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Interviewee: Tim Beachy
Interviewer: Ian Mass
Present: Marshall Watson, Casey Leung
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ohp_timbeachy3.mp3

[Begin Tape #1]

IAN MASS: So we have here Tim Beachy and it is the last day of January, January 31st 2012 and we're at the United Community Services Coop in Vancouver. So—

TIM BEACHY: The world's going to end before the end of this year.

IAN: The Mayan calendar. Yes. But now you say that with a smile, is this something you believe in? Are you a fatalist Tim? Or are you a—

TIM: No, but I hear these things about the great turning thats going to happen in 2012. And I think that's just cultural. I don't think it's armageddon or anything apocalyptic. I think it's a different sort of—

MARSHALL: Heading towards some sort of zero point.

TIM: Or a restart maybe. Pushing the restart button?

IAN: That might be, what do they call it, magic wand thinking. [Laughter.] Let's start again.

MARSHALL: Do-over. [Laughter.]

TIM: Yeah, do-over.

IAN: Speaking of starts, great segue, tell me how you started off in the world here Tim.

TIM: In the world. Well I was born in a little town in Ohio.

IAN: What was the name?

TIM: Plain City Ohio.

IAN: That's a small little town.

TIM: It's west of Columbus a ways and the reason it's called Plain City is because plain people live there—amish people and mennonite people. And it was really a strong community of amish people. And my grandfather was one of those amish people and my father was one of ten and I was the middle child of seven born there. And then we

moved to Minnesota when I was less than a year old. So I don't remember that at all as a newborn although we went there every summer for many years to visit and for Christmas and stuff. And so I knew the people. I had seventy-five cousins who lived there.

IAN: Now, tell me. Did you ever go to a family reunion?

TIM: Yes we have a picture of over 150 people standing in a big back yard somewhere.

IAN: Isn't that something.

TIM: And it was great fun. I mean I didn't know those cousins very well but they were wild. And those people had many children. And so nine uncles and aunts on my father's side and six on my mother's side and then they all had, oh...

IAN: So did you not know them well because... Well, why didn't you know them well? Because you were in Minnesota?

TIM: Because we were in Minnesota and we saw them like once a year or something. But then as we got a little older people moved away from there and the cousins weren't coming home so we had big reunions.

IAN: So did your dad move away from the Amish faith?

TIM: Well he moved to the Mennonite faith. We were raised in Mennonite circles which were, you know, for people who don't know, that's a sect that's been in existence since 1525. It had some peculiar tones to it like the complete separation of church and state which in 1525 was a pretty new position to take. No war. You don't join the army, you resist war. And some other things. Like you join the faith actually—there are ethnic Mennonites and there are faith Mennonites—and you join the faith as a adult so you have adult baptism. You don't become a Christian until you decide to. And some things like that which were pretty peculiar in 1525 but are more common today.

IAN: And was it a strong Mennonite faith that your family had where you were?

TIM: Oh yeah. My father was a minister.

IAN: Oh, okay. That would classify as strong, yes.

TIM: [Laughs.] There were seven of us and it was strong.

IAN: But it sounds strong and gentle. Is that a good...

TIM: It didn't start out so gentle. My parents were really strict but I was the middle child of seven so my older siblings broke the waters. So, for example, my father would not allow my brother to play football in high school. [5:00 #1] Or basketball. But my brother just decided to do it anyway. So by the time I got to play basketball my father had become our biggest fan. Me and my younger brother's best fan was our dad.

IAN: Wonderful.

TIM: He would come and cheer like crazy. So there was a period of eight years where they moved from a very strict separatist kind of view, as in "we are separate people," to one of very much joining the community.

IAN: And you just came up the middle.

TIM: I came right up the middle. It was great.

IAN: And were you in rural Minnesota?

TIM: Very rural. For those that know Canadian geography, the Canadian Shield drops down into Minnesota and ends about here and we're twenty miles to the north. We lived, I don't know, we had 650 acres or something, but it was in complete poverty. I mean it was awful soil to raise crops on so it was a poor part of Minnesota—that whole shield north toward the Red River and Duluth and Lake Superior. And it just drops right down and the Mississippi starts in there.

IAN: Oh, really? Okay. I didn't...

TIM: Just north of us.

IAN: And was your family drawn there because of the Mennonite faith?

TIM: Yeah. My father accepted a pastorship up there in this tiny little church and in those days the church only had lay-pastors which meant that there was no pay to be a pastor. You had to make your living and then be a pastor on top of that. And so that was very hard. Very hard on my parents.

IAN: Right. Because there wouldn't be much money to go around.

TIM: And as kids we didn't know how poor we were. But as we grew up it was clear. When my dad died I did the eulogy and I had to face that issue of how he suffered through poverty while working as hard as he did for all those years. He died early. Well not that early, but he had a heart problem for many years and I'm sure it was a stress-related issue.

IAN: So you grew up out in the country.

TIM: Way out in the country. We were... It was almost an hour bus ride to school.

IAN: Uphill. [Laughter.] An hour both ways. And that was just to elementary school?

TIM: No elementary school was... When did I change schools? Well it was about a mile walk each way. And then in grade four we went to a different school and took the bus. I didn't get to walk uphill both ways complaining about blizzards.

IAN: So tell me, was it a good—those words are always difficult—was it a good childhood?

TIM: Yes. For me it was. I have siblings that don't feel that way. But for me it was a good childhood.

IAN: And why is that?

TIM: Well I had an older brother who was kind of my idol and... I don't know. I just didn't experience some of the things that my other family members did. I mean there are seven of us and I think four of us are pretty sane. [Laughter.]

IAN: Four out of seven. [Laughs.]

TIM: It was... Yeah, some of them had a hard time.

IAN: And your older brother, what's his name?

TIM: Ron.

IAN: Ron. And he's still with us?

TIM: He's still with us. He's seventy-three I think. Or seventy-two. He was a teacher. A life-long teacher. A heroic coach. He coached football and basketball and track for, I don't know, fourty years. He had several state champions and in Minnesota that's a big deal.

IAN: Oh yes.

TIM: Sports are huge there. And he had five children all of whom were All-Americans in one way shape or form. Football, basketball. Two of his girls were senior All-American basketball players and one was an All-American cross-country runner, one was an All-American football player who would have played professional but he got hurt his last year in college. So yeah.

IAN: Still sounds like your hero.

TIM: He's still a hero, yeah. [10:00 #1] He's a very right wing republican though so we can't talk politics. [Laughter.]

IAN: Oh that's too bad. [Laughs.] How do they turn? How do Americans turn? They are such a friendly, open people until they're not. Then they can be just nasty. What happens? I grew up across the river from it and still watch with puzzlement. How do these nice people turn?

TIM: Yeah. I don't know. My brother—

IAN: I'm really pitching you political—

TIM: No, I get that. My brother was supportive of me when I resisted the war and came to

Canada in 1970. I didn't feel that he was... I mean, he didn't say, "you're right, I agree with you," but he was very open and accepting. About all of the things I did. But in his later years this thing happened to him and you're exactly right. You go to that little town and everyone's friendly and you go to a store and they say, "Hi, how are you?" and they don't know who you are. They are just so open and friendly but they are probably leaning farther right than Gingrich. They're as far right as you can get.

IAN: You just hit on a word, we're jumping around here, that actually really resonated with me about people from America. And we're obviously generalizing—there's about 40 or 50 million who are quite on the left—but they're not accepting of differences. Or not as accepting. You described your brother as being accepting when you came to Canada and that seems to be withdrawn in some or others. Maybe it's due to immigration—you see the same thing in places in Europe—but somehow or other....

TIM: Well immigration is a really hot button right now. I don't know, I think there's highs and lows that are more extreme south of the border. That is, patriotism runs really high, across all walks, the progressives... [inaudible]. So I think the extremes are bigger there. It's one of the first things we noticed actually when we moved here. But there is still a streak of, "You gotta' join. You really gotta' join or there's something wrong with you." And, so I think that melting pot idea is not just an idea. I think it is a very real cultural.... I mean, coming to Canada and hearing about multiculturalism and having multiple languages and getting to understand Quebec was like the shock of my life. And I had some real trouble. If Pierre Trudeau hadn't been the Prime Minister here when we came it would have been a lot different.

IAN: Yeah, mosaic and melting pot are a little cliché but, in places, relatively accurate. Let's move back. So you went to high school, a mile on the bus.

TIM: An hour.

IAN: An hour on the bus. And you played basketball. Were you a good student?

TIM: In high school I was a pretty good student. And then we moved, actually, to eastern Montana when I was fourteen. Because my dad took on a different role in the church there.

IAN: The mountains?

TIM: No we were in eastern Montana where there's badlands and there's big rolling hills so there would be ten miles between the top of this hill and the top of the next hill. And all this incredible farmland in between. And so we moved to a town called Glendive there. And I picked up my basketball, dropped football, dropped track, and just focused on basketball. And yeah, I was a pretty good student. I was in the National Honor Society.

IAN: Good, good.

TIM: Which was, well there were this many in the National Honor Society and I was the last one. And it was interesting because in Minnesota they were one year ahead of Montana in introducing the 'new math' so I took algebra in grade ten and [15:00 #1] we had the new math, which to these guys doesn't mean anything [gestures to Marshall and Casey] but we talked about sets and all that stuff. And then I go and take advanced algebra in my next year in Montana and I knew it all. And it was about sets and the instructor didn't know anything about it so I ended up—

IAN: Teaching the instructor how to teach the class.

TIM: Yeah, so for the first three or four months I ended up teaching the class. In a very structured way. And the instructor thought he had landed in heaven because he had a student who knew all of this stuff. [Laughter] And I enjoyed academics quite a bit.

IAN: You just triggered me. When you said 'new math' I knew exactly what you were talking about because it was about the same time. So how old are you?

TIM: I'm 64.

IAN: 64.

TIM: I turn 65 in July. I'm 7/7/47.

IAN: And I'm 1948 so it was the same era. And so that new math was, yeah, around grade nine, something in the distant past for us. [Laughter] So you moved to Montana.

TIM: Yes.

IAN: Different than or better than? Certainly different than.

TIM: Yes, well we lived right near town and my dad had a better job. He got a job driving a school bus. And we had a better lifestyle. Three of the kids were gone. I was now the oldest one at home. It was a better life because, well, in those days you could get a driver's license at age 14 in Montana. So I got a driver's license pretty quick and had access to dating and things like that that, in the country, just weren't.....

IAN: Yeah.

TIM: You're too far away. You couldn't do stuff.

IAN: And so suddenly a whole new world....

TIM: Yeah. It was great. And it was a bigger school. There were like 175 in our class where the other school was more like 75. So it was a bigger school, more opportunities.

IAN: And then you graduate from high school. Anything else you want to talk about in there before we...

TIM: Well I had quite a learning when I went to that school because, you know, it was more cowboy country and oil country. And so a lot of families were transient and there was kind of a divide in the school between people who were actually long-time residents and those who kind of came and went. Because the oil booms—those booms were significant. You would get 500 families moving into a community and then they would all go when the boom was over. Maybe that's an exaggeration but quite a number, lots of families.

