

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

Q: This is Saturday, May 18th, and an interview with Rebecca Campbell. And Rebecca, I'd love to hear a little bit about your background and what led up to you becoming involved in communal living.

A: I was born the eldest of five children in Marin [?], Ohio, in 1951. August 22nd -- I'm a Virgo/Leo. I have always been interested in spiritual things. I read the Bible extensively. I was interested in the Jewish culture, I visited other churches with my friends as a child. And we shifted -- I was raised a Protestant, and we shifted churches several times, and we never considered it any big deal. My parents were not terribly doctrinaire, which was to my advantage later, I found. We just went to what Protestant church was near us. I was baptized a Lutheran, and then pretty much raised a Methodist. When I was 14 -- and we had moved after my mother's death -- we went to a little country church with my cousins. But at a certain point at that age, I found it rather boring, rather stifling. And so I walked out. I just didn't feel like going anymore. My brothers and sisters tended to follow me, since I was the eldest of five. So pretty soon -- and my father is a Mason -- so it was sort of an esoteric background I was exposed to, although they don't talk about it much, it's a secret society. When we moved again after my father's remarriage, to Decanton [?], Ohio, I was looking for something, spiritually, and I thought, on a given afternoon, a Saturday, it was raining rather hard, that I was going to the Unitarian Church. But it turned out I misread, by a seemingly fortuitous accident, the Yellow Pages, and I ended up at the Unity Church instead, which of course is much more metaphysical. And actually, that was fortuitous, because it turned out that it fit more to my beliefs. What naturally was resonant with my own soul, because I'm more esoteric naturally, which was probably why I was getting more into the esoteric Protestantism that I was exposed to as a child. My mother was a Sunday School teacher, and so I had more discussions with her in depth about the Bible, and I read a lot of things about the Bible, so I wasn't bored with that or with the real teachings of Jesus as a man. It was just that it seemed rather anemic the way it was being taught and applied in the mainstream churches. I studied, and it probably saved my sanity, with the Unity minister, an older man in his seventies, named Uncle Fred. Very folksy guy. He hired me to do the cleaning in the church, and we'd have these long, philosophical discussions. I was depressed because I didn't fit in the high school. I was highly creative rather than academically oriented. And my father remarried, and it was not compatible. She was kind of the wicked step-mother. At least from my view-point. And so, it was unpleasant. I actually left home when I was 17. This was ironically precipitated by my father wanting me to join the Navy. And I was a pacifist. One of my friends said, "Yes, I can see you in the Navy, Rebecca, for three days before you got courtmarshalled." So, I ended up living on the streets with friends in Columbus, Ohio, appropriately High Street. And it very much was in those days, with the drug use.

Q: What year was this, about?

A: October of 1969. The tail-end of the counter-culture.

Q: And what city in Ohio?

A: Columbus, Ohio, near the campus of Ohio State. On High St.

Q: And for Columbus, Ohio, was this sort of the peak of the counter-culture?

A: Yeah, it went after that pretty fast, it got much more yuppy-fied and diluted after that. But I got there while it was still in full-swing, just before the Kent State riots. And I was actually in the Ohio State riots, not participating, but trying to follow it, a couple days before Kent State, in May 1970. So there was

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

some interesting things happening. I was near where there was some action. So in any case, an interesting thing happened in January of 1970, when I had been there for 4 or 5 months, I was staying in some friends' apartments, I was kind of living on the streets and moving, playing musical apartments in the university area with friends. Kind of crashing with them. And a couple of friends of mine were out, and I had a mattress under their kitchen table. And there was a knock at the door. I opened the door, and there were two young gentlemen from San Francisco who we'd met a couple of days and had just arrived in Columbus. They had brought another young man, with strongly semitic features, wearing a gray Christian set of clerics, with a red ribbon, and a black ebony cross, trimmed in silver. I'd never seen any priest dressed like this. They said, oh and my name in those days was Penny, incidentally, Rebecca is my spiritual name. Penelope is the legal name, it doesn't really fit too well, so I haven't used it since I was 18. They said, "We wanted you to meet this gentlemen, he also just arrived from San Francisco. I just had a feeling we should bring him here." And I asked him, "What church are you from?" He seemed to have this Jewish sense of humor -- "The Holy Order of Mans." And I said, "Holy Order of what?" And he said, "Holy Order of Mans." And I said, "Well, perhaps I'll join it to find out." And he looked me in the eye and said, "You'll find out." So he came in, and we began, Mike and Larry, which are the two gentlemen from San Francisco, and I, started having a discussion with Brother Larry Titlebaum. He was indeed Jewish. It turned out he had been raised -- he was a Red Diaper baby who lived all his early life in Washington DC with Jewish Marxist parents, had converted with his twin brother to Zen Buddhism, and then met a very unique Christian master in the Haight-Ashbury area of San Francisco -- as I said, this is a real interesting story -- who basically said, "Follow me," and they did, back to the house in Haight-Ashbury, which was in the headquarters of the Holy Order of Mans, which was an esoteric Christian order of teaching and service. And he explained all this. In the meantime, the two friends that owned the apartment joined us, and it was quite mysterious, by the end of the evening we had about 14 people crammed into the apartment, sitting at Brother Larry's feet, listening to him! I can't figure out where all the people came from, but it was quite an evening. Larry had an excellent sense of humor. He didn't take himself seriously. And he seemed to be -- this was a great interest to me -- he seemed to be actually doing the spiritual practices which all of my friends talked about and smoked dope in order to get to that state of consciousness, supposedly, which I found really dubious. I, myself, was doing some experimentation, but I didn't take it all that seriously, it just seemed to me like a phase I was going through, rather than something that would be permanent. So I and my friends, many of whom were gay, incidentally, were studying with Brother Larry, and the gay people particularly found it remarkable because he accepted them. Like, he didn't make any issue of their sexuality. He accepted them. They were welcomed to come to his classes any time. This really impressed them, and a whole lot of them came. And I was impressed with his tolerance. The cousin of my best friend, one of the gay couples that I knew and had stayed with, came down, and he brought his girlfriend. And I had gone to high school with both him and his cousin, my best friend, and acted with him and so forth. So I knew him pretty well. He came into Brother Larry's apartment, and at the break of the class, he said to Brother Larry, "You know, Larry," -- he didn't insist on being called "Brother" either, which was nice, he was very informal -- "I'm looking around this apartment, it's supposed to be a Christian apartment, you're in a Christian order, right?" And he said, "Yeah." "I don't see any symbols of a typical Christian order. There's no cross, nothing you would expect, except the one you're wearing." And he said, "Oh yes there is." Tom looked sort of perplexed, and asked, "Well, what's that?" And brother Larry pointed to the astronaut's earth-

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

rise photograph, above the mantel, and said, "That's a current portrait of Jesus Christ." I'm just giving you some samples of his humor. Another time Larry and Michael, they soon became hostile right away, they were ironically the ones who brought him to the apartment, and then they got hostile. But they asked Brother Larry what his feeling was about private property. Because Michael, who was Hispanic, tended to be more communistic. Brother Larry said, "Well, it's a nice concept, but it doesn't exist." And somebody else asked him, "What do you think of the Old Testament?" And it was interesting, because he was Jewish, and he said, "It's old." His classes were just really amusing, but had a great deal of profundity. His understandings of analogy, the underlying symbolism, was very profound, the actual word-play that you could see in the words and the underlying patterns, I was most impressed with this, and then when you asked him about the spiritual practices, he could give you actual concrete information about meditation, contemplation, and the differences between them. How you could actually begin to do them. And you can't get this sort of information from the mainline churches -- they've forgotten it. Another thing that impressed me was, well, there were a number of things. The order was a balance between service and contemplation. Because Brother Larry worked at Burger King.

Q: Now, let me make sure I got this right. Did he come to Columbus from San Francisco?

A: He had studied with the head of the order, Father E. W. Blighton [?] in San Francisco first.

Q: And then went to Columbus maybe to recruit people?

