, which is very exciting, very timely, appropriate. Anyway.

Interview with Lynn Mathews Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

April 15, 1996

Q: I know I have to leave. Can I ask one final question? And that's that, if you had to sum up the mission of your organization, could you do that for me? Because I'm not sure I have a real clear picture.

A: Well, I think it's very academic, not academic -- it's very abstract. Well, now, you mean now? You see, now --

Q: It changes, I guess, doesn't it?

A: Well now -- well one thing that's happened is, we still have 29 ICA locations. And each of them are meeting the contradiction in their own local community. Another way of talking about what happened to us is that we went local, just like many other institutions went local. We went local. "Think globally, act locally." We did that. And the mission is to care in the context of a global society, for the local. Now that -- I think that's the best way to put it. You might ask David that question, how he would say it. Um, but that's the way I would say it. Um, ... a lot of people, uh, well, in Asia, next weekend, we're having a meeting of the Asian network, called the Asian Network, and they're working on what they're calling the technology of transformation. Um, ... because, we go in, our teams go in and do a, say, organizational development program in a big company. And at the end, many, many times, the comments are made, "We don't know why this was so different, but it was just so different." And it's because, down underneath it, is RS1. That is what is underneath, never a mention of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Church, but down underneath of that is that word of affirmation, the honoring of the creativity of every human being. What a great phrase, we used to have to say, "Just remember, when you go out to teach this course, that there's a ball of creativity in every human being around that table, and your job is to release it!" That's what people sense, and that's what this Asian meeting -- and also, we're, in December, no, in June, a global group is going to meet here, and go on with this question as it relates to the archives, as it relates to what we get onto a CD rom disk, in the arena of what we would call Spirit. That has to do with the Other World. I think the Other World, is, as a companion piece, a secular statement, secular images and metaphors, to RS1, is some of our most significant work. It's hard work to know how to market the Other World. So that's what the Asian meeting's about, and it's what our June meeting will be about here for a week. Um, anyway.

Q: Thank you so much for your time.