So the school population would go up and down. And the people who first befriended me, like the day I walked into that school—we moved there about three days before school started so I knew nobody—and I walked into the school and I was lost and this kid says, "Can I help you?" And he became my friend for the first few weeks. But he was not one of the locals, he was a newbie. And so my first group of friends there were not locals. And it was a very divided school and I found out that these new friends of mine were the guys who fought in the back alley in lunch hour and were involved with crime and things like that. So it was quite a transition for me and quite a lesson about class and acceptance and who is open and who is not. It was very interesting.

IAN: Hmm.

TIM: But I joined the basketball team there and that got me in and before too long I had friends in all parts of the school which was kind of fun.

IAN: Yeah, it seems that those joining things, whether they are the basketball team or the drama club are real saviors for a lot of new kids in school. You can get out of one group and into a new group in a way that you can't do otherwise.

TIM: Yeah, and you know these young guys don't get this, but there weren't tools. The slide rule is a tool but there were no personal tools like the internet or computers. You did a lot of things in groups. [20:00 #1] And for me, moving into a new place where it's somewhat urban, I could join the drama club and I did three or four plays. And in that time I took speech so I could talk better in public and I actually became a disc jockey. We had a Saturday afternoon show on a local radio station put on by a bunch of us and sort of sponsored by the speech teacher. [Laughter]

IAN: Rock and roll was your downfall? Good for you. The triumphant downfall of so many adolescents.

TIM: And now these guys can be a disc jockey at home one night and put it on the internet or—

IAN: YouTube.

TIM: Yeah.

IAN: And figure out how many hits they get in Saudi Arabia.

TIM: Hey, I took phone calls too. [Laughter]

IAN: Let's move on from high school. What did you do? You graduated and....?

TIM: I graduated and....

IAN: Basketball scholarship?

TIM: No, no, no. I was a sometimes-starter and sometimes bench-sitter. But it was great fun. There were only 16 schools in Montana that were in the top class and we were one of those 16. So we ended up playing all the other 16 big schools in Montana which included Billings and Missoula where universities were. And that was fun. We would get in a bus and drive 200 miles to Billings on Friday morning, play a game, stay overnight in a hotel, play another game with another school from the area and then the following week would play two games with other visitors. And it was fun. It was rigorous but it was really fun because we got to stay in hotels. And I had never stayed in a hotel before in my life. So these were definitely formative experiences. And the cheerleaders came along so that was fun too.

IAN: Cheerleaders. [Laughter]

TIM: I ended up dating one of those cheerleaders actually.

IAN: And suddenly you've reached the pinnacle of the male, adolescent high school experience. Dating the cheerleader.

TIM: Yeah. But I wasn't that good at basketball. I was good enough but I was short and there was no way that there was going to be a college career. I knew that pretty quickly.

IAN: So you went to university after that?

TIM: I went to a small mennonite school in Kansas, in the middle of Kansas.

IAN: Okay.

TIM: And that was a two year school. It was seen as a feeder school to the bigger colleges. Private school.

IAN: Topeka? Or?

TIM: A place called Heston outside of Wichita. It was outside of Wichita by about an hour. And again it was a community where there were a lot of mennonite people, they put that college together. And I was very let down when I went there. I was expecting a higher academic focus and it wasn't as academic as I had thought it was going to be. So while it was kind of a fun time, it didn't push me in terms of academics. I learned how to golf there though.

IAN: Oh golf. That's an important...

TIM: Skill. [Laughter]

IAN: I don't think I told you—I may have told you in my interview—my golfing experience was as a caddy.

TIM: You were a caddy?

IAN: They used to have caddys back when I was a kid. And that is, literally, the only time I have ever been on a golf course. I was a caddy for about six years.

TIM: Well when you live in those parts of the world, eastern Montana or Kansas, there's a lot of big flat land and golf courses are cheap. They can put a golf course in—not a really good golf course—but you can hit that ball a long ways and it's basically prairie forever. They have to shape the greens and stuff but golfing there was a cheap sport.

IAN: So it sounds like those two years in Kansas were okay but somewhat forgettable. So what did you do after? Or is there more you want to tell me about that?

TIM: I think forgettable is a good word. [25:00 #1] [Laughter] I met some good people whom I have remained friends with the rest of my life but yeah.

IAN: Kansas is like Missouri in that it's Truman territory.

TIM: Yeah. Conservative, Republican.

IAN: Yeah. Solid people.

TIM: Solid people. Farmers. Except there the farmers are wealthy. Big fields, big combines.

IAN: So where after that? After those two years in Kansas?

TIM: Yeah, well summers I would go home and work on the farms in eastern Montana. I worked on ranches. I rode horses for a few summers and also did grain farming because that was there. Good, outdoor work. Very wholesome. Those were the days when we didn't know about sunburns and cancer and stuff and so we would just get up in the morning and go out. And it was chilly so you'd keep a shirt on for a while but then by about eight o'clock you would just go like this and you'd have your shirt off until the end of the day in the hot, hot, hot sun.

IAN: And you'd just be brown.

TIM: Just brown. And I'm hopeful that it won't come back to bite me.

IAN: I was a lifeguard as a kid so now I've got sunspots everywhere.

TIM: And I played fast pitch softball each of those summers too.

IAN: Oh okay. You want to join the Salty Dogs? We—

TIM: No. [Laughter] No. Those were the days when I still had good eyes, I could still see. So I was a pretty good hitter and I played all the positions in the field so that was fun. We played like two nights a week all summer and practiced in between. It was great fun. There were a lot of guys my age who lived in town and who worked out on the farms in the summer. So there was just these guys roaming around and I always thought that to keep us away from their girls the farmers sponsored this softball league. Just to keep them busy until the weekends when they go back to town. Oh dear.

IAN: Oh dear.

TIM: Yeah, and so after I left that college I went to Goshen College which was a bigger Mennonite school in northern Indiana. I had a faith—I still have a faith—but we were... It was a much more academic school. It was one I wanted to go to because it had a very strong reputation academically. And I knew some of my cousins lived around there. I had family now that was living in that area. And it just seemed like the right thing to do, it was kind of the natural thing to do.

IAN: And what was your major?

TIM: History.

IAN: History. Yeah. Was it general history or was there a focus?

TIM: Well I really liked the renaissance. That was my... And I had a fantastic professor.

IAN: That always helps.

TIM: That does help. At that age, at that level, when you get someone who kind of lives that history from the inside and talks about it as if they are there and made us think. It was a much more progressive school. I mean this professor taught us that the victors are the ones who write history and the losers are the ones we should actually pay attention to. And so we learned a lot about peasants and people who weren't in the oligarchy. We talked about the real economy of real people which I really related to because we were anything but an oligarchy, the other side of wealth and such. I think that's where I really learned the meaning of my own childhood. And where I was coming from. But, now, I want to pick up on a theme that I'm sure will come back later and that is the draft. The draft was a very real thing.

MARSHALL: And when was this? Sorry—when you were in Indiana? Ballpark, the year would have been around...?

TIM: Well I would have registered for the draft in 1967. No, I'm sorry, eighteen. So 1965. That's when I graduated from high school, '65. And then two years in Kansas and so '67, '68, '69. And I had registered for the draft as a non-resistor. That is a person who

will never go to war. And they accepted it because there were enough Mennonites in that county—and there is a whole history there that is a little murky. Well, I'll tell you just a little bit about it. In 1920 or so, three Mennonite leaders were hung from trees there. [30:00 #1] They were lynched.

IAN: In Montana.

TIM: In Montana. In the county where I registered and they didn't die because the sheriff came and cut the nooses off. So that county never ever drafted after that... never drafted one of these 'conscientious objectors' so I always felt I would never be drafted. But I registered as a conscientious objector and that was my stand at that point.

IAN: Yeah, you had to. I remember the law was that you had to register—

TIM: You have to register, right. And that sort of set the stage for later.

IAN: Okay we'll come back to...

TIM: So then, by the time we got to Goshen College in 1967, the war was full blast. And it became a very big part of our lives, thinking about the war and so on.

IAN: I was just watching a documentary last night about Hamburger Hill.

TIM: Hamburger HIll.

IAN: Hamburger HIll. Which was the symbolic term. Now that was a little later in the early '70s when Nixon was there.

TIM: Well...

IAN: Just by coincidence.

TIM: Anybody who was white and was going to college got deferred in any case.

IAN: Yes.

TIM: I was from a county—because you registered in counties—I was from a county that was probably never going to draft me. All of my friends were subject to draft and most of them, maybe half of them at that school had registered as conscientious objectors and the other half were subject to war.

IAN: Now does your objection transfer to the county in Indiana or...?

TIM: Because I was in college, as we were just talking about, your permanent residency is where your registration stays so that was my permanent residency still.

IAN: So let me just go back to the school a little bit. You were doing renaissance history and in some ways you said it helped you find yourself in a sense and put some context around this very interesting all-American kind of life. I'm kind of struck by this

Illinois, Canadian shield but Minnesota, the wild west, over to Kansas and back to the midwest.

TIM: Where are you going with this Ian? [Laughter]

IAN: I don't know, but I'm more wondering where you were going with it. So you're at college and—I'm kind of jumping ahead a bit—but I'm supposing you got a BA with a major in history. But what was your thought about what you were going to do with it? Were you going to be a preacher?

TIM: No, that never occurred to me. My mother wanted me to do that but it was the farthest thing from my mind. Well, uh, the war—I don't know how to think about this really, and I know you are in the middle of an experience about it—but the war was really the overriding factor in our lives. And then in early 1968, no... Well the first year I was there I started getting involved in politics and we ended up in Washington several times—Washington DC. Demonstrations, huge demonstrations. The civil rights movement was alive. The town that this college was in was extremely patriotic and anti-black. And so we had a town and gown kind of thing going on there. We would take down the American flag at our college because we didn't like it and then the city would go nuts. And there would be people coming around and putting flags up and standing around the poles and defending the flag. So there were skirmishes, if you will. I remember going to Washington with other friends from the college and sitting in on the Fulbright Hearings. Senator Fulbright was the Senator who was most against the war and held hearings in the Senate and we packed the room. There was time after time when his US Senate hearings were... We weren't there during the rowdy times, our crew was pretty calm, but other universities were also packing the house and Columbia had been occupied and Berkeley had the free speech movement [35:00 #1] and, oh god, it was just chaos, all the universities. And 1967 Detroit burned.

IAN: I was there.

TIM: The cities were just boiling. You couldn't go to Chicago, parts of Chicago. It was a very... University almost seemed to not be very meaningful. And then I got involved in politics. A Senator from Minnesota whom I had known as a kid—I knew he was a Senator—ran for President. Actually there were two Senators from Minnesota. There was Senator McCarthy and Senator Humphrey. And Senator McCarthy was a very strong Catholic and very strong faith-based politician. And I had my own faith and so on, and we just went toward Eugene McCarthy. We organized. I worked for the democratic party in eight states that spring. I was still going to school but we just left. We just left campus and went and worked in Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Wisconsin and New York. We just went all over the place. And the professors were very sympathetic towards us. I passed all of my classes that spring and I was only on campus for maybe three weeks in total. I'd come back and I'd go see a professor and he'd say: 'Where you

been?' And I'd say: "I've been busy." And he'd say: "Well why don't you write a paper about that?" [Laughter] Anthropology, Sociology, History: "Why don't you write a paper about that?" So that spring I wrote several papers about this experience. But, you know, on other campuses... we were just down the road from Notre Dame and Notre Dame was never taken over by the students—there was a lot of unrest there. And I think the professors, all the schools, were going through huge change. Including the professors who were soul searching and trying to deal with this rabble that were saying: "I'm learning more out there than I am here and why am I here in the first place?"