A: As a mission. Interesting enough -- there were many things I liked about the order, one of them was the balance between service and contemplation. It was the first order to ordain women into the priesthood in modern times. It began nine years before the Episcopalians. It was co-ed, it was a married order. And the houses were shared by men and women. They pioneered -- they did not believe in proselytizing, they believed in being present, and meeting the needs of people wherever they were. They did street missions where they would actually go out to the people rather than expecting the people to come to them. And they did not proselytize on these missions or their volunteer activities. They'd often just volunteer in the community too, and they did not recruit. If somebody came up and was interested, they would talk to them, and give them a card and invite them to classes, but they never did a hard-sell. And they were forbidden to, it was one of the tenets of the order, that you were to be, rather than try to attract grace or whatever by bringing in large masses of souls. And the order realized it had a specialized mission, also. But I'll get into that later. I studied with Brother Larry for 6 months. And in July of 1970, Brother Larry went to meet the newest master teacher, or bishop, who had been assigned to the Chicago area, which included Cleveland, the Midwestern region. So he went for a number of days, and when he came back, he said, "I talked to Master Roul about you, and he would like to meet you. Would you like to go?" I said yes. I had just gotten a job -- I was constantly getting fired from jobs, because I'm not terribly obedient, and I wasn't terribly serious, but I was serious about getting the bus fare. And I had just been working at a job, Brother Larry had gotten me a job at Burger King, and it turned out that I had earned the exact amount of the bus fare to get the Chicago. So I went, and I was impressed with what I saw. I have to say, I had some spiritual experiences in the 6 months I was spending with Brother Larry -- just the way he was brought to the door, and the way in which the spiritual side opened, I would say there was something going on there, it was synchronicity. I hope you're willing to consider that, because not everything can be explained in a cut and dry manner,

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

especially when you're dealing with spirituality. And I should think all communities should include some spirituality, and some of the miraculous. It was just things like I would intuitions about something and it would prove out. Like a reality check. I tend to be a practical mystic, so I don't take seriously anything I can't check out in real time. But things constantly happened, and they bore out. The second week I was there, in Chicago, -- I'll give you an example of things that happened. I was in the chapel and we were having a vespers service, which we did every night. It was short, no more than a half hour. And Master Roul, the new teacher, was in the chapel with us. And I had had a thought, because one of the novices had a fever, and apparently there was a spontaneous healing that happened. And I thought something like, "There's a lot of skepticism, including in myself, about miracles, and those who perform them, but thank God they do exist." And all of a sudden, as soon as I thought that, he came over and put his hands on my head and he said, "Your prayer has been heard." And he gave me a blessing and something definitely happened, something opened. I had an initiation soon after that, but that was after I went to San Francisco, but my impression was, this was the way it was opened. The order did a lot of laying on of hands in order to accelerate consciousness. I think there were some things that may have been a deficit in that, because I think you can over-accelerate people's consciousness. Just like when somebody takes LSD, and they blow their circuits, I think the same thing can be done with advanced techniques. I think you have to be very careful.

Q: Now, so I understand what's happening, this order had houses all over the country?

A: Well, at that time it was growing, so it didn't have it all over the country. At that time I believe it had them in San Francisco, Chicago, maybe New York. Maybe three or four areas where they had them. The pattern was, they would send one to two people -- they actually followed what Jesus said about, the whole chapter where he talks about sending his disciples on missions, send one or two before you into a given city. They exactly followed it. They were like the primitive Christians.

Q: So that was what Brother Larry was doing, he was one of the disciples they sent to Columbus?

A: Exactly. And they also took seriously, like the early Christian had everything in common, they took it seriously and were doing it. And they also began, they were participation in the early movement of what we now call gentrification, and recycling, because they would purposefully go into the worse parts of the city, a lot of times, not always, but a lot of times, especially when they were developing a group house, when the larger group was going to move in there, I think that's mainly when they would start that. I think a lot of times they would send their advanced force of like one or two people into a university area where young people would be. Because it would appeal to young people, particularly at that time.

Q: And also so they could do service in these poor areas too?

A: Yes, but that would be later. Then when they decided to put a bigger house in, they would go to the poor areas, and then would send a travelling crew in, who would renovate the house. So they did a great service from a number of angles. They started the gentrification process that would often take off in the area, preservation and so forth. They would have potential volunteers and people who were service oriented right in the neighborhood. And if you take prayer and the use of the mind to send out spiritual forces into a given area, it would uplift the area. So there's a number of things that they looked at before they did this.

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

Q: Now was this order affiliated with an established church?

A: No. Independent. And Father Earl W. Blighton, Father Paul, the founder, had worked with many leaders. He had gotten a lot of his experience diversely. He felt he needed to prepare himself, and the greater and broader his experience, rather than narrower, the better. He worked with the Civil Rights movement with Martin Luther King. He was a civil engineer by trade, but he must've just done it as a side, for all the things he did. He was a friend and also worked for awhile with Earnest Holmes, in the Science of Mind church. His best friend was Dr. Samuel L. Lewis, the founder of the Sufi order, on the West Coast, and the heir of the Levi Strauss fortune, who gave up his fortune to become a Sufian Zen master. And I actually got to meet Dr. Sam before his death. Also, the order accepted all paths. It was an esoteric Christian order, but it was tolerant and accepting, and we actually studied the scriptures and lifestyles of other religions. And that was another thing, we were not permitted in the tenets to criticize other people's paths, particularly publicly. I guess you could privately, I mean, but nobody was supposed to be quoted in a newspaper article, or get up on the pulpit and preach against somebody else's path. Specifically. I mean, if somebody was doing injustice, that's one thing, or running a cult where people were being abused. But we're talking about basic beliefs.

Q: Now when you went to Chicago, you were to visit someone named Master Roul?

A: It's an ancient Egyptian name, "R-O-U-L," it's a spiritual name.

Q: What was a "master" considered? That was the next level up from "brother" or something?

A: No, not by any means. Brother is the lowest. Brother is like a deacon -- if we were looking at a typical church structure that would be understandable, novices would be novices, first-vowed would be like postulants, final vowed would be deacons, priests would be priests -- male and female priests, as a mentioned, and female master teachers as well -- master teacher would be the same as a bishop. And I guess the head of the order would be like the arch bishop or pope. The one thing the order did maintain, is hierarchy, and I think that was its undoing, and I can explain that later. I didn't see it at the time. It certainly made life difficult for me, because as I saw later, I don't fit into hierarchies.

Q: So, can you tell me some more of what happened in Chicago?

A: Because I was a novice, I stuck around the house quite a bit. So I just was engaged in different tasks. They'd often give you things, like the Zen people, to test your patience, things that were irrational, to see how you'd react. I remember one of the priests gave me a hammer and told me to chip all the paint off of this radiator. It was one of the most aggravating things. I had to stay on this thing for 3 or 4 hours to get the paint off. They do things like that. If you've never cooked before, they put you as the cook. It was things to test your resourcefulness, your ability to call on something higher than yourself, to push the envelope. They didn't want you to be comfortable. Sort of like boot camp, really. Two weeks after I arrived, Mother Ruth, who was the wife of Dr. E. W. Blighton, or Father Paul, came to visit. It was interesting -- she was a tiny little woman, like 4'11". You might say she walked softly and carried a large Zen stick. She was very soft-spoken, very gentle, refined, saintly, but she spoke with "honest expression," as they said here. Here at the conference they used the term "honest expression," or, if I may coin a term, based on the community at which we're visiting, "gonesty."

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

Q: Did you come up with that?