So that was extremely exciting. And then 1968 was a roller coaster. I was working in Wisconsin for the democratic party, organizing. We were 'Clean for Gene'—that was the slogan. We cut our hair, we didn't have any facial hair, we dressed nice. And then Lyndon Johnson said he wasn't going to run again. He was the president we were trying to get rid of. And he said he wasn't going to run again. And then all kind of things happened. That spring was, as a 20-year-old or whatever, I was... Well, to put it in perspective, Lyndon Johnson said he wasn't going to run again and then about two months later, Martin Luther King was shot. In the meantime, Robert Kennedy had decided to run for President and then he was going to run and then he was shot after winning the California primary. And then Czechoslovakia was invaded and all these schools were up in flames and it was like: "Holy crow, what is this?"

IAN: Kent State was in there too wasn't it?

TIM: No Kent State was later. But as a young American it was constant change, and battering and what are we doing next and who's going where. So, I made it through that spring and then I built silos that summer with a crew, people I knew. Another lesson, we would build silos and they were 60 or 80 feet tall, 20 feet tall.

IAN: Barn silos, you're talking about.

TIM: Barn silos. And there was no safety equipment. We were at the top of these things, running up and down a ladder and hauling up cement. There was no safety equipment. I mean, it's earth-shattering to think that we did that. Anyway. And then that fall I went back to school. And then Hubert Humphrey, the other Senator from Minnesota, got the nomination for the Democratic party. And I don't know, many people have seen the stories about the democratic convention that year, the riots all over Chicago. [40:00 #1] Hundreds and hundreds of people injured, some killed. The Yippes and the yuppies, not the yuppies, but—

IAN: Jerry Rubin.

TIM: The Chicago Eight, Bobby Seale, and Tom Hayden and all those guys were our cultural heros. And life was turning pretty violent. And in that fall, suddenly it dawned on me. And it dawned on everybody at different times, but for me, it dawned on me that the people who were going to war and being pushed to Vietnam were black, native americans who couldn't go to school and who weren't rich. They didn't get into

this college or they couldn't afford it or their grades or whatever. And those are the people fighting. That really pissed me off. I had general anxiety and anger but that was personal for me. And I dropped out of school with one term to go. So I didn't get a BA. I didn't finish my history courses. I quit, with one term to go, at Christmas time in 1968.

IAN: Out of anger? Was there a focused reason for the quitting?

TIM: Well I didn't go home at Christmas. I stayed in Indiana at Christmas time and I read 1984 and I read a bunch of other books and I said: "I gotta do something different. I can't do this. This is too weird. I'm trapped in a world I can't deal with."

IAN: Okay.

TIM: So I quit.

IAN: So what did you do then?

TIM: I hitchhiked around the country. I hitchhiked for probably three months. I met my future wife when I was hitchhiking.

IAN: Ah ha. [Laughter] You're not getting away that easy on something like that. So you stuck your thumb out. Did she pick you up?

TIM: Uh, no. My journey took me all over the place. I went to Los Angeles. I went to Dallas, Texas, all the way east to Florida. I think I hit most of the 48 states during that time. On the road constantly. And as I was back going through Heston, Kansas, I went to see some of the people I knew and they were having a party that night and they said: "Why don't you go down to the campus and find these two people because they're coming over and you don't know them but they'll find you" and whatever. So I went and found them and one of them was Susan. And when I walked her back to the campus that night I asked her if she would run away with me. She didn't.

IAN: She didn't?

TIM: No. [Laughter]

IAN: We almost got an incredible story there. [Laughter]

TIM: So our relationship developed over time.

IAN: Did you stay in Heston?

TIM: No. I just kept hitchhiking.

IAN: But you sent her postcards?

TIM: I sent her postcards, lots of postcards. And then I ended up back in Indiana and I

started working in a factory, and you guys don't get this, but in those days you could go and apply for a job and be working that afternoon. Jobs were that plentiful. Manufacturing. I worked in a factory that punched holes in metal things that go in the wall to hold those electrical devices. And so I worked there for about six months. So my hitchhiking career was over but I got a different career then. In those days, as well, you couldn't go and buy a camperized vehicle. So if you were somewhere in Iowa or Kansas, you would order your new van and have it shipped to northern Indiana and they would camperize it—put fridges in it and beds and such. But then it had to be delivered.

So I would work my shifts, Monday night through Friday night, whatever it was, and then on Friday afternoon I would get a van, park it in my driveway, go to work, get off at one in the morning, have a shower, get in the van and drive off to somewhere and then fly home. And I made fifty bucks a weekend doing that. So you could drive to Des Moines, Iowa in about six or seven hours—no traffic in the middle of the night—through Chicago and whatever and get a ride to the airport in [45:00 #1] Des Moines from the people you were delivering to and then fly back to Chicago, South Bend and hitchhike home and be back by noon.

MARSHALL: You were a camper van delivery guy. [Laughter]

TIM: I was a camper van delivery guy. And I did that most of the time I was working in that factory. [Laughter] I loved the road, I loved traveling and I could drive forever.

IAN: So you must have had a lot of cash in your jeans.

TIM: When I stopped going to school I had a $500 debt to my father and I paid it off that spring after a few of those. And so I was essentially debt-free by the middle of '69.

IAN: So why don't we take a quick break here...

[Begin Tape #2]

IAN: No. Ok, so we're in 1969, I think, and Richard Nixon is now the president, and—

TIM: Oh my god, yes.

IAN: You're working in a factory and driving camper vans.

TIM: Yeah.

IAN: So how did you save yourself from that?

TIM: Yeah. Well, I convinced myself—

IAN: Were you in the wilderness? Did you feel like you were in the wilderness at the time?

TIM: Yeah.

IAN: Yeah, yeah.

TIM: A whole bunch of my friends had moved off. They'd gone to New York and gone, they just moved. They moved, and I convinced myself that there was a great turning coming, that this was all going to eventually lead to a time when we were going to get set back. So I decided that I needed a profession. History wasn't going to be a profession for me, so I returned to Minnesota, back to my stomping grounds. My brother lived there, my older brother lived there. I went there, and I went to vocational school to learn to be a printer.

IAN: Hm.

TIM: And so I started there in September of '69, and, you know, Susan came to visit me a time or two there. She was now in Indiana. She'd followed the footsteps and was in Indiana. So we got together a few times. But being in northern Minnesota, it was a great place for draft dodgers and war resistors to stop by your house—I was living with another guy in a house—and we had this stream of people who were running from the law, resisting, going AWOL, and things like that, and so that stream went on, and then I got a call from a friend of mine that I had met in Indiana who was actually a Canadian citizen. He was Canadian. He was there in school. And he came to visit in January of 1970 [that's my phone, don't worry about it]. He came to visit in January of 1970, and I was going to school, and [5:00 #2] I was in charge of the yearbook at that school and a whole bunch of things, and he talked me into going to New York with him. Cause we had friends there. So we got in a car, and we drove to New York. We get to New York, and these people there say, "We're moving to Canada."

IAN: [laughter]

TIM: So I moved to Canada. I just went with them. There were two cars full of us leaving New York. We went to London as visitors, and then I stayed.

IAN: London, Ontario.

TIM: London, Ontario.

IAN: And you stayed in London?

TIM: Stayed in London. Well, got in touch with the Canadian underground, the anti-war underground, and they arranged things, and, you know, three weeks later I went down to Detroit and came back through Sarnia, and [inaudible at 5:56] never got the status, that day.

IAN: Yeah, right on the border.

TIM: 20 minutes.

IAN: Yeah. Yeah, that used to be my house after they, after we were close to the Ambas-

sador Bridge, and so people used to get their landed immigrant status and come and stay at our place.

TIM: Well, it was so interesting, because the people in London, they told me they... First of all, they gave me a job, which was not really a legitimate job at first. It turned into a real job. They gave me a car. They gave me cash. They told me how to answer the questions. They told me exactly the moment to enter Canada, at 3:30 in the morning on a certain day, and I came, and I immigrated.

IAN: Boom, boom, boom.

TIM: I got my immigrant status in 20 minutes.

IAN: It's incredible.

MARSHALL: And you'd have been, is it 22?

TIM: Well, this would have been around February 28th of 1970, whatever that is. I was born in '47, so.

MARSHALL: Ok.

IAN: So you walk out of the immigration office at 10 to 4:00 in the morning, because it only took 20 minutes, in January of 1970?

TIM: February, yeah.

IAN: February. So did you think, "This is something momentous?" or was is still, was it a lark?

TIM: It was not a lark.

IAN: OK.

TIM: It was not a lark. It was serious. It was, there was a feeling of being a nomad. There were people there that I knew and so on, and these other friends that, from New York, that were also immigrating, so they went back to New York, packed up their stuff, and moved. So they were delayed, but they were coming back, and I knew them. So we rented two apartments side by side in a brand new apartment building. We set up a commune. There were eight of us. Eight single people living in two apartments side by side on the top floor of an apartment building. And we lived in common: we shared food; we shared cars; we, you know, we helped each other out, made sure everybody had money to go to the show or whatever we wanted to do; and became Canadians.

IAN: So what did Susan think of all this?

TIM: Well, she was tracking this by postcard and so on, and she went to Germany on a stu-

dent exchange thing for four or five months that spring, the spring of 1970, and then when she came back, I talked her into coming to live with us there, and so she joined that group. And then we were married four or five months later.

IAN: Wonderful. With all your friends in London.

TIM: Yeah, yeah. We had a, we got married in our house on the floor, and the pictures from those days are pretty much hippie-looking.

IAN: Oh yeah [laughter].

TIM: But I owned a 1955 Buick Roadmaster, which was like the biggest car you could buy in 1955.

IAN: [laughter]

TIM: And we used to sport around with that, hippie types driving this big, black, shiny Buick.

IAN: Yeah, I mean, you may remember from my interview, my first car was a Pontiac Bonneville, '54.

MARSHALL: What was the job you were doing? You said they got you a job.

TIM: I worked at a bookstore.

MARSHALL: Oh, ok.

IAN: Oh, a bookstore in London?

TIM: In London, yeah.

IAN: Conservative town, but an interesting place.

TIM: Interesting place. My friend that came to visit me got involved in politics. He was a New Democrat, and he actually ran in the 1972 election. Some people we met there ran in the 1971 provincial election in Ontario, so we were right involved in politics again. [10:00 #2]

IAN: Mhmm. That was a radical time for the NDP, the Waffles, and the Waffle party and all of that.

TIM: It was interesting and exciting, and Kent State did happen right after I moved, soon after I moved to Canada. That was 1970, and I remember having a huge outburst of anger. I wrote an awful letter to my parents. You know, I mean, in retrospect—they didn't keep it. I haven't read it since. But I remember it as being very accusatory toward every adult. [laughter]

TIM: And it was a real time of change, yeah. I had never been mad at my parents, actually,

and I wasn't mad at them then. I just wrote this letter that I'm sure they thought, "Oh my god, what's happened with this fellow?" [laughter]

IAN: Now, did they come to your wedding?

TIM: No, they weren't invited.

IAN: Weren't invited, yes.

TIM: We just decided to get married and got married.

IAN: Got married. There you go.

TIM: It was two weeks between then and then.

IAN: And what did Susan do in London? Did she work in the same bookstore, or?

TIM: No.

IAN: Had she graduated? She got a B.A.?

TIM: No, she had not graduated, she didn't graduate either. She worked in a bookstore. Yeah, she did. A different bookstore than I did.

IAN: Those were the days when there were a lot of bookstores around.

TIM: Yeah, there were lots of jobs. You got [inaudible at 11:26], you got a job.

IAN: Yeah, you could have worked in the insurance industry in London. So how long did you stay in London?

TIM: Uh, we got married in February of 1971, and then we left. So that was it.

IAN: Ok.

TIM: We took about a month or so, and we came to British Columbia. I mean, we went to visit my parents and her parents, and we did all the things families do, and then we moved to Abbotsford and started working in a group home.

IAN: So why British Columbia?

TIM: Well, there was a connection with the Mennonite—

IAN: Mennonite connection. Mennonite community, yeah.

TIM: In Abbotsford, so we ended up working in a group home in Abbotsford that was sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee. So we hadn't really lost touch with our faith. We were not very faithful people in the traditional sense, but we were part of the new wave.

IAN: Ok, and so you've been... I haven't heard social services in here at all until right then. So, was it—

TIM: It occurred once before.

IAN: Had it occurred?

TIM: Yeah. When I graduated from high school, somebody—I don't know who this was—put a tag underneath each person's name in the yearbook, like a prediction, and they predicted I would be a social worker in New York.

IAN: In New York.

TIM: The Bronx, actually, they said. And I hadn't really thought about social work.

IAN: Did that shock you? Did that make you think?

TIM: At the time? I don't know. I just thought it was peculiar. "New York's a long ways away, and I've got [inaudible], and how am I going to get to New York?" [laughter]

TIM: Social work, well.

IAN: Yeah, and even somebody in Montana, you know: "Social workers: pah!"

TIM: Yeah, and I do remember being interviewed on local television in high school, and it was interesting because the coach, the basketball coach—we were a really good basketball team, we were ranked really high in the state that year—and the basketball coach sat each one of us down and interviewed us live on Global television. And he asked me if social work was going to be my future. So there was something there. I don't know what it was.

IAN: They were seeing something in you.

TIM: Yeah. Don't know what it was.

IAN: It was probably as much the middle child as anything else, eh?

TIM: The most important thing to me was chasing girls.

IAN: [laughter] You were 17. Duh.

TIM: [laughter]

IAN: So you came to Abbotsford and pretty immediately—

TIM: Yeah. We dove right in.

IAN: Now, was this a live-in group home situation?

TIM: Yes, and there was a—

IAN: You were the group home parents.

TIM: Well, we were the second parents. There was a group home house, big house with eight boys in it and an older couple who became our dear, dear, dear friends.

IAN: Who was that?

TIM: Edith and Frank Bergman. They became our Canadian parents. They were older. He was about my age, as I am now, when we arrived there. And we were the second, we lived in a little cottage on the same property a little ways away, and we helped. And then six months later, they left, so we became the house parents, and then another couple moved into the other house. And that was our first entry into dealing with the sticky parts of society [15:00 #2], I guess. I don't know how else to say it. Some of these boys were very disturbed. There weren't treatment facilities.

IAN: You were the treatment facility.

TIM: We were the treatment facility. Yeah.

IAN: Now were they all kids in care, or were some of them private...?

TIM: No, they were all kids in care.

IAN: Ok.

TIM: Run by the province directly, and some of them were waiting to go to treatment centers. Some of them were on remand because they'd been... delinquencies, or you know, whatever. Yeah. And they ranged in age from-... I think our youngest was 9, and the oldest was 18. And so you have a 9 year old who probably today would have been diagnosed as autistic, quite severe autism, to an 18-year-old criminal type. I don't mean that, but with a record, a quite considerable record. And that was so, so, so hard. No one should be asked to do that.

IAN: Eight? Eight.

TIM: Eight, yeah.

IAN: And your training with the Bergmans.

TIM: Yeah.

IAN: And that was about it.

TIM: That was it. And they were not trained.

IAN: No.

TIM: They were very wonderful people.

IAN: Faith-based people?

TIM: Faith-based people. And, you know, she cooked these fantastic meals and so on, and it was a home. It wasn't—but these kids needed more than a home.

IAN: Right, right. More than love.

TIM: Yeah.

IAN: That was a foundation, but not necessarily the... How long did you do that for?

TIM: 18 months. And our last day there was August 30th or something, 1972, which was the day the NDP got elected government here.

IAN: Oh, right. Yes. Oh, isn't that interesting, hey? So your relationships with social services there were front-line stuff? Did you see social workers much?

TIM: We saw ministry social workers about once a week, and then more often when there was trouble. And, you know, at remand hearings and family hearings and stuff like that. We got supervised once a week.

IAN: Which is not bad, actually.

TIM: Well.

IAN: Well, it may have been poor supervision, but at least the frequency—

TIM: Wonderful people. I love those people. I still think about them occasionally. But they were, you know, they didn't have enough foster homes; they didn't have enough placements; they were up against the wall. They tried to help us out as much as they could, and it was just... They had a very difficult job.

IAN: Yeah.

TIM: And, well, you know all this.

IAN: Yeah. So 1972. So before we move on, anything else? I mean, that was your first time in social services. That was pretty formative.

TIM: [laughter]

IAN: I'm maybe not surprised, but it's interesting that you continued. I mean, why is that? After that kind of—

TIM: Yeah. Well, we were pretty burnt out.

IAN: Baptism by fire.

MARSHALL: Especially since you had just gotten married previously, and you moved in together

and showed up.

TIM: We got married within about six weeks were were just kind of doing this. And then within another six months, we were the main providers. And just young. And our attitudes—cultural attitudes and so on—were much closer to the kids' growing up than we were to the system's. But one of the really, really fortunate things for us was that we became friends with Walter and Mabel [Peteco], and Walter Peteco was the Executive Director of Abbotsford Community Services that had started in 1968-69? So it was still pretty formative in those days, and Walter invited me to come to work for them. So I went to work there, I don't know, December of 1972 or something like that. And the NDP government had just taken over, and a whole bunch of things began to change in government and in the social area. And so that was quite an exciting time to start working for Abbotsford Community Services.

IAN: And what'd you do?

TIM: Well, I kind of was a youth worker, and there were some street programs going on there and volunteer programs and so on. I just kind of fitted in. It was a pretty small group.

IAN: It wasn't a big agency at that point.

TIM: No. I think, and those were the years of OFY grants and LIP grants, and so there were projects... [20:00 #2] There were always projects going on in that group of years, and so '72, '73, '74, it was pretty exciting. They were trying to bring in resources for it, into Abbotsford, and there was lots of opportunity, you know. In those days you could go and wander through the legislature. And I remember standing in a urinal in the provincial legislature, and I look over, and there's Dave Barrett standing right beside me, Premier, and thinking, "You know, this is incredible." This is not the kind of world that I had come from in the U.S. where the government class was kind of over there, and the people were here.

IAN: Yeah, yeah.

TIM: And it gave me a sense of being part of things, and...yeah. So I worked Abbotsford Community Services, and the organization kept growing, and by 1977, I was supervising people who were much more educated than me, who had Master's Degrees in social work and other things. And I was, you know, running these programs and doing all this stuff, and the thing just kept growing. And Walter had faith in me, and he was a great mentor. And I just came to the point where I knew I was over my head. And I wasn't over my head in a drowning sense of the word, like, "Aaaahh", but I kind of came to grips with the fact that if I was going to make a meaningful contribution, I needed more education. So that's when I went to the University of Oregon.

IAN: Okay.

TIM: And I completed my B.A. work, which, I had to complete 36 quarter-hours to get that. So I got a B.A. in Community Service and Public Affairs at the University of Oregon. That's a great school, by the way, and it's a great town, and it's a good place to live. It was a wonderful place.

IAN: Do they have the Ducks?

TIM: The Ducks. Yeah. They won the Rose Bowl this year.

IAN: Yes, I know that, but why would you name your team "The Ducks"? [Laughter]

IAN: Unless you're owned by Walt Disney and wanting to push a movie. [Laughter]

TIM: Well, Bill Knight was there, you see, and he later founded Nike and all that stuff, and so there was, sports is big.

IAN: Oh yes, oh yes, but... "The Ducks".

TIM: Ah yeah.

IAN: You should have done something about that.

MARSHALL: Did you leave Abbotsford Community Services when you went to the University of Oregon?

TIM: Yeah, that was my transition.

MARSHALL: Right, ok.

TIM: And then a really, really, really fortunate thing happened. When I looked at schools, in my mind, it was either the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, 'cause they had some program there that I liked, or the University of Oregon. And I looked quite a ways, and I was being thoughtful. And Susan's parents lived in Oregon, and it made sense for us to go there, and so on, and so that was the thing. But during that time when I was at the University completing my B.A., the Psychology Department announced this brand new program, which I thought was ready-made for me. It was called Applied Psychology. Master's Degree in Applied Psychology. And I had become acquainted with psychology on a deeper level through my work and so on, so I wasn't put off by the term "psychology", and I knew that the Psych department there was really well ranked in the hierarchy of schools. You know, behind Stanford and some others, but in the top five for academics in Psychology. But they were opening up this brand new program, and it was the only Master's program that that department had ever given. Like, they didn't give Master's Degrees. They gave Doctoral Degrees.

IAN: Oh, right.

TIM: That was one way they kept their high standing, right? So I went over there and snooped and started talking to people, and they took in ten of us in that first cohort. There were ten students in that program, and they were so afraid of losing their stature among these Psych school that we had to clear all the GREs and all the—as if we were doing a Doctoral degree, number one, and number two, we got incredible attention. They were really afraid we were going to be a bunch of know-nothings when we came out. [Laughter]. So we got the best. I studied under Jim Kelly who had founded the [25:00 #2] American Community Psychological Association. He was one of the top psychologists in the world. And he, his—the formative part for me was that he taught us that it's about ecology, that psychology is about ecology and people's participation in the social ecology of their communities. And it was such a—it wasn't Jungian; it wasn't Freudian. It was so practical.

IAN: Practical. That was the word I was thinking of.

TIM: And you know, I'd just had these six years of great work at Community Services, and here I was getting a frame for it—getting a way to look at it, getting a way to analyse it. And it was, so that was part of it. And then there was the organizational psychology, and there again we had these incredible professors who were doing lots of organizational psychology work, so it was a 72-hour Master's program. So I was fortunate to get into it; I was fortunate that it was the first cohort, because we got all this attention; I was fortunate because Jim Kelly left there—my professor that I really loved—left there, like, a couple years later. I would have missed him. It was, and then I got paired up with this incredibly smart young woman who was my partner through that Master's program, because that's what they did. They partnered us up. And here's a 21-year-old Japanese-American who already had an M.B.A., and who was so, so, so smart. And I hadn't done algebra since Grade 11, when I'd taught. [Laughter]

TIM: And here we're taking Statistics 501 and 502 and 503.