A: Yes I did. I'm good at coining phrases. I'll share that with them before I leave. So any case, Mother Ruth and I were just total opposites, but we hit it off. It was incredible, it was just magnetic. I mean, we would talk for hours. She's like in her 50's, in her peak, I'm an 18 year old, precocious, I was not filled with all the social graces, I'm sure I had quite a few rough edges, given my upbringing, and what had happened to me, because there was a lot of abuse in the household when I was growing up. But in any case, we hit it off, and after about a week of her being there, one day I was on the bed taking a rest after working rather hard -- we got up at 5 in the morning and worked straight through until 11 at night -- she stuck her head in, and said, "Rebecca, what do you think about going to San Francisco with me?" I said, "Far out!" So I flew out with her to San Francisco. This was great, I'd never been on an airplane in my life, not to mention a jet, and not to mention going to the West Coast, which was the hip place at that time, it was the time of Haight-Ashbury. They're headquarters was right on the edge of Haight-Ashbury. So I went out there, and I remember coming in the door, and Father Paul greeting me. He took my hand -- I knew who he was, because there were a lot of pictures of him around, but not like there were big pictures where people were bowing down. It never had that kind of -- it was very clear that Jesus Christ was the head of the order. It was not a cult. I'm sure at certain houses -- I heard stories later where people were abusing their power, but a lot of those people got busted too. And I busted a couple of them as a matter of fact. So, there were some members who left disgruntledly and said it was a cult, I don't feel that it was. For one thing, there's usually a cult figure. Somebody that's unassailable, you can't question them, this sort of thing, and while there was more hierarchy than I would've liked, Father Paul certainly would listen to your opinion. I actually would go into his office and talk to him and that sort of thing. It just didn't have in my opinion that kind of an aura. I remember when he shook my hand and he looked me in the eye, and he said, "In humility, there is great power." And I remember I got an electric shock in my hand. So there was definitely an interchange of energy there of some kind, whatever you want to call it. The houses of the order were generally, when they had a headquarters, they usually renovated an old mansion. It was usually a large house that had multiple bedrooms. Really big, like 12 or 13 bedrooms sat least. On one floor would be the men, on another the women. They did not mix unless they married. I think there was other things going on, but that was not sanctioned. And they would make space for married couples, who could have a little suite of rooms, or they could have their own house. Sometimes they would buy an apartment for them or something. The average age of the order at that time was 22 or 23 years old, it was very young, so a lot of the people were single, obviously. But the houses were, at least in the early years, very well taken care of. A lot of the people in the order had buildings skills, or they learned them. So a lot of the order, they had in-house skills, they didn't have to hire people to do them. The order had the skills, or they'd bring them in from other centers, people who had specific skills they would bring in to be part of the work crew. There were several houses in San Francisco. There was the headquarters, which was male and female. There was the sister house, where it was obviously all sisters, except for I think the couple of priests that would head the house -- there would be a married male and female priest. And then downstairs was Father Paul and Mother Ruth's apartment, and the chapel. And then just across the block was the Fillmore aide [AIDS?] station run by brothers. So they were operating an aide station -- actually that's not as innovative, because there's been soup kitchens running since the turn of the century. Salvation Army's been doing it. But the order was operating that. Then, though, while I was there, about a year later, just up the street they opened

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

one of the first shelters for battered women in the country, called the Raphael House, which still exists. It's the largest shelter for women, children, and families, in the world. It's a converted hospital, in the middle of San Francisco. Named after the archangel of healing. They got a modest little building on Goff St. that was condemned, and they got it from the city for a very small amount in agreement to rehab it. Which they did -- they sent more crews over. We'd volunteer on Saturdays, even if you weren't builders, you could paint and do things under direction. So I remember being over there. It was a square building, and we created a courtyard. It was actually a beautiful courtyard with wood, really beautiful polished wood, and we'd actually have dinners out there. And entertainment. There were a lot of talented artists and singers and musicians, and we would actually have meals for the residence, and we'd invite people from the order over, and we'd have sing-alongs, and concerts, and it was delightful, particularly during the warm weather.

Q: Did you dress in any particular way?

A: Yes. The dress of the order -- I should probably send you some pictures. I have a good one of me at age 21. It blew me a way, I just got this thing from Olan Mills, I thought it was just going to be a normal size, and they send me this whole thing, it looks like a poster. Me at age 21 wearing the garb of the order, which looked -- the men dressed pretty much like Catholic priests, except they wore that black ebony cross with the silver trim, without the body of Christ on it. It was like the Protestants, we removed the body for our crosses. And they would wear either a red or blue ribbon. The red ribbon was usually indicating a missionary. And the blue was more regular. And they wore either -- well, it varied throughout the years, because it started out they wore grey for hot weather, and black for regular wear. And then we developed a midnight blue and a camel color for hot climates. So it varied a little bit. But basically the brothers dressed like Catholic priests, except they had robes that they could wear inside the house, or just going outside briefly. They were really neat robes, like monk's robes with hoods, kind of a blue-green color with a cord. The women wore garb more similar to women Episcopal priests, only we had more like the mandarin Catholic collar. They have the round collar, we had the round collar but with the black square over the collar, like the Catholic priests. And we wore the cross similarly. We wore our hair either very short, or up, like in a French twist, and granny shoes. And capes. The women could wear, as well as robes, they could wear, we had these beautiful midnight-blue capes with lining and hoods.

Q: Now, there was clearly a lot of the hippie things still going on in San Francisco at that point. Were any of the hippies -- I sort of hesitate to use that word -- were they attracted to what you were doing?

A: Oh, definitely. Most of the teachers were former hippies.

Q: Okay. So you had a lot of hippie seekers come in and want to find out what you were up to, and want to join?

A: Yeah. I don't know if you want to let this out publicly, but the guy who's the head of the remnant of the order, the successor to Father Paul, he was Osley's [?] head chemist. The house that was the order's headquarters was Osley's laboratory, were Purple [?] Osley was made. I put that in parentheses, because you have to be discrete about -- because the order might sue you or something. It doesn't exist as an entity that much, there's a few remnants that kept the Holy Order of Man's rubric, but they're just

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

a tiny remnant, and then the rest of them was this Brotherhood of Christ that I mentioned. But I find it rather amusing. The teachers were the original group on Haight-Ashbury. They were a little older than the rest of us, they were three or four years older, a lot of them. They were still very young, but I mean they were more in their mid- to late-twenties.

Q: Do you know what year that Father Paul started the order?

A: He had a commission. I'm not totally clear on this, I think it was in the late '60's, and he met with a bunch of people in San Francisco, and apparently he had assembled this himself, he had gotten divine guidance to do this. But it was very practical -- getting the commission together, and apparently he had all different types of professions. He didn't just have -- it could have been Samuel Lewis, who he's been friends with for a long time, might have been on that, but like ministers from other faiths, doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs, professionals, probably, business people, probably. And they met for a period of time. Maybe a year. And what he was trying to find out, with brainstorming and so forth, this process, what would be the ideal religious organization or spiritual organization that would really help humanity in the late twentieth century. And what he got was, from this committee, and what he got from within, was basically what became the order. Male and female, all these suggestions, he incorporated. So he used a facilitation process, at least to some degree, to come up with the ideas, which was remarkable. This guy was remarkable, I mean, he would say things, and I'd shelve them. And then years later, or a month later, I'd see the guy was totally right on. Like he would say things like -- and he also got revelations. From Jesus Christ, and a lot of them dealt with what was going to happen. The apparent mission of the order, he kept calling us "chakra troops," like we were young people, but we also accept as an esoteric order -- and this is true of some metaphysical Christians as well -- we accept reincarnation. And there are evidence that the early Christians did too, so again we resembled the early Christians. And he felt that we had a lot of experienced mystics from ages past who had been assembled during the last days, during the time of the earth changes that had been prophesied, and that he was to get a group of people that could be trained on how to handle the energy consciously, that was going to come into the earth and help the people when it really started to happen. Barbara Marx Hubbard, the futurist, came up in a vision that she had, she also received a revelation from Jesus Christ, and she's Jewish. Which is real interesting. I talked with her about it. She got the beautiful term, "planetary pentecost." And he had been told this 25 years before it really began to happen, and one of the manifestations of this was the power of the sun was going to increase on the planet.

Q: Oh, like the greenhouse effect, right?

A: The ozone hole. And of course I'd been in the order since 1970, but he had been talking about this since the mid-sixties, and then in 1974, the scientist that won the Nobel Prize for it, or several prizes, I'm forgetting his name, from California, started doing research, and they did find that there was more solar energy coming into the earth, because of the ozone layer, in the poles. So this guy was right on the money about all kinds of things, that just sounded far out, but he was not talking through his hat. It happened. All this stuff happened in real time, it isn't just floating up in the ether somewhere, it can be proven and verified later. So I found this really impressive. I started getting things that would happen, having prophetic dreams, and they happened. So, through the processes he developed, through human technology, of accelerated energy in the human body, using the chakras, the energy centers, he seemed

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

to be able to bring people into higher states of consciousness faster, so they could help others who were doing through at slower rates. Who, when the energy came down -- this is what we were told -- a lot of people were going to get their circuits blown and go insane. That's happening now. That explains a whole lot of the violence, the senseless violence! Thirty-two people being blown away by the city in Tasmania. There's all kinds of things like that happening. And I don't know about you, but when I was a kid, there weren't things like that happening. Something is going on. And he told us about this. And we were told that we would be an "elect" group -- I don't totally buy into hierarchy and elitism -- but elect in the sense of being trained to help others, and know what was going on, consciously. He wasn't as tied to form, as often is the case, as a lot of followers are. The leader's usually not as dogmatic as the followers, who jump on his or her every word, and become hypnotized. So I don't think he was as tied into all these forms. He just saw that these clerics and all these things that we were using were forms by which we could reach the masses of the people.