IAN: Without 101 being your backup.

TIM: And so she backed me up. And we made an incredible team, 'cause by this time I'm, like, 30 years old, and she's 21, and she was the brains, and I was the wisdom in this group, and we wrote incredible papers together. It was just an incredible time.

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: And I left there, and I had, like, I don't know, five or six job offers in Eugene with major companies, 'cause the professors there, they were—they wanted all of us ten to succeed. So these professors are calling me, it's like, "Go call so-and-so. They..." you know, whatever. And we, at that stage, had to make this decision about either coming back or staying, because we were dual citizens. And it was not even a decision. We both wanted to come back.

IAN: Hm.

TIM: And we had a, by this time our daughter would have been six.

IAN: Ok.

TIM: So we came back. Without a job, just landed back in Abbotsford.

IAN: To Abbotsford.

TIM: Looked for work.

IAN: There you go. So tell me about the work, looking for work, then. And what you found.

TIM: Well, I looked around, and I applied for jobs in some big—Finning Tractor, I got interviews in Finning Tractor for their HR side and, you know, things like that, 'cause I could do that. And then I got a call from an old friends who said, "The White Rock Coordinating Center is looking for an Executive Director, and it's all built around the Abbotsford Community Services model, so why don't you come and have a chat?" So I went and had a chat and ended up working there.

IAN: Right. As the Executive Director.

TIM: I was the first employee, yeah.

IAN: Oh, first employee!

TIM: And the Executive Director. Because they didn't have any. They were brand new. And so that was another journey. But they couldn't afford to pay me, you know, what is anywhere near market. [Laughter]

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: So I said, "So how much money do you have?" and they told me, and I said, "Ok, I'll work for that. But here's the salary I really want, and when we get enough money that I can make that salary, then we'll go there, but in the meantime, I'll work for what you have." There was a certain amount of money, and I took out a certain of money, and it lasted, you know, several months, and then we got it to track.

IAN: So tell me, what was...

TIM: That was 1980.

IAN: Who and why was this set up?

TIM: The White Rock Coordinating Center?

IAN: Yeah.

TIM: It's now Peace Arch Community Services. Well, some people who knew the Abbotsford Community Services experiences had moved to White Rock and were active citizens there. But it was a time—White Rock is very senior-oriented [30:00 #2], and there weren't a lot of programs for kids and families, and the community school was trying to bust out and do new things, and this group of people had formed around the old community justice. I don't know if you remember those, the time, under the NDP they started these community justice councils?

IAN: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

TIM: To think about justice in communities. [laughs] You guys don't have a clue. Anyways.

MARSHALL: I'm going to Google all this later.

TIM: The things that went on, you know. And then out of that community justice council came this group that said, "We need a coordinating center to put all these pieces together and help us do the community development and get on with program development and so on," and I happened to land there.

IAN: Tell me a couple of the names. Who were the leaders?

TIM: Allison Thompson, who later worked for the Children's Foundation, has provided services, and she's still providing services, for kids in the Fraser Valley. She had been a LIP officer, and before that an OFY officer, and that's how she knew the Abbotsford thing, and so, you know. We knew Gary Hamlin, a long-time...who had moved to British Columbia to help start the Abbotsford Resources Board, would have been a community development person. He was doing that. So I knew him. And the coordinator of the community school had been one of the founding members of the Ishtar Transition House, and my wife was also a founding member of that out in Aldergrove. So there were a number of connections, and I was fortunate to land there and have the time and start up.

IAN: So tell us about the development of the Coordinating...

TIM: We set up a cordon, a Volunteer Bureau. We set up an information line. We set up a number of programs. We got projects. We did a lot of work helping seniors, 'cause in those days the New Horizons was everywhere for seniors. They could start projects. They just had to get ten people together and start a project. We joined the United Way, so we got—

IAN: Back when you could join the United Way.

TIM: Back when you could join the United Way. And then we ended up—I don't know what year this was. Maybe '82? The International Year for Disabled Persons—we invented

a program that got great federal funding. We started teaching people with disabilities how to run word processors. I think the year was '72, I can't remember. I'm getting lost in—

MARSHALL: '82.

TIM: '82, right, I'm sorry.

MARSHALL: Ok.

TIM: Even '82, '83, I'm foggy in.

IAN: Ok. At our age, it's not important.

TIM: Yeah. So we did some, and the board was great, the citizens on the board. And then another organization, we merged. The South Surrey/White Rock Family Services Association and the White Rock Coordinating Center merged, and out of that Peace Arch Community Services a little bit later. There was a time lag there, but then we became relatively bigger, and then 1983 happened. You know, Bill Bennett gets elected in June, holds a cabinet meeting on July 7. He announces they're going to cut the civil service by 25%, gonna outsource all this work, and it happened. And so between the summer of '83 and when I left, we grew to three-and-a-half, four million dollars, just "pfff". And the institutions were de-institutionalizing, so the ability to develop programs for independent living—people with developmental disabilities—came. We developed a couple programs there. We had some group homes for kids. You know, we, it was quite a, it was a very big growth period.

IAN: Right.

TIM: One of our programs got unionized, so I negotiated a first contract there all by myself. Never done that before.

IAN: QP? BCG?

TIM: HSA.

IAN: HSA, yeah.

TIM: So that was exciting times.

IAN: Right, right, right. Yeah, it grew quite quickly. I remember, well, that was my days at Family Services, was just then.

TIM: Well, the application of what I had learned in Abbotsford Community Services, and then the theoretical, I had good confidence [35:00 #2]. The board was strong, and, you know, we were able to do a lot of stuff.

IAN: So, moving forward then.

TIM: Well, then, I left there—

IAN: So this would be '83, '84?

TIM: So, I started there in June of 1980, and then I left in '87. So I was there a long time.

IAN: Ok, long time, yeah.

TIM: And during that period I became chair of SPARC BC, and I was involved in other provincial things and so on. And then I left in '87, and I worked for United Way of the Lower Mainland as a Planning Consultant, and I was there for two, two-and-a-half years.

IAN: What made you make that change?

TIM: Well, you know, somewhere in my mind, I had set up a series of experiences I wanted to have. I wanted to work locally; I wanted to work provincially; I wanted to work in a hermit environment; I wanted to work nationally. And it just was like a tape that was going on in my head, I guess, and so I had stared working with United Way and had learned the on-site review process, and they were doing a lot of those in those days, and so it just seemed natural.

IAN: The on-site review was the precursor to accreditation, wasn't it?

TIM: Well, it was the United Way's system. A peer-review process and it had a very firm structure. Essentially it was going into an organization for three or five days and going through that organization top to bottom, starting with the finances and working through all the systems. And so I did a lot of those in those days, while I was at Peace Arch, and then after I got to United Way, I was doing more of them.

IAN: So that was really the first, I'm sticking on this a little bit, because my sense was—non-profits, and we'll just stick with non-profits. We won't even go into governments right now [laughter]—that non-profits before that time were a bit wild and wooly in a sense, right?

TIM: Mmm.

IAN: They'd kind of pulled themselves together, they're [inaudible], but the professional standards—that's why I was talking about a precursor to accreditation—The United Way really saw the need to try to help organizations professionalize themselves after a period of huge growth and—

TIM: Yeah. Can we take a break?

IAN: Yeah.

[Begin Tape #3]

TIM: Later, we want to talk about the disposition of these tapes. [laughter]

TIM: So, your question was, "was the on-site review kind of a precursor to accreditation in a more formal..." Yes. Let me just respond by saying a couple things.

IAN: Yeah. What I'm getting at is the development of the social service community here, the nonprofit community and that. I think that's one of the goals of these interviews and tapes. It's not just to hear from old coots like you and I, but is to...

TIM: Well, you know, I think the incredible, I think many people, well, historians will do this too, I think. The upshot of all those OFY grants and LIP grants and LEAP grants and those things that were federally funded by the Trudeau-era governments, brought huge numbers of people into a sector that they didn't think of as a sector. Doing projects to help the community. Doing—you know, painting storefronts, whatever. All these things. And that workforce stayed as the sector blossomed and as the institutionalization happened and as outsourcing happened from the provincial government. That work force stayed. And part of that workforce was really educated—not necessarily in social work or the social fields, but, you know, a lot of those people had B.A.s and had done academic work. A lot of them hadn't.

And so this workforce was not, it was ready-made in the sense that a lot of people knew about people with disabilities and, you know, so on—children, street workers, and so on—but they weren't trained to do that. And there certainly was not training in management and leadership in those days. I mean, Abbotsford Community Services provided a setting for some of that, and Walter did as good as he could, but, you know, that place was booming like this, and as the sector boomed, it boomed again, like, in the '80s. So, yeah. I think the on-site review process was a piece of work that could be applied in this sector. It was actually built for United Way, and it works better there than it does anywhere else, but—in my view—but it did start the process of thinking about system-wide change and system-wide analysis and so on.

And I don't know how many people felt like I did, that I worked in the sector to the point that I was over my head and therefore needed to go back. I think that that occurred to some of us and not to others. And so when accreditation started, well. Before that, the leadership was concerned about the solidity of our organizations and how, you know, the margins were so thin. Like, there was so much growth, but the margins were so thin you couldn't, you know, put your surplus away and use it for training the next year, and people were inclined to do that anyway. They were inclined to take every penny and put it back in service.

IAN: Service, yes.

TIM: Because of the mission. The mission part of this thing was so driving, for most of us, that, you know, we didn't think so much about the institutional side of long-term employees retention, decent wages, training, accreditation, certifications, safety—health and safety. You know, we kind of, we're still building silos, you know, doing it off the

back of antelopes and skittin'-scattin' and goin', and part of our reward was that this was so much fun, and there was a lot of development to do, and, "Wow, new programs, hire, go." And it was later when all this thought about solidifying institutions kind of came.

IAN: So you must have learned through the onset—this is when Gary McCarthy was...?

TIM: Gary McCarthy, Peter [Elfored], Bob Meyers.

IAN: All those folks.

TIM: And those three guys had a cohort right across the country of people who learned the on-site process from them, and I worked for Gary here—and Gavin [Perryman]—here at United Way of the Lower Mainland, so that got me connected with some of these other people from around the country who were doing this on-site review process, so in a way, that [5:00 #3] got me thinking about national work.

IAN: So is that when you went national?

TIM: Yeah.

IAN: You were there—[inaudible]—just two years, would you say? Two or three years, let's say.

TIM: Two or three years, and at the end of 1989, I applied for this job in Ottawa, and I got it. So then I moved there in December of 1989.

MARSHALL: And that job was...?

IAN: Yes. [laughter]

TIM: I was the Vice President of United Way of Canada, and my portfolio was the operations. There was another person doing marketing and another person doing the finances, but everything else was in my bailiwick, so it was a big job.

IAN: So what was that everything else in your bailiwick?

TIM: Training.

IAN: Training.