Q: Right. Now, it's interesting when you were talking about the chakras, he must've adopted some Eastern religion into what he was doing.

A: That's what I'm saying. It was esoteric philosophy, but Jesus was the master -- the teacher we were following was Jesus. But I don't think Jesus is going to fight Buddha, and Buddha's not going to fight Jesus. What you're talking about is packaging. Certain avatars came to certain people at certain times, because they had the form that would benefit those people. So that's what we're talking about here, is not getting hung up on these forms. And that was the beauty of it, there was a recognition of this instead of getting hung up on forms. Yet, we did, we studied Christ's teachings, and he is my teacher. I don't think anything compares to him as far as the great teachers -- he is the only one that gave his life, he's the only one that went among the people. He was the only one who was at the level of social activism, and risked his life doing it like that. He was quite unique in that. So, there's a lot of things about Christ himself that are much more my -- and I'm just speaking subjectively, from my own soul, the way I operate -- there's this energy with that particular path. But certainly it's the path of esoteric Christianity rather than the typical churches. We studied the tarot. We studied astrology. Dr. Samuel Lewis, in the fall of 1970, when I first got there, we had the Sufi master giving classes on the Epistles of St. Paul. And this guy, he dressed like an old hippie, this heir to the Levi Strauss fortune, he was disowned by his family. He had the top scores in tests when he was a kid, like he scored tops in the state of California. He could've gone anywhere for school, both the money that his family had and the scholarships he could've gotten -- he chucked it to become a Sufi and a student of Zen, and he became masters in both disciplines. So there were some really far out, neat people. The order would have speakers from the Vedanta Society -- we would actually have field trips to these different churches and different temples, to Jewish temples. We'd invite Jews to come in and celebrate the Seder, the Passover, so we would learn first-hand other paths. In our libraries you would have different translations of the Tao Di Ching, you would have the Torah, the Kaballah [?]. We studied the Kaballah. The idea was to study the symbolism. And as an artist, I really saw the wisdom of this. Because now, if you can imagine the mastery I have of symbology -- I'm a poet! And if you understand consciously these cosmic symbols, that appear throughout the cosmos, I mean, you can go into Arturus, and beings on that are going to be using the same symbols. These are found in chemistry, they're found in astrology, they're found in -- this is what cosmic consciousness is, it's the ability to pattern and see all these things. I feel the order really

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

had elements of this, and they were bringing people into that. That was the mission of the order. I really was trained beautifully. But the hierarchy things, I noticed, a lot of people were cold. Like here, you have warmth, and you can't go into a hallway without someone saying hi to you. When you start talking to people at lunch, there's an immediate rapport, and it's welcoming. Not always in the order was that the case. Some of the teachers seemed to me to be preoccupied with whatever. It was almost like they were acting preoccupied so that you'd think they were important. There seemed to be a lot of that going on. A lot of people were from dysfunctional families. Now that can be good in one sense, because they're not satisfied with things as they are. On the other hand, though, they bring their problems into their spirituality. It doesn't suddenly disappear just because they had an initiation. I don't think the order dealt that well with that. I think eventually they started sending people to psychologists and so forth. At first they tried pastoral counselling. That would help a lot of the time, and certainly with spiritual, what was called mentoring, or spiritual directing, they were very good at that, because they had a mastery of a lot of the techniques that had been forgotten. But if somebody comes in with emotional problems, which a lot of those people did, looking back, they needed more specialized help. And the order oftentimes dragged their feet on getting help for people. I don't think in that way they were that sophisticated. It was really strange, because they were so sophisticated in so many ways and doing so many things right, but I felt that was wrong. The obedience thing I didn't do to well in. I was in a lot of trouble.

Q: Now I'm curious some about some of the practical sides of things. Did you all go out and get jobs? I know you said Brother Larry worked at a Burger King.

A: Yeah, it was self-supporting, that was the other thing I really liked about it. We didn't rely on donations, so nobody could tell us what to do. It was practical in that way. This guy really thought it through. We would, about 3/4 of us, and keep in mind, this was headquarters, so a bigger proportion of people were working in. So about 1/4 of the people at headquarters were working in, and about 3/4 were working out. I would say that would be much less, like one person or two people at a typical center. A regional center might be a little bit more too, but not huge, and I think in a lot of the smaller centers everybody worked, except maybe the priest. Most of the time they would work at least part-time, and they might do something like being the chaplain, and they could be home if people needed spiritual counselling, lay disciples and so forth, to teach classes, this sort of thing. But most of the people in the order did hold outside jobs. And most of the time they had service jobs of different types. It went anywhere from being a consultant to being a nursing aide. But that was the way we often made money. I don't think too many people got into sales or anything like that. It was much more service oriented. The order made its own money. We lived a comfortable lifestyle. It was not opulent, and I don't think it should've been. But we ate well. We'd have feasts, like Easter feasts. We have three days of fasting, and three days of feasting. And we lived in San Francisco, so you get fresh fish, fresh vegetables, all these exotic things I never had in Ohio, and I was the cook. So I could order anything. I remember getting fresh red snapper, directly from the ocean. Artichokes, I never had artichokes before, and avocados. I loved vegetables and fruits, and of course they're in abundance there. So we ate well. The order did not skimp on food. They believed in eating well, but it was part of spirituality to respect the temple, so we were not ascetic in that sense.

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

Q: Would you take turns cooking, and sharing the work of the houses?

A: There were people assigned to certain things, like there was usually a steward or stewardess who would be the administrator of the house, and they usually worked in, or worked only part-time. There was a cook for the larger houses, and I was one of those. I did a lot of inner work, inside the order too, but I would say I worked mostly outside, and I had a number of, at least three of the years of the nine, I worked inside. On weekends, to give everybody a break that worked their normally, in the house, so they could get out of the house, they would, just like here at the Communities conference, people would sign up, to cook a meal, some people would sign up for clean up. If you were not volunteering, it would be brought sharply to your attention. We would have communion in the morning. We'd get up about 5:30 every morning, and have communion for the first half hour, and then we'd have breakfast. We fasted one day a week. And at first I thought this was quaint and ascetic and so forth, and now all this data is coming out about dietary restriction, and the value of fasting in animals, so again, Father Paul was ahead of his time. And I've maintained that. I would be a really good research subject for that too, because I have fasted at least 36 hours a week ever since I was 18.

Q: Wow. Do you think you're healthier as a result?

A: Well, I'm 45 years old? Do I seem 45 years old?

Q: No, you look great!

A: That's what I'm saying, energy level, no wrinkles, I'm not wearing make-up. I don't get sick. My body's very strong and healthy. Extremely. So I definitely think so.

Q: Do you take juice or anything when you fast?

A: We would take fluids. We always had bottled water in the centers, because again, he said tap water was not safe 20 years ago, and everybody thought he was eccentric, and now the data is coming in about fluoride and herbicides and petrol products. So again, he was right on the money. He always had us drink lemon juice to break a fast. And we thought that was quaint. Then this avant garde biochemist in Texas, wrote a book about fasting, and using juices as an augmentation to it, and in the research he did, he discovered that food molecules would be anabolic or catabolic. It turned out that the most catabolic or destructive, was pork, which of course in Judaism, revelation to Moses, you don't eat pork, there was reasons for that. They were given some real good guidance there. And then he found the most anabolic substance that was most constructive to the body was lemon juice.

Q: How interesting. Now would you drink it pure, or did you dilute it?

A: We diluted it. You don't need much lemon juice, a little bit goes a long way. We'd use the pure water, and then we'd put lemon juice in it, and then before we went to bed we'd drink the glass of lemon juice, the evening of the fast. And then we would have orange juice just before eating breakfast, and then we would eat. And we would have certain things like cereals and things that would be good to break the fast. I don't think you should go eat meat and all kinds of things like that. So we integrated the body with the spirit. We didn't believe you could just concentrate on either one. It had to be a balance. One of the teachers gave the best definition of spirituality, he said it's integration. And I thought that was the best thing I've ever heard and I've always tried to [tape ends] ...

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

Q: Did they send you back to Columbus, or --?

A: No. I was there for two years, in seminary. The order seminary was kind of irregular. It would depend on how much the teachers gaged that you needed the training. Some people got sent out right away, some people they kept around. I was kept around for about 2 years, because I was kind of disobedient, and they wanted to keep their eye on me. I also think Father Paul wanted me around for special training, looking back on it, because Mother Ruth had recommend me. But he ordained me, I never was ordained in the order, I was always kept at the final vowed level. Even though I was told I was supposed to do all these other things, I never, because of the hierarchy, because I didn't fit in hierarchy, I don't think they would give me authority.