TIM: Training was a big thing because local United Ways wouldn't train locally. There weren't enough, say, in the lower mainland, so you would train the big-city personnel, these more rural parts of—smaller towns. There were 123 United Ways, and I think 20 of them were in Quebec, and I never learned French, so I didn't actually do a lot there, but, well, Montreal I did quite a bit because they were bilingual and all that, Quebec City. But the smaller ones, I just couldn't relate to. So there was training, campaigning—which was the thing that United Ways did. Everybody knew United Way this

much. Everybody knew it, but only this much, and it was about the campaign. How much money did they raise? Where's that thermometer this year? And that was also a time when there were, donors were demanding more choice. You know, if we're giving you, United Way, Monopoly on our workplace so you can come into our workplace and ask each one of our staff people to give, in return, we want flexibility. We want our staff to be able to say who the money goes to. Donor choice.

So that was coming in in the '80s, and it really blossomed in the '90s. So I had the Labour portfolio. Labour is a big partner with United Way, so I worked with people from the CLC, Nancy Rich and, you know, those guys. There was quite a portfolio of Labour staff people across the country, probably 15 people that were in these bigger United Ways that worked with Labour in their local communities. And then the allocations side of United Way, that's a whole science unto itself. Art, science or whatever. [Laughter]

IAN: Whatever.

TIM: We won't go there. That was also troublesome because many United Ways were growing, but the money that was growing was this donor-choice money, and they didn't, some of them didn't have as much money to actually give out as they had the year before because this donor-choice thing was growing, and so it was quite a time of change for the United Ways, and I also held the portfolio for the western region, the prairies, Ontario, and the Maritimes. So I traveled about 120 to 130 days a year when we lived in Ottawa.

IAN: And how was that on the family?

TIM: Moving to Ottawa was, it was good, 'cause we had lived in South Langley for ten years before that, on a farm with two other families, including that older couple that I mentioned.

IAN: The Bergmans?

TIM: The Bergmans. We [inaudible] there for 18 years, owners with them in that place. Well it was, for me it was fantastic. I got to travel, and I got to do things that I'd never done before, and in that sense, it was fantastic. I got to be in big cities a lot, Toronto and Montreal and so on. I got to go to Washington, D.C. a number of times to go to United Way International and United Way of America meetings. LA, Chicago. So, I mean, there is that part of it. But you'll recall also that there was a recession in 1990, '91, '92, and United Ways were suffering, and many of them lost money. The United Way had basically doubled the take in Canada [10:00 #3] every year from 1960 to '70, '70 to '80, '80 to '90, and then suddenly in the early '90s, we were falling backwards. But that progression had been double, double, double, double. And the pressure was on, and people lost their jobs. A number of United Way Executive Directors were moved on, change. So it was troubling in that sense. It was good for the family. My wife got a job. You remember that guy who came to visit me in Minnesota? We went to

New York?

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: He later became a Member of Parliament, and my wife worked for him in Ottawa.

IAN: Is that...?

TIM: Ray Funk.

IAN: Oh, ok. yes.

TIM: From northern Saskatchewan.

IAN: I've heard the name, yes.

TIM: And he's been a friend of ours.

IAN: Oh, so she got to work in parliament. What an [inaudible].

TIM: She got to work on Government Hill with him in his office. So that was fun. He was opposition, one of the opposition critics from Co-ops. So we got to participate a bit in the Ottawa life, but I traveled so much, it was...

IAN: Right.

TIM: And my daughter went to school there, and that was a little tougher for her than for us.

IAN: Right, right. Was she a teenager at this point?

TIM: Yeah, she was 15 when we moved.

IAN: That's a difficult time to move, yeah. Ok. So you were there in Ottawa until when? You were there quite a long time.

TIM: We came back at the end of October of 1994, so it was almost five years.

IAN: Just five years, ok.

TIM: Or a month short of five years.

IAN: So before we—you didn't come back to United Way, though.

TIM: No.

IAN: So before we leave the United Way, just kind of in 'cause we're doing historical context, today, what do you think about the United Way now? That's a wide question, but it has been, for decades, such an important part of the social service scene network.

TIM: Yeah.

IAN: And my, well, I won't give you my opinion. I'll ask you yours.

TIM: Yeah. Well, the roots of United Way go back to 1895 in Denver, and in some cities the United Way was started by business. In some cities it was started by Labour. And in some cities it was started by citizens, agency. So if you go across the United Ways in western Canada, you're going to find out that in Winnipeg, it was started by the Labour Council.

Now, in the early days, the rationale for United Way was to stop this business of cowboy charity or whatever that was called, where charity was viewed as—I don't want to get sexist about this, but: the grandlady in the flowered hat would bring food to the poor family on Christmas day and feel really good about it. That was the old image of charity. And so the United Way in Denver when it, and, I don't know, it's called Red Feather or something, many changes over the years.

IAN: Oh yes, Red Feather. Yes, I do remember that name now.

TIM: They started United Way as a way to channel this stuff in a systematic way to the actual needs in Denver as opposed to this hodge-podge of charity. Companies were angry that people were knocking on their door four or five times a day looking for handouts and charity and "will you sponsor this?" and "my uncle needs a job" and, you know, this kind of stuff that would have naturally happened in smaller towns and cities.

And so I would say the beginning was a way to systematize, whether it was started by the Labour Council or businesses or by non-profit organizations. And those were called community chests, where, you know, 15, 20, 40, 80 organizations would get together and say, "Instead of all raising money and competing with one another, let's do this systematically, and if we do it correctly, we can get access to payroll deduction." Now, payroll deduction, just for you guys, in the days when it was manual, payroll deduction was a big pain in the butt for employers. But when automated systems came in in the '50s, suddenly payroll deduction was [snaps] a goldmine for fundraising. Just huge. And the money just "pung"ed out. [15:00 #3] Because then a union and a company could sit down and agree, "United Way can come here, and everybody can say how much they want taken off their payroll cheque. They'll never see the money. It'll just go 'boom'. And the payroll department will just forward it over to United Way. What a great idea."

And so this idea of United Way commissioning a company to collect money on its part was new, and they even, the laws allow it. The company can also issue tax receipts. It isn't the charity, it isn't United Way who's showing all those tax receipts. It wasn't in those days, anyway. It was the companies. They take your money off your payroll slip and give you a tax receipt. And the automation of payroll deduction, which really turned United Way into a powerhouse.

However, by the late '80s, people were wanting more choice. United Way was losing its grip on this monopoly, that it was in the best position to pass money out.

That somehow this community chest or Red Feather or offshoot from a Labour Council could decide everything kind of went away. And, you know, over time institutions form, and government says, "Oh, United Way gives them a hundred thousand. We don't need to give them anything." And so there were these deals, not—you know, sort of tacit agreements that were going on in various places. And people...along with all other institutions in our society, United Way started to lose the faith of the population. Distrust brewed. And people wanted more choice, and the Internet and globalization and everything else is going toward choice. And people wanted more choice. Consumers wanted more choice. So United Way began to suffer.

One of the last things that I did when I was at United Way of Canada, and it continued after I left, I was the coordinator/facilitator/researcher for a group called—I can't remember the name, but the idea was to look forward to the year 2000. This is 1994-95. What are United Ways going to be in the year 2000? And there were some incredible discussions, and it was a part of that United Way history that I really cherish, because powerful people in United Way had to grapple with "what is the United Way of the future?" And I'm a big United Way supporter. I still give a leadership gift. But my own faith in the United Way has gone a little south. I think the world is so changed, and as an institution, it is so oriented today in self-survival, that there's a lot better ways to do it than United Ways are doing right across the country. I think they're hanging on to life. And they all do very interesting things. I'm not trashing the specifics, but in general, there's got to be a better way.

IAN: Yeah, they seem to have moved even into service provision themselves, which is almost competing with the social service sector. The Success by 6 stuff,—not necessarily bad programs, but interesting, confuse the social service. Are you an ally or a competitor?

TIM: Yeah, I think that's a BC phenomenon, the Success by 6. But that kind of thing has been matched elsewhere in the country. And I wish that they had taken a different route overall, that partnership, using the brand in a better way. Not pinning their hopes on always making that thermometer get bigger every year. Because it isn't. Here in the lower mainland, it's not growing.

IAN: Yeah, bad year this year, I heard.

TIM: Last year was a bad year. So they have tried desperately in different parts of the country to stay attuned to what donors and citizens want, and their measure of success has always been that friggin thermometer. So, you know, it's about branding. And so whether Success by 6 is successful or not, did it show up in the barometer? That's the blunt and hard question which people want answered, and different leaders have different points of view. But I think that when they go into social services, they're outside their main field of work.

IAN: Yeah. So '94, you came back [20:00 #3] to—what brought you back to British Colum-

bia?

TIM: I was really tired. I was beat. I was—

IAN: 120 days a year driving?

TIM: I was driving back from—I had driven down to Kingston that morning to attend a meeting most of the day, and I was driving back. It was May 24th, and the snow was coming down. It wasn't sticking, but it was coming down south of Ottawa on my way back, and I started swearing out loud to myself.

IAN: A good Mennonite boy like you! [Laughter]

TIM: And the next morning I went to see my boss, and I said, "You got time for dinner?" and he looked at me, and he said, "Yes," and he knew what I was doing. And I quit.

IAN: You quit.

TIM: I gave him, like, eight months' notice or something. Six. Then I came back, we moved back. We move back to our place in South Langley, and I didn't have a job, and I didn't know what I was going to do, and then, as I left, they gave me a couple of contracts, so I had work here, actually. Ottawa work here, which was terrific, 'cause I didn't—we didn't have any financial difficulties that year, and I could still work, and I still was traveling quite a bit, but it was like a decompression chamber—[Laughter]—to come out of that work, and it was ok. So then, my old contact from years ago in the party in social services, Jim Karpoff called me one day and said, "You know what CSSEA is?" And I said, "No, Jim, I don't know what CSSEA is, and I need some help." And...Community Social Services Employers' Association. 'Cause he was the Executive Director then, and he needed some HR work, and I started there a couple days a week. And that carried on from the spring of '95 through the almost end of '97.

IAN: Working for Jim.

TIM: Well, Jim left the fall, but—

IAN: Jim left the, yeah.

TIM: But working at CSSEA. I got to know that whole system very strongly, and it felt comfortable to be back in a provincial sphere. I'd been at the national, and it, you know, it has its own problems and issues. Being back in the provincial sphere—that's when I really got to know community social services. You know, in Abbotsford and White Rock I was doing it, I was inside of it, doing it, and then at United Way we were distant and doing some of these on-site reviews and consulting work and so on, but it was at the Employers' Association where this idea of a sector really clicked for me, and it all became...I could see something there.

IAN: Now, you were the Executive Director—acting Executive Director—there for a while.

Was that during that period? '95 to '97?

TIM: Yeah, Jim...in the '97 period. I was a consultant working part time, sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the projects. And there was a lot of start-up activity going on at CSSEA. Like, there weren't policies, there weren't, you know, how the reporting was going to—there was just a lot work to do. And he had a core staff, and I was doing the sideline stuff there.

IAN: So maybe just for the record, can you, in a minute or less, tell us about why CSSEA was created and what it was supposed to do back then?

TIM: Hm. A minute or two. I'll try.

IAN: [Laughter] A minute or less, I said. Not even two.

TIM: The government set out, the new government, the Harcourt government in '92—did they come in in '92?