Q: In what ways were you disobedient? Like, would you talk back to people?

A: Yeah. I mean, a priest would tell me, "Rebecca, lower your voice," and I'd say [says in a man-like voice], "Okay Reverend Mary! I'm lowering my voice! Is this okay?" And I remember Reverend Mary would respond, "Rebecca, you are a menace to humanity." She put me up in my room for awhile. So I went to my dormitory-style room. But just things like that. I remember I took an unauthorized vacation, and the reason it was "unauthorized," is some idiot in the corporate headquarters, I'd applied in plenty of time, they didn't get back to me, and I had my arrangements to leave so I left. And I was brought back and busted for being "unauthorized." A lot of that was bureaucratic. See the order got some bureaucracy there, which with hierarchy, you get into, no matter how good your intentions. And I don't think it was just. And other people said later it wasn't. I was busted to a novice and put on absolute silence for three months. And sent to Reno, Nevada after that.

Q: Wow, so they had heavy consequences for disobedience.

A: Yes. And they could be very -- and I mean I didn't feel I was truly disobedient, I feel it was their problem for not, but oftentimes they wouldn't -- in a community now, you could work it out. But when you've got a hierarchical structure, you're supposed to listen to what their decision is. And this is what I could never get into. I always felt like I had the right to talk back and give my side of the story. And I did have a hearing before the esoteric counsel, which consisted of the priests and teachers, who happened to be in San Francisco at the moment. But I didn't feel that was just. So, but in any case, that was the sort of thing. Also, as I said, I busted some of the priests and teachers for being abusive. I think a few of them had it in for me because of that, obviously. These people were not perfect, so there were some politics going on there.

Q: So, three months of silence and then you were sent to Reno?!

A: Reno, Nevada, which was the nearest by center to San Francisco. But I got my full status back in less than three months. Three months was the sentence, but it was only two months. But it was hell. I was very depressed. I felt more when like a kid, my mother was beating me a lot. It had that kind of a feel to it, I didn't do anything, and I'm getting this type of abuse.

Q: Did you ever think of leaving?

A: Oh yeah, especially at that time. But, and it just seemed authoritarian. Fortunately they put me with a couple, and older couple, who were very compassionate and very parental. Remember, I was just in my

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

early 20's. So that helped. And it was a fun place, they operated a very fun center, and I had a good job at the Washoe Medical Center. It was a nursing assistant's job, and it was really interesting work. Beautiful place to work. And Reno is beautiful, it's up in the mountains. The Sierra Nevadas. So it was pleasant, even though I was going through that. I'm glad the environment was that good, otherwise I probably would've left. Right after that, though, I was sent to the suborder, there were two suborders. The Immaculate Heart Sisters of Mary, and the Brown Brothers of the Holy Light. Now these were -- we had celibate orders, but they were suborders, and they were for limited contracts, you might say. You would take a vow for a year -- vows for the order were lifetime, but the suborders were just for a year. And you agreed to serve celibately in service for a year. Like heavy-duty service. They would go into prisons -- anything that you can think of that was heavy-duty -- working with the severely mentally retarded. And this is where I found my calling within the order. The Immaculate Heart Sisters of Mary had started going around the country helping cities start shelters for battered women. This was the early '70's. Because we had the expertise from the Raphael House. Many of us had worked there. So we had a leg up on a lot of cities that didn't have this, it was a new thing at that time. So I remember I got sent to Eerie, Pennsylvania, to the hospitality house, to operate one of the very first ones. I was 22, and it was a really excellent experience. We were given a lot of experience and a lot of responsibility when very young. Of course, that had been my pattern, after my mother's death, I had taken over mother's duties for awhile until my father remarried. I guess I was used to it. And it was a bit more pleasant doing it for others rather than your own family. More unforced. This was more my choice. It was a beautifully run shelter. Eerie is a very together community service-wise. Very integrated set of services, I was most impressed. And I got a really good sense of how a regular community could have integrated services and work together. I got a lot of my ideas about holistic by serving for six months in Eerie. I made a friend of the formal school superintendent, Dr. Gertude Barber. She got me a job at the center named after her, for the retarded. So that worked out really easily. She really liked me, I'd go see her, and it was a good relationship, it was amazing. So anyway, that was a pleasant stint, and then after that, I was assigned to the Christian Community Bureau. I went out to Kansas. And see, you notice how community seems to intersect -- I kept getting directed to anything that had to do with outreach and community, it just seemed to be more my calling. It was in Wichita, Kansas, and Wichita is not my favorite place. The land's flat, the people talk flat, the buildings are flat, it's basically flat. But it was pleasant because there was another center there of the regular order, and then there were two sisters, myself and Sister Mary, and then the married couple of priests, who were often travelling, who were the heads of the Christian Community Bureau. The order had a set of Christian communities, lay communities. Some of whom lived together in income-sharing like the order, but others that were kind of loose and had a meeting place, would come together for services, potlucks, that sort of thing. But it was more like cooperative communities, where they live elsewhere, but convene for certain things. And they were constantly doing conferences and that sort of thing. I helped plan some of the conferences for that, I was the stewardess, as well as the cook.

Q: Now at this time, were you considered an Immaculate Sister of Mary?

A: No. My stint doing the battered women shelter in Eerie -- six months in Chicago, six months in Eerie. I was not a natural celibate, I did not intend to stay -- it was a phase, just like my living on the streets. I went for six months and worked at this office in Wichita. It was getting too big, the operation was

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

getting too big, so there was a center of longstanding, in Fort Worth, Texas. We took over a whole house, in kind of a business area, so it was very well-suited, more for what we wanted to do, and the expansion that we needed for the communities, because they were growing like wildfire.

Q: Yeah, this is a huge order.

A: Well, at that time, and it was growing faster than any other order than Mother Theresa's, at that time. Because, it really appealed to people, the esoteric aspect, the married aspect, the tolerance. All these different things. In the meantime, this whole counter-movement, the Evangelicals attacking cults - and to avoid being labelled that, we would immediately go, wherever we went, to spiritual leaders in the mainstream, and we were also doing these straight ahead service-type projects, so it was harder for them to accuse us of this sort of things. We weren't doing anything that far out. Well, maybe we were, but we weren't dressing like it, we weren't acting wacko.

Q: What did your family think about what you were doing?

A: All my brothers and sisters joined the order.

Q: They did?! That's great!

A: Except the youngest. The youngest was a lay disciple, though. And my father was a Mason, so he understood. He had an understanding of esotericism. So, it was -- he was a little disturbed, because he wanted us to go to college. But the order gave --

Q: You got a great education!

A: I think it was better. At least, for me. My second sister had left the order, and eventually got a double-degree in psychology and organizational development. She's out in Seattle. She's the only one of us who's attended college. But you wouldn't know it from talking to us. I have no advanced degree at all, I'm self-taught. Except for the training I got in the order. But I got a whole lot of really good training there. How many people get that type of training? It's a very holistic thing that you can synthesize, it teaches you how to think, it's a whole process, rather than just what to think. And that was really important, it was the type of education that was much more consonant with my development as a person, I think. Because I don't think I would've survived in academia. Sorry, I don't mean any disrespect.

Q: No, I have no particular feelings about academia.

A: Really? You're just kind of operating out of it, as a platform?

Q: I work -- exactly.

A: I suspected so -- you seem like a fellow traveler, with your reactions here. So anyway, we moved to Wichita, and this was really interesting -- we would be for days if I told you everything that happened, but this is real interesting. I went to volunteer for a hotline, and they asked me to put down -- it was an emergency hotline, operating out of like the central coordinating agency for the nonprofits in Fort Worth, when I first got there, in the summer of 1976, in June. The woman who was doing the training for prospective volunteers came up to me with my application in her hand, and she said, "You know, with the amount of experience you have, specifically with battered women's shelters, there is a group of

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

professional women and a legislator, here in Fort Worth, that just met, I just saw it, they're operating out of the women's center at Fort Worth, and they want to get a shelter for battered women started. I think you should give them a call, I think that's going to be a whole lot more worthwhile for everybody if you would use your talents there." So she directed me there. I made one phone call. Within five minutes, the head of the women's center called me right back. They had me in a meeting with them the next day. There was a state legislator, and they had connections to all these famous Texas women, like Liz Carpenter and all these people you've heard of, Ann Richards I think was operating as a state legislator at the time she was in on it. I was 24, and they wanted me as the head of the whole group. Within two meetings. And they surrupticiously, because I knew my order wouldn't like it, because there was definitely envy going on there, they insisted on making me the executive vice president. I wouldn't take the presidency, I gave that to the social worker, who was also one of the key people. And I became the executive vice president of the board. And I did all the media, all the speaking. I was like the cover girl for them. There were all these pictures of me in the paper, I was on radio, I was on television.

Q: Wow, so your stint in Wichita, then, was pretty short, because you pretty much went down to Fort Worth right away.

A: It was a hiatus where I could kick up my feet, because it really got active after that. I'm glad I had that.

Q: Was that their first battered women's shelter?

A: Yes. They had never had one. As it turned out, there was a group in Austin that was running neck in neck, and they actually got first, but they only opened about a month before we did. And now there's -- I was really happy to hear it, because I was reading the Christian Science Monitor, they have more battered women's shelters in Texas than in any other state now. So something I did 20 years ago really had a powerful impact. But I was heard all over the state apparently, because people knew of me. I was a regional celebrity, at least for a period of time. But then, my order started putting pressure on me, I think what finally did it was someone called Reverend Ruth, half of the couple, with the Christian Community Bureau. And they were calling, and they said, "Is Sister Rebecca there?" And she said, "No, not at the moment, can I take a message?" And somebody said, "Are you her secretary?" They had it out for me after that. It got really bad, because it really was envy. They were trying to do everything they could to monkey wrench what I was doing. Trying to keep me on cooking duty so I couldn't go out to a meeting, that kind of stuff. This is when I started having difficulties with the order. When I started to function at a certain level, they seemed to resent it. They seemed to try to sabotage me. Also, I was running into problems with the actual group of Women's Haven, the name I gave to the group. After it really got going, you got the little red hen effect -- nobody wants to bake the bread, but everybody wants to eat it. All these people came out of the woodwork, and Patrice, the social worker president who I worked closely with, there was a lot of envy directed at us. Backbiting and that kind of thing. In March of 1977, after just working on this for 6 months, we both resigned simultaneously. Because I wanted out. I was getting it from both sides -- I was starting to get slammed on the board in my work with Women's Haven, and then I would get home and get it because I was on the board. It was difficult. So I said, "Please get me out of here, I'm leaving." Again, I busted the two priests, they were work-a-holics, they would not take a break. And their health was breaking down, and that was part of the reason they were making it bad for me, so I got a hold of Mother Ruth, my secret weapon. We were

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

such good friends. I always did this stuff behind everyone else's back, I got them pulled out. And they were forced to go on vacation, for three weeks or a month, to get away by themselves. So it had an effect, but by that time I had left. They sent me back to that region, though, after I'd been at the order retreat center for a month, north of San Francisco. They have a beautiful retreat in Forestville. It was the first time I'd ever been out in the country in years for an extended period of time. It was wonderful. Because I've always been in cities. They sent me back to Dallas on a special mission, nobody specifying what that would be. Possibly to get rid of me for a year. But I was still in contact with people in Fort Worth, because I was well known there and everything. But it was another period where I was isolated. No one would come over from Fort Worth to visit me. It was really strange. Only one or two people from the center -- and it was a pretty big center in Fort Worth -- came to visit me. And I recall organizing an Easter sunrise service. It was multi-denominational, including the Sufis, esoteric Jews. I got the woman who was the current head of the Christian Community Bureau, who was a gifted speaker, one of the order priests, to come over and speak. So I got her a speaking stint with 50 people -- there were 50 or 60 people that showed up from all over the region, of different denominations. I remember very soon after, like a week later, I came over to visit, and she and her husband, another priest, got me in the corner in the dining room, and screamed at me. Because I wasn't coming over regularly for communion, I was giving communion to the retarded, who had never had it before, at the place where I was working, with severely retarded. I remember going to a church and just crying for about an hour. There was all this abuse that seemed to remind me of my childhood -- another dysfunctional relationship based on ... I analyzed it later, and I think I saw a dysfunctional -- the military system is good for the military, but it's not good for religious orders or things in the cultural sector. It's destructive. It creates hostility, it creates crises. It exists to solve crises, and therefore to perpetuate its own existence, it constantly creates them. And that's what I kept experiencing. I didn't see it at the time, but analyzing it later, that's what was happening. And I was outgrowing the order. I think I was really outgrowing it. It was interesting, because the priest that was the head of the Christian Community Bureau, the night before I left, maybe it was the day I left for San Francisco, she cried. But she also was chastising me, but in the middle of the chastisement, out of the blue, it had nothing to do -- it was like the parenthesis in the middle of telling me how I had done everything wrong and all this, she said, "You're functioning at a level far beyond my capabilities." And then she kept braiding me. It blew me away, it was like this subconscious thought that kind of bubbled up and she actually expressed it, and then she went on brow-beating me. When you listen to people, you can really hear what's going on, and sometimes they'll tell you, and it's amazing how that happens. And this kind of thing kept happening in the later years. It was interesting -- Father Paul passed on in 1974. He told Brother Larry, who was by then a priest, "Please come with me and Mother Ruth to our secret hide-away." And he said to one of the brothers, who later became a brother teacher, an assistant bishop, "I'm leaving now." And he just thought he was going to his retreat. It was just before Easter. And he took Larry and Mother Ruth to his retreat. And they were having a discussion, and all of a sudden, he said, "I must be going." And he got up and walked across the room, and as he walked, he fell on his face. And as he fell, in his breast pocket, was a small Bible. And it opened to the verse of the New [sic] Testament in Jeremiah, "I will be to them a God, and they will be to me a people, and no more will one say to another 'Know God!' For all shall know God from the greatest to the least of them." And he knew he was leaving. It turned out to be a "heart failure," whatever that means. Yogananda had heart failure -- he sat in yoga posture and stopped his heart, I guess that's heart failure.

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

So anyway, since it was just before Easter, they kept the body in cold storage for three days just in case. And then when nothing happen, evidently he decided to fly the coop for the road -- they burned it and scattered the ashes over the San Francisco Bay, at his request, it was in his will, I think. Then they sent a lot of the teachers and priests out to the different centers to do crisis counselling. They announced it in a really gentle way, and we had whole discussions about it, what would it mean for the order and all that. The teachers did a rotating thing, which I thought was pretty good, they had tryouts for the position, and each year, one of the six teachers who was then functioning, would function in the position. So for a 6 month period, they would hold the chair, and then somebody else, and they would see which one was the most suitable. And in my opinion, unfortunately, this former Catholic seminarian eventually got the position, and he was the one who took in the last years to the Russian Orthodox Church. I think it had to do with his hierarchical background, I don't think he could take the ambiguity.

Q: So he took the order and basically merged it with the Russian Orthodox?

A: Yes. This was after I left. But it started to decline after that, in my opinion.

Q: After Father Paul died.

A: Passing, yeah.

Q: And he died in '74?

A: Yeah.

Q: And then when did you leave?

A: I left in '79, so obviously I stuck things out. I'm very committed when I feel something's worth it.

Q: When did they join with the Russian Orthodox?

A: I think it was in the late '80's. I mean, I'm just jumping ahead with it. But anyway, I was on that mission in Dallas, and I was really alone, and I was really depressed, stuff from my childhood. I was in my mid-20's, and oftentimes stuff comes back up from the years, there's nothing unusual about that. And then they brought me back to Chicago, and fortunately, the last teacher I was under was a good friend of mine. I'd known him ever since he and his wife and children had come in. He was a remarkable man also. He was a former -- this guy had an incredible job history -- he was a former clown, tattoo artist, actor -- he used to date Mary Tyler Moore when she was real young -- really an unusual guy, real creative. And a business manager -- this guy really had a diverse background. But he understood me, he was my sort of unorthodox sort of person, so we always had a good rapport. And he had just recently gotten married to one of the other teachers who I had a good rapport with, so it was a good scene. And then they did a downsizing of the headquarters in Chicago, and just made it into a regular center, and they decided they would adapt the Marial Mansion, which they had just bought in Indianapolis. Huge mansion, it had a bowling alley, a ballroom, which they turned into the chapel, and it was in the historic district, so they were going to remodel it and they had the backing of the city of Indianapolis. Richard Hudnut [?] had been the mayor for years there. He was quite enlightened, I met him. He was sponsoring all of this renovation and gentrification, so when the order said they were going to do this, and they met the order, they were very impressed. He also got a string of restaurants called Brother Juniper's started,