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: '91? '92. They took a look at the whole labour situation in the province and divided up the public service into pieces of a big pie. So there was the public service—provincial public service; there was the advanced education; there was the K-to-12 sector; there was the hospital and health sector; there was, help me, there were other sectors.

IAN: Yep.

TIM: And they defined, after quite a struggle, well they defined, I think it was six sectors, and then the—and I was in Ottawa, so I didn't get this part—but there were advocates within the social service sector that said, "We also want to be a sector. We want to be one of your sectors."

IAN: "We are a mess, but we want to be part of—we are a sector."

TIM: Right. So, so. Glen Clark was the Minister of Finance, and so he was in charge of that part, and Harcourt was the Premier, and they accepted this request from sector leaders to say, "You're a sector." So all of a sudden there was a seventh piece. Or was it eight? I can't remember.

But in any case, so, having done that, then the Harcourt government set out a couple of what we took to be determined outcomes. One is that unionization and collective bargaining [25:00 #3] in this sector would be done by the Employers' Association, number one. So that was, and that—CSSEA would also do HR. But there was a return benefit for the sector that organizations in this sector who contracted with government would get continuous agreements. Continuing agreements or continuous agreements. And, you know—

IAN: As opposed to the year-to-year—

TIM: As year-to-year contracting and, you know, competitive bidding and all that, that if they can fund school boards and hospitals and community colleges on a continuous basis, why can't social services be funded on a continuous basis?

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: And so, you know, in the '70s, the NDP tried to put in these resource boards as a way to formalize this structure, and then, you know, here's the next attempt to kind of formalize this structure. So there was a lot chatter about how these continuing agreements were going to be built. 'Cause many organizations had contracts with more than one ministry, and the idea that you could get one contract to cover all of these ministries in one deal so that Peace Arch Community Services or Family Services would have one defined relationship with the government, and all these other ministries would flow into that, into that agreement.

Then you could establish wages; you could establish training programs; you could establish retention policies; you could do all this stuff that everybody wanted to do at this time, which is to get formalized and have a continuing relationship with government and have these, have the ability to actually be whole organizations, not be pulled apart by, you know, some contract manager from this ministry, and a different deputy from there, and a minister from there, and a politician from there, who could come and dabble in your work. You know, make it an institution like a school board that could—anyway.

So that was going on in that period of '94-'95-'96-'97. Jim Karpoff left in the middle of '97. The board appointed—asked me if I would be the interim Exec while they went and did a search, and I did, and then there was a strike that year—a rotating strike, and so I got to be a public spokesperson and media person and stuff like that for them, during the strike period, which was great fun.

IAN: [Laughter] On the employers' side of things.

TIM: I had only been—I had negotiated one contract in the 1980s with HSA, and then basically hadn't done much. I mean, I was with United Way. Canada had Labour as one of its portfolios, and so I did that, I had contact with, you know, mucky-mucks in CLC in Ottawa, and I knew those folks, Labour people, but coming here in the hurlyburly of a sector trying to get organized—and unionization was going up like crazy because the NDP was really supporting it, and the wages were starting to go up. There was actual wins here. The average wage went from $11.35 to $16.35 an hour over a course of about three or four years—you know, things were happening. It was working.

And so there was, you know, the ability to take a look at the big picture and see a future, a positive future. But continuous agreements fell off the table. And so the bargain, the social contract between the sector and the government stopped when that happened. And that, you know...in the course of history, that was a turning point that Mike Harcourt and others should not feel very good about.

IAN: Yeah. So let me ask you the same question I asked of the United Way. CSSEA still is an organization.

TIM: Yeah.

IAN: I think the Executive Director's just resigned, hasn't he?

TIM: Oh, he's been replaced, and I don't know the new person.

IAN: I don't know who that is either. So what do you think about who they are now and where they might go? In relationship to the sector.

TIM: Well, yeah. Yeah. The grand bargain that failed meant that a number of things happened. One is...during the time Jim Karpoff was there and then I was there, everybody wanted to join CSSEA—"Suss-see-ya" isn't it called by government folks—and so the membership went up and up and up, and we were offering HR services. We had quite an HR group [30:00 #3], and, you know, we were engaged. But as soon as you get into HR, you start to get into touchy issues like retention and training and, you know, "what's the qualifications of a great Executive Director?" And then people start to push, and then there's advocacy, and the government in the last part of the '90s got fed up with this advocacy stuff. You know, you get 300 people in a hotel that have never been together, and they all share community services as their core...they don't sit quietly. They demand things.

IAN: [Laughter]

TIM: They, you know, corner a politician. They haul a deputy in and yell at them. You know, this— and so there was a power block here for the first time. The school board's been doing this for generations. The hospital board, you know, they have been doing this all the time. For generations. And here this upstart little sector that was barely crawled into that pie in the first place...

IAN: Whose history was charity...

TIM: Whose history was charity.

IAN: Which means, "Here's ten bucks, be quiet."

TIM: And I think a certain Premier just one day decided to end it all. That's my view of it, and I forever don't think... That's the failure of Glen Clark, in my view. However. But, as this thing before they chopped off HR—can't do HR anymore. Then they chopped back the membership of CSSEA from 650 to 225.

IAN: Oh, the union. Yeah.

TIM: Because if you weren't unionized and you didn't get over so much money from the government—which took out all the childcare, all the women's services programs,

took out a whole bunch of stuff, just took it out of CSSEA and turned it into a bargaining council. And your question is, "Is it relevant today?" and the answer I have is "no". I think it did its thing. It failed in a whole bunch of its mandates. It was supposed to bring in this continuous agreement in relation to continuous bargaining. Like, you know, the two go together. Until somebody [banging sound] decides one day to cut them off. I'm getting animated.

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: I don't mean to. Anyway. I think it has done its job. It's done a fine job for what it is. It has had some great leaders in there. But bargaining, one of the other failures is that it was always operated—the board has always been controlled by executive directors. It never made the leap to bring in actual board members from PCRS and Family Services or Pacific, uh, Peach Arch Community, or, it's all been executive staff sitting at the bargaining table. The other councils are all controlled by elected board members—school board members, elected members of hospital boards, and so on. And so this animal never grew to its full potential. So, it's a bargaining agent. That's all it is.

Now it does these ancillary services and good services, I don't [unclear]. But it again is searching for its own mandate. I think in the future it's going to need to be more flexible, to be nimble. I think that CSSEA should be owned by its members, and if that means taking the current one over—'cause government dismissed the board and replaced it with one guy, a trustee, once. Then they appointed all the members. All the members serve at the leisure of the government, not the members. And so it's not all owned by the members, and it should be. So, and at the beginning, I can see. You know, there's beginnings. It's mature now. It's...what is it? 15 years old?

IAN: Yep.

TIM: So... time for a change. 18 years old. Time for a change. And I think the future would be better handled if the members ran it.

IAN: Maybe Board Voice should take that up.

TIM: Hey, not a bad plan.

IAN: Not a bad plan. So we're moving almost to the present now, so, but we haven't... You left CSSEA. Or your contracting role, your Acting Executive Director role.

TIM: Yeah. I was on an interim thing, and I applied for the job, and those poor board members. I remember the guy who came and told me I didn't win the job. He felt so bad, and I felt so relieved.

IAN: [Laughter]

TIM: I didn't realize it until Ken looked across the table and said, "Tim, you're not in the final. You're not the final one." I suddenly felt this great sense of relief, which I didn't

expect to feel. So it's remarkable. [Laughter]

IAN: Who became the Executive Director?

TIM: John Nielson.

IAN: John Nielson, yes.

TIM: And John became a great friend.

IAN: A very good—

TIM: A solid gold human being.

IAN: Yeah.

TIM: And one that I grew to really have a lot of affection for [35:00 #3]. And still do.

IAN: Right.

TIM: He served there at their leisure, and then he later was...had to leave under quick circumstances.

IAN: Yeah. So what happened to you?

TIM: Well.

IAN: Back up to South Langley.

TIM: Back to South Langley. And I was out of work.

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: I had made really good money that previous—CSSEA paid well [laughter]. I don't know what they pay now, but they paid well in those days, so.

IAN: There's a Vancouver poet by the name of Tom Wayman. One of his best poems is called "A Government Job At Last". [Laughter]

IAN: Fantastic poem.

MARSHALL: Google that.

IAN: Yeah, put that in there.

TIM: I wasn't even on salary. I was on contract.

IAN: Oh!

TIM: So my contract was X number of dollars per day, and if I quoted that number to you and put the days together that I worked that year, your mouth would drop open. I

made a lot of money in those, in that year, so I didn't mind leaving. I've never really wanted money; it hasn't been my focus. So we could take some time and do what we wanted. But about that time then, there was...we had a Deputy Minister of Children and Families, a very powerful ex-So-cred Liberal named Bob Plecas who, as Deputy, said, "We gotta fix this system. We're not going to give you continuing agreements. We're going to give you contract reform, and a whole bunch of you are going to amalgamate. We're going to just make you do it."

Now, Bob Plecas, in those days, his hands were about that wide, his fist was very big—I'm exaggerating. [Laughter] But he could be very outspoken, was. And very powerful. And we couldn't figure out for the life of us why that government would bring that member, that person, back into this ministry, the Children and Families. But they did. And there were a number of people who said, "Well, we're not gonna amalgamate. We don't care what you do. We're going to form something else, and we're gonna"—you know, at that period time, they said—"We're gonna call the co-op". And I was fortunate to be standing there when this was going on, and as a bystander, they kind of called me in and said, "Can you help us?"

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: So I was not—I wouldn't even call myself an organizer of the co-op, except that I followed instructions of people and then I organized. More of a traditional organizer, not a founder.

IAN: Mm-hmm!

TIM: So that was the way I see it. And then the co-op didn't have any money, so one of the incipient members of the co-op paid my wage for a while, and that was PLEA community services. Tim and I had become great friends in the CSSEA period 'cause we, the two of us, used to get on the helijet every Wednesday morning for months on end and fly over to Victoria and negotiate this continuous agreement. Which morphed into contract reform, which morphed into contract reform 2 and became totally meaningless. So I took this loss of continuous agreement personally, 'cause I was at the table with Tim Agg week after week after week sitting with deputy ministers and executive directors over there and government executive directors, trying to negotiate this agreement, and...what a fraudulent procedure that was. And I was taking—we took it seriously.

IAN: And they weren't.

TIM: Well, some of them did, some of them did not.

IAN: So that sounds like—we sound like we're almost at an end question here, but I'll ask it, 'cause it's not the end yet, but one of my end questions was: what's one of the biggest disappointments in your career? Is this it?

TIM: [Long pause} Hm. No one's ever asked me that question. I've not been disappointed in much. And I don't have any disappointments with the co-op, so that would put me back here. You asked the question at the right time [banging sound, laughter]. [Inaudible]. Well, yeah. I think...I'm an optimist, and a pragmatic optimist I hope. That's where I want to be, that's the life I've lived, I think. The deflation of losing that concept of the continuous agreement, and the way it was done, was very disappointing. But (this optimistic part of me says) it did cement in my mind that this is a sector, and it is an abused sector, and it is a sector that needs to get its act together. Today, as well as in [40:00 #3] 1995, '96, '97, and before. We still haven't got our act together.