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

top quality lunch places for sandwiches. We baked our own herb bread for it, and it was quite renowned, in that region especially. And in Chicago, and San Francisco -- they were all over the place for awhile. There still may be one in San Francisco -- the order got bought out, and it still exists in Indianapolis. But Father Joseph had started that. So anyway, the order therefore had its own community business, so people did work out but a lot of our income did come from Brother Juniper's, and a lot of people, including my own brother, worked there. For some reason, probably because Father Joseph permitted it, all the existing Campbells in the order were allowed to come to Indianapolis and be together. We hadn't been together in years. My family -- my one sister went in and out of the order, but my brother and sister and my brother-in-law and niece were all there. As well as friends that we'd known for years. So, and this was the last place I was in the order. And at that time, they were trying to become less hierarchical, and more democratic. And it was tough, because you had all these people who were used to being told what to do. I, on the other hand, revelled in it. Because I'm naturally an artist and a heretic, and I like democracy. And it was becoming more like a community -- he was trying to make it more into what we have here, you know, the community structures that you've probably encountered in your travels. More diverse, etcetera. I also got space to do my writing. It was in this little room off the chapel. I must say, though, they had disenfranchised me several times. I had gotten several rooms and people had claimed them, and they weren't giving me the space to write. It seemed to me like it was disrespectful. They didn't see its function in the order, which was so service and worship oriented. They didn't see the use of the arts. Father Joseph did, but on the other hand, he didn't want to use a heavy hand to get people to see that. He wanted people to come to their own conclusions. So he intervened some for me, but he didn't want to overdo it. The brothers and sisters, there was a lot more marriages happening in the house. We had our own entertainment, there were a lot of musicians and artist, and we had home-made entertainment. We'd invite some outside people to come. We had folk dancing there. So they were trying to be more like a community such as what you see now.

Q: So even though Father Paul had died, and this new guy took over, who was more hierarchical, authoritarian, this center in Chicago managed to even loosen up?

A: Yes.

Q: But the guy in San Francisco wouldn't have approved of that.

A: Probably, but we didn't go around telling every detail of what we were doing. So it was really nice, but it just got -- I felt really persecuted, because nobody was listening to what I was saying. It was dirty. This was an instance where the house was not cared for. Nobody was taking responsibility for things. And there was an instance I mentioned in an earlier workshop today about -- this would give you an example of me versus the community -- I kept remarking, "It's really a drag to see dirty coffee cups all over the place." We were allowed to smoke in there, we had roll-your-owns, which were a little healthier, I don't know how much more, but we used pipe tobacco, so probably it wasn't as bad -- it didn't burn as well, but it didn't burn your lungs as much. And I kept harping on this, because it was really a drag. I felt it lowered the vibration of the house, because it's disorderly, it's slovenly, it shows a lack of consciousness that we didn't want in our houses. Nobody would listen to me. So finally, every time I would find a dirty coffee cup, I would go to the kitchen, wash it, and hide it. Pretty soon, there were no coffee cups in the house. After morning communion, I remember being up in the chapel, and I

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

heard all this ruckus downstairs, and I said, "My God, what's going on?" I mean, they were yelling and screaming. I put my ear, I went down to the bottom of the chapel stairs, and two floors below they were convening an impromptu meeting in the kitchen. "There's no coffee cups! What happened to them?! I'll bet you Rebecca took them!" So they sent the steward, who was a big hulking guy, but very mild-mannered, up to talk to me. "Rebecca, um, they think you took the coffee cups. Did you take the coffee cups?" "Yeah John, I did. I got fed up with people not listening to me, and I felt it was really disrespectful, so I took the coffee cups." "Um, could you tell me where they are?" "No, John, everybody in the house is going to have to have a treasure hunt trying to find the cups, because I'm not telling you where they are, and I'm staying up here in the chapel so they cannot lynch me. I'm keeping sanctuary." So I stayed up in the chapel, and I heard all the people tearing up the house. They were swearing, they were not adhering to "peace and serenity," as they probably should've been. And finally, John himself, the nice hulking steward came up, and started pawing around the chapel. And I had hidden them underneath the sacristy [?] and he finally found them. And then he came up to me and he said, "Um, Rebecca, I found them. Would you mind if I took them downstairs?" I said, "Not at all, John. If you had the wit to find them, you're welcome to remove them." So pretty soon there were three people that came up with trays, a couple of them were swearing, I could tell the vibes, John wasn't, but the rest of them were really angry. Three wise men or something, they carried the trays with the cups. But I was getting really unpopular, because I was speaking out. They were claiming to be democratic, and they weren't. The place was a wreck, this sort of thing. Finally, I started to burn out, after 9 years of doing all the service and I didn't feel I was getting anything back, I started to burn out. I just started to get tired -- I had all the symptoms of burn out.

Q: Why do you think the house started to get sloppy? Because before you said they were real clean, right?

A: Because, Father Joseph was experimenting with people being able to take responsibility themselves rather than being ordered to do it.

Q: So there was no longer this top-down thing?

A: Exactly. And they were not ready for it. I was. But these other people weren't. The problem was I was the minority in this group of people that weren't used to it. So I went to Father Joseph, I remember I walked over to his house several miles away, he lived in the carriage house with his family, on a blizzard night. I talked with him, and he said, "If you don't get a Sabbatical, I'm going to get one for you." He said, "I think you've got some lessons to learn outside the order. I don't think at this point in the order's development they're not going to be respectful to your desire for outreach and for the arts. They don't see it. And it's going to hurt you, and you're burning out. You've got to go do something else, at least for awhile." So, I got the Sabbatical, and they were going to move me over temporarily. They weren't going to give me anything -- after 9 years I got nothing, no stipend, nothing. And they moved me over into this -- well, voluntarily, I moved into this other house that wasn't finished, and they were going to charge me for this bed, in almost a slum house, they were going to charge me \$265 a month. So what I did was concoct a plan with my sister, brother-in-law, and this minister who I exchanged beds with, who was a friend of the family. And we plotted my escape. I was working at a temporary job for a bank, and they got the order van, while everyone was in a conference, and they got exempted, they gave several

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

stories. So my sister, my brother who was stationed there at the time, and this minister, carried all my stuff out to the van and got me to the Greyhound bus station. And my other sister was living in LA with her best friend, sharing an apartment, and they had invited me to come out. So I left. This was in April of 1979. It's interesting, because when I was in Dallas, I had an astrology reading. I had never had one before. I was 27 years old, and the astrologer said, "First thing, you've come to your Saturn return. A year from now, there's going to be a major change in your life: April of 1979." And that's when I left the order. It had been predicted. And then she also told me, "In your early- to mid-40's, there is going to be another major change." Excuse me, she didn't say "middle 40's," I said, "How many years is that going to be from now?" and she's calculating it, and you can hear it on the tape -- we taped it -- and while she was calculating for about 30 seconds, and she said, "About 14 years." And I go, "Fourteen years!" Patient person that I am. But sure enough, in this time that she had predicted, that's when I started reviving my interest in communities, and I have a feeling that by getting involved in this community movement, as it has evolved in the last 15 years, I feel something's going to happen in my life. I have a lot to contribute at this point too, because when I left the order, I started consciously studying large system. How can you transform large systems? And using spiritual and practical principles. I perfected my writing. I healed the damage that had been done to me emotionally, how to relate to people in intimate relationships. I've never married, because it's hard for me to find the type of intimacy I seek, because most people aren't capable of it. They're dysfunctional, or they're just at a different level of consciousness. So that has been somewhat discouraging, and at this point I'm totally frustrated, because I gave up -- I don't create now, because the environment is so corrupt, it's corporate control, and with the type of things I intend to say, they would never let it out.

Q: Are you still doing battered women's shelter work?

A: I do a lot of other types of work. I started working as a non-profit consultant, with non-profit start-ups, things like business incubators for homeless people to get their own businesses started. An alternative money system. I helped settle a disagreement in a suburb of Cleveland called Bay Village. There was a big dispute about the school system. I helped get a system called Time Dollars, a time credit system. I got it started in Cleveland.

Q: Oh, I know about Time Dollars! So, are you living in Ohio now?

A: Cleveland. But I want out as soon as possible, because when I went there, 14 years ago, there were the remnants of the Christian community still there, from the order. And for the first 8 or 9 years, that was still there, and then people died, people moved away. There were hostilities that broke out because people didn't preserve the community. And so it's all gone. It's like the rug was pulled out from me. I'm not that close to my family, because they're dysfunctional, basically, and most of them have never worked out their conflicts. I went for therapy, and worked hard on it, but they are in denial about it. So I can't relate to them anymore. So there's nothing left for me.