And had we been powerful, we would have had those continuing agreements. Had we been powerful, that whole stuff that came in with the, you know, the Liberal government in 2001 where NAFTA became the bible and [inaudible] became the bible—competition is the only way, competing for contracts—that has done our sector damage. It has not been one of those evolutionary things where competition makes you stronger. Competition has ensured this sector is weak. And government knows that. And people in government who sponsor this kind of competition know exactly what they're doing. These are smart people. And they know exactly what they're doing.

When Bob Plecas was the Deputy Minister of Children and Families, he looked across the table at me one day, and he said "Let me tell you..."—I was at CSSEA—"Let me tell you, the one thing we have to keep from happening, it must not happen, is that...in accommodation between the executive directors in your sector and labour, we have to have a wedge between them at all times." And, you know, in those days I couldn't tell anybody that because it was in an environment where that...you just can't tell those kind of confidential conversations to anybody. But that is exactly what it is! Keep the progressive forces—labour, and those nasty people who keep wanting to advocate—keep them out of here. Keep those executive directors happy, make them secure and safe, and you will always have this wedge. And, well...

IAN: It's still there.

TIM: What's happened?

IAN: I don't know. How [inaudible].

TIM: So, as much as I—frankly, I really have grown to appreciate Bob Plecas. He's a straightforward, straight-up, smart kind of guy, and he tells it like it is, and he told us the truth that day. And as much as I don't like to hear the truth, it was the truth. But we're still where we were. All these things that we do to make ourselves a little more powerful, have a little more clout, they're all good. We just haven't gone there yet. We just haven't gotten to the place where we need to be. So that's my passion coming out.

IAN: And Bob Plecas is your kind of guy because you're a pragmatic optimist, and you can't

be an effective optimist without knowing the truth.

TIM: That's good. I like that. You write that down, Marshall.

MARSHALL: We got it, we got it.

IAN: And Plecas always told you the truth whether you liked it or not.

TIM: He—far as I know, he always told us the truth. He was straightforward and—

IAN: Generally, yeah. Interesting man.

TIM: But no one told us the truth about the continuous agreement.

IAN: Yeah.

TIM: That—no one told us that truth, and I resent that. I think it was made at the highest levels of government and that they didn't want to have a political tail pinned on them, so: "we'll make sure that it appears that it's been killed by the bureaucracy."

IAN: Right. So tell us about the Co-op then.

TIM: Oh dear. Yeah.

IAN: Interesting you said you didn't consider yourself a founder. Like, I could hear that, but certainly you're seen as a founder.

TIM: Mm. It's just 'cause I was a bystander and I'm the last one standing.

IAN: [Laughter]

TIM: No, I'm not the last one standing.

IAN: Tim Agg's still around.

TIM: Tim Agg's still around. Tim Agg is the founder. If anybody's the founder, Tim Agg is, because his organization paid my wage without return for many months. I wasn't working full time. It wasn't like, you know, huge amounts of money, but it was there, secure, and they did it. They also loaned the Co-op, you know, over $60,000 in our beginning times before the shareholders paid in their value. So, you know, they were—and Tim himself has been a big believer.

MARSHALL: Founding organizing was around...what are we at? '98 you were, around then?

TIM: Yeah, the Co-op was officially formed in October '98 and so I think our first meeting was in February '98. We had a meeting at the United Way, and 20 people showed up, and they appointed a committee—two committees—and they worked and so on. And I think in July that year, the committee reported that it should be a co-op, and they got agreement. There'd been a big argument before that, and I had been involved in

very cooperative things [45:00 #3] over, in the course of my life: a cooperative living arrangement in Ontario, and then in our farm in South Langley, three families in a co-op. We'd done something really incredible during the recession in the mid-80's with our mortgages, saved a huge amount of money. That was personal. But actually forming and—I had joined a housing co-op at one point, but then we moved, so we dropped out of that. So I didn't—I never knew what a co-op really was structurally and so on, so we had to learn a lot, and I think we started out believing that bulk buying was the ticket, because everyone was buying in such scattered ways and so on. And you know, the market has changed over the period, and there was a time when bulk buying would have been the ticket. But as systems become more streamlined and automated, and competition in some of those sectors is really high, there's only a few niches now where bulk really works.

IAN: Uh huh.

TIM: And, you know, some of these are cutthroat businesses, and, you know, you don't actually understand it till you get inside—you strike the deal with Corporate Express on office supplies, and then you see what happens—that the next day, other people know about the deal and they'll offer the same price. They just cut, cut, cut, cut.

IAN: Yeah.

TIM: And, you know, in our sector, there's been this thing about "I have to have my own. I need my own computer system, I need my own financial manager, I need my own accountant, I need my own telephone system." And part of this fragmentation is around these system things, that the Co-op, as part of the mandate, was to go in and find those common instruments and tools and supplies and products and services and bundle them so that there would be economies of scale and people could actually control, have a decent control with a supplier. You could bargain with them. Say "no". You know, "Grand & Toy is giving us a 40% break, we want a 50% percent break now. And we want that to ride out—we want to have that margin as Grand & Toy tries to meet this 50% break, 'cause it's cutthroat, we want a [rider] to move it up."

Like, those are the ways you bargain down. We didn't know that. And we didn't know all that stuff. And so I think that's a bit disappointing. I think we had a bigger block in view of that. But the Co-op was born in an advocacy time in an advocacy place, and we know from our experience that the first 40 organizations that joined this co-op did not join it to bulk buy. They joined it 'cause it was the place to be. Here was a place where we were advocating, we were making change, we were trying to lead change, and the board was always strong and out there in front of everybody and leading. But having said that, when we actually did the math, we found out that our members, those that were using the products and services were getting a really good financial deal, and that was a good thing.

IAN: Mm-hmm.

TIM: And then over time, we developed the project and consulting practice, which grew to be pretty healthy and actually responded to the mission side of these organizations as opposed to the sustainability side, the financial sustainability side. And the heart of you, Ian, and all of the people in our sector is on the mission. The institutionalization, the tools, the products and services are there to support the mission, not vice versa. And so it took us a long time to actually figure out that when we could identify with your mission and bring services to bear on your mission, that we would then have this better co-op. [Back] then we were more focused on products.

We were always focused on mission, and I can look back at, you know, speeches I may have given at annual meetings and stuff, and we were always focused on mission and advocacy, but the fact is, most of our work was on products and services at the beginning, 'cause that's what we thought [50:00 #3] was going to happen. So, yeah. I think the biggest part of this is the incredible working relationship I've had with a whole lot of people: the chairs and the board, other people that I've gotten to know, and board members. Board members have always been the biggest customers of the co-op.

IAN: [Laughter] Get engaged, go to spend your money. [Laughter]

TIM: You get engaged, you get to see what it is up close and personal, and I think that's... it's very neat and interesting. I don't quite know—and then past board members will continue to use those services as well. So there's been accumulation of the good customers, or really participating members. So it's been good. It's just unfortunate we couldn't have every single member be on the board.

IAN: [Laughter] yes.

MARSHALL: Those meetings would be unruly.

IAN: A collective cooperative board.

TIM: The thing is—well, you know, we made a decision. The board made a decision, really, on—which is the formative financial decision of the co-op. And that is to have—sell shares up front and have no annual fee. Every other provincial organization in the province has an annual fee. And our board decided to differentiate and, for various other reasons, to just sell shares, and then the co-op had to make it on its own without annual fees from members.

IAN: Hm.

TIM: And it made us work really hard and be very creative and have a tough year or two. You know, but I started working one day a week, and then two days a week, and then three days a week, and so on. So it was an easy uptake for the co-op in the sense that it didn't incur huge costs up front. We were very cheap and [careful].

IAN: So it's...

TIM: Oh my word.

IAN: What's your—what's, looking back, what do you think is your best success in there? Best success, greatest accomplishment.

TIM: The most fun was the co-op. The most fun was the co-op by far. Although I had fun at other places, I think the co-op brought together the—and,the co-op and associated work, 'cause I've been engaged in other things kind of as sidelines to the co-op. I'm a volunteer a number of places and so on—and I think it pulled together my experience and my theoretical training at school. Like, that stuff that I learned in the late '70s in that applied psychology organizational and community psych. I'm probably using that more in the last five years than I used before, and I feel really good about that. I, well, since I left my job here, I've had time to rifle through some files and find papers and stuff, and I'm amazed. I'm just amazed.

IAN: [Laughter]

TIM: So, fun? Here, the co-op. Achievement? You know, there's been achievement at each place. Yeah. I know that one of the tracks of my life is that I leave things undone. I left things undone at Abbotsford Community Services, at Peace Arch Community Services, at United Way of Canada, at CSSEA, and probably at the co-op, so I think that's a trait that if I could make it over, I'd probably do it over, do it differently. But there always seems to be so many things to work on and so many exciting new things, and I don't think I'm a good finisher. [Laughter] I don't tend to wrap things up in bows very tightly and nicely and hand it off. I recognize that in my own history. That wouldn't be fun. And as my good friend Tim Agg says: if you ain't having fun, don't do it.

IAN: Don't do it, yeah.

TIM: So I think—but you know, I think I've had both the applied, really on-the-ground working with families and kids that didn't take up as much of my life as I probably thought it was going to take up—it's been more management and stuff, but I don't think I've ever actually lost that. That's pleasing to me.

IAN: And you're having fun now?

TIM: Right now I am, yeah.

MARSHALL: I have a question. This actually came out of the, when we were here last time you did [inaudible]. But when we first started, you mentioned—I don't know if you still feel this way—you were really excited about this project. About doing this and getting to sit down and interview people about this. I was just wondering if you could—if you still feel that way—

TIM: I do.

MARSHALL: —are you still excited about this type of thing, this project, what it might entail?

TIM: 'Cause my vision is still what it—I said it before, and I just keep saying it: this sector needs to pull together. And everything we can do to contribute to that is positive. So if my story or Ian's story or Carol [Matasucy's] story, anybody's story can contribute to the future where the sector's acting more cohesively... You know, what we know about communities is that cohesiveness is really good. We're community service, and we're very fragmented. We're not very good about this. You know, to act in community with one another? The currency is not money; it's trust. And when that coin called "trust" doesn't equal ten of those government shekels, then we're going backwards. You gotta equal at least ten. One unit of trust has got to be worth $10, in just—to make it blunt.

MARSHALL: Right.

TIM: And when we eat at each other, and we discount that trust, we're discounting dollars by the score. You know, like, we knock off dollars, and this is a wealthy sector. This is a sector...the communities of this province are wealthy. If we think about if from a point of view of trust and the actual use of resources, this is a very wealthy place. But when we distrust one another, we impoverish one another. And that's what I see we do. I love this sector. I love working here. It's been a lot of fun. It's going to be more fun. But if we don't get over this hangup of trust, people who want to manipulate and use this sector will continue to do so. And it won't stand up for itself until that trust is solid, so that's why I'm excited about this, and I'm excited about other things that I'm working on. You know, it's time for us to get our act together. Time to grow up. [Laughter]

TIM: Ooh, I should look at the camera when I say that. [Laughter]

MARSHALL: That was a pretty closer, if it's going to be closing.

IAN: That's my last question.

MARSHALL: All right.

TIM: Thank you Marshall and Casey.

MARSHALL: Thank you guys, both of you for this.

[End of recording]