Q: Do you attend any religious groups?

A: No. I gave up on that. Ten years ago, the church where I went, that was a very activist, liberal Presbyterian church -- it followed a lot of the model of The Church of the Savior. We had a group called The Seekers, that would actually work on meditation and prayer within a mainstream church -- it was

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

really neat in a lot of ways. We had the sanctuary movement in there, we were actually sheltering "illegal" Guatemalans, and so forth, so it was great in a lot of ways. But the minister attacked M. Scott Peck, in his People of the Lie, having the whole chapter on exorcism he attended, and saying that there are psychic entities, and they can cause havoc in human beings. And he said Peck was insane. And I disagreed with him. And when I did that, I was basically excommunicated. And I never went back. I said, "That's the last time I'm getting involved in any type of organized religion." And I tried for many years -- nine years in the order and several years after that, I tried, but I'm gone. I'll never go back to a conventional church. I think it's bull shit. I don't see where anybody, where they ever practiced it. Over and over again. In the order itself, and -- they all operate from a hierarchical structure. And until you change that paradigm, I don't think there's going to be any progress made. It's always going to fall back to the evil that you see in organizations. Corruption, power plays, envy, that sort of thing. So, that in a nutshell, is my story.

Q: But I bet you're really glad you did it, aren't you? I mean, it sounds like such a wonderful education, and you did so many neat things when you were in it.

A: Oh, yeah, considering my age, I've lived about seven different lifetimes. I've packed a lot of life into it.

Q: Yeah! Like you said, when you were in 22 and you were a celebrity in Fort Worth running this battered women's shelter. I mean, most young women would not have an experience like that.

A: I know that. But on the other hand, I've never married. I don't have anything substantial materially. By the standards of the world at this point, I have absolutely nothing.

Q: Well, it must've been hard leaving the order and not having them give you anything.

A: That's what I'm saying. I haven't told you half of it -- I've experienced a tremendous amount of rejection, because of who I am. I know what minorities go through, because I'm a minority. Only I don't belong to a group, it's just me.

Q: Are there other members of the order that are disaffected like you?

A: Oh yeah. Part of this Christian community, they split from the order because of several abusive priests that they had. And I busted the priests when I came back to Cleveland.

Q: I was just thinking that maybe some of you could get together as a support group or something.

A: But we did do that, and some of these people didn't continue evolving, -- we parted ways because they got more into the worldly academic path.

Q: And you were more into personal growth?

A: And so I'm like a living reproach, I never bought into the system, whereas some of these people have started to buy into it. One of my closest friends, who used to be the vice president of the Christian community, got into academia, and she's into research and all this. And she gets into this whole mentality. That's her worship at this point. Plus, she had a horrible childhood, and she's dealing with her family, and she's got so much on her plate, that she doesn't have time to be my friend anymore. And I have nothing, I'm totally alone at this point. Any friends that I have are in Australia, in Woodstock, Scott.

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

I don't know if you met him, I've known him since San Francisco, and he's a media person. He's wonderful, he's one of the neatest guys I've ever met. He's here -- but they're all in different parts of the country.

Q: It's good that you're able to come to this conference, though. This seems to be a good place to start if you're interested in community.

A: I know that, and I have a feeling that something will happen for me. But I'm about ready to put a bullet to my head if it doesn't, because there's nothing for me in the outer world at this point. And the outer world is getting worse and worse. It's going to be a massive chaos, with earth changes and with social decay, social disruption that's going to happen as a result of the earth changes, and just people flipping out over the disintegration of the systems. It's happening. And in Cleveland, it's really bad. Because there's a whole -- and I think it's true of a lot of other cities, but Cleveland really stands out -- there's a whole, White, male business sector that controls the entire city, of which the politicians are puppets. And they're destroying the children of Cleveland. Did you hear about the Browns leaving for Baltimore? The Cleveland Browns were taken by Baltimore. And they've already built a stadium called Gateway, where they give tax abatements to these millionaires -- they're getting all the money, the people of Cleveland are getting nothing. They're charging high prices so nobody can get into the ballpark anymore, and it's so small, you can only get a small number in there. The municipal stadium, where the Browns and the Indians used to play, it's not good enough to get an expansion team, for the NFL. They're going to tear down this 80,000 person stadium that they've got, to build another one, and they're giving abatements for all this. Meantime, because they're giving all these tax abatements, and the schools are supported by property taxes, there's nothing left for the Cleveland schools, which are in default. They just laid off 600 teachers. That's why I'm getting out, it's insane. I have a whole file, I keep a running clipping file of the disintegration of systems within Cleveland -- I call it "The Rape of Cleveland." And I've been chronicling this for the last ten years. I've watched everything that's been happening. I'm going to go crazy -- because I know what's going on. I see what they're doing. Jesus prophesied that within the last days, people were going to abuse the children. And he said "It would be better for those to have a millstone and hung about their neck and drowned amidst the sea." The offenses must come, but woe to unto those by whom they come. He prophesied about it, and I'm seeing it happen in Cleveland. What worse abuse could you give than to deprive a child of basic education? Because of a bunch of friggin millionaires, want more money. I'm getting angry just talking about it. I've got to get out, because I'm aware, I can't close my eyes to it. A lot of these people are closing their eyes to it, they're yuppies, and they're talking about alternative lifestyles, and living in suburbia, and doing nothing, and going to the Indians games. I can't do that. And I bother people, because I'm not just talking about it, I have the same values that they're talking about, but I'm living it. And that really bothers people. I'm a dominant female, that bothers them --

Q: --Well, you're pointing out their hypocrisy.

A: Even if I say nothing, they know I know, just by what I'm doing. And being a dominant female, that's not ever popular in any century.

Interview with Rebecca (Penelope) Campbell

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 18, 1996

Q: Yeah, and it sounds like especially not in Cleveland.

A: Yeah, it's much more conservative. I think I'd still have some problems here, but from what I've seen of the males and so forth, they're pretty good here, comparatively. I think I have a much better chance here, so that's why I'm here. But anyway, the order, it kept such a low profile, probably you'd only find it in oral history. There's another book you can check, what's the name of it -- I'll find out for you. It's a chapter in this book about this unorthodox -- he was like a heretic, a Russian Orthodox bishop, I think -- who operated in California, he came over from Russia. And this one off-beat sect that he founded met the order in the late '60's, and there's a whole chapter on that called "Nether Village."

Q: So it's a chapter within a book.

A: And I have that chapter. I could send it to you. So that's the only thing I know of written about the order history, other than some of the order publications that I no longer have. My sister -- I could put you in touch with my sister, but you can't tell her that I put you in touch with her, you're going to have to come up with something. She's hooked up with the network on the West Coast of former order members. She might even help you find Mother Ruth, because Mother Ruth is still alive. I think she is living in Portland Oregon. She left the order too. If you could talk to her, if she would talk to you. When I met her she was in her early fifties, so she has to be in her late '70's.

Q: And where does your sister live?

A: She lives in Seattle.

Q: Okay, because I'm going to be making a trip up to the Washington area.

A: And maybe you can interview her. But come up with something.

Q: Right, I could come up with something, because the professor I'm working for is a religious studies professor, and I could say he got her name through something.

A: Figure it out. She's hooked up with the University of Washington at Seattle, and Antioch University, she got her degree from Antioch, so maybe you could use Antioch too, because that's pretty liberal and it's widespread. With Mother Ruth, though, you could definitely use my name. In fact, you find her, let me know where she is.

Q: You think she might be living in Washington?

A: Portland, that's the last thing I heard. And there's this whole network, I think my sister could probably direct you to where you could find her. She certainly would hold the key to a lot of order history, if she's still alive, and if she would talk to you. She's very reticent. Maybe she wouldn't. But if she's fed up with the bullshit that came down after his death and Andrew decided to sell the order down the river, she might be willing to talk to you about that. She's capable of indignation, I've seen her -- it was interesting, though, because Dr. Samuel Lewis called her the most evolved human being he'd ever seen. This is a Sufi master, and he's saying a woman is the most highly evolved person he's ever encountered. So if you get to meet her, it will be quite an honor. It was interesting, because we were such opposite, and I was so much younger than she was and all this, but there was really this affinity. Apparently she saw something there.