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Dartmouth College Oral History Program
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Transcribed by Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft

[EMILY H.]

BURACK: So my name is Emily Burack. I'm sitting here in Rauner [Special Collections] Library on August 20th. What time is it? At 1 p.m. in the afternoon. With Fran Oscadal. And we will get started.

Hi, Fran.

OSCADAL: Hi, Emily.

BURACK: Let's start with basics. Where were you born, and when?

OSCADAL: I was born in Buffalo, New York, and my birth date is December 23rd, 1949. My parents grew up in one of the oldest parts of the city, still known as the First Ward. And Buffalo—if you want, we can talk about background information.

BURACK: Mm-hm. Sure.

OSCADAL: Buffalo was, and I think probably still is, to some extent, largely an ethnic city: Polish, Italian, very Irish, African-American, there used to be a German population, and we lived, as I said, in one of the oldest parts of town. It was a combination of residential and sort of industrial. It was down near the waterfront, and the waterfront was dominated by flour mills and other small industries related to shipping that came over the Great Lakes.

I know my paternal grandfather—maternal grandfather, John Sheehan—he worked as a scooper in the grain operations. My grandfather and my father worked most of their lives in Pillsbury Flour Mill, and when I was about five, we moved out of the First Ward to another largely Irish neighborhood, South Buffalo, where I grew up.

And throughout—and I suppose this is relevant—throughout my childhood and youth, I attended Catholic parochial schools, as I mentioned—or didn't mention, Buffalo is a very Catholic place. We lived in a predominantly Irish

neighborhood. Churches were very important and a very big thing in everyone's life.

So I grew up in a very religious atmosphere, and I'm still religious. I still consider myself a Catholic. So that's basic background.

BURACK: The bare bones of the background. What were your parents' names, and what did they do?

OSCADAL: My father's name was Cyril [F.] Francis, and he went by either "Cy" or "Frank," depending on the people who were talking to him. As I said, he worked at Pillsbury most of his life. He was a millwright and a master mechanic. So he repaired virtually anything or everything that—he had a crew. There were a number of them. Repaired everything that broke down in this mill. This was a large mill. When this mill opened in 1929, just before the Depression struck, it was the largest flour producing mill in the world, and it stayed that way for a number of years.

I know something about that because I worked there summers while I was going through college. My mother was Margaret, and her maiden name was Sheehan, and she was a mother and a housewife, as most women, married women and mothers were then. They grew up in a time when men were coming back from, say, the Second World War, could find jobs, blue-collar jobs that paid enough to raise a family. Most women didn't work. Many of them didn't even drive. My mother never drove a car.

We lived in South Buffalo. We lived in a typical kind of suburban neighborhood, street after street of house right next to each house, separated by driveways. It was a very nice place to grow up. There were a lot of kids. It was postwar, baby boom. Irish-Catholic families are often large families. I had just two brothers, John [M. Oscadal] and my youngest brother, [Martin G.] "Marty" [Oscadal]. We had a lot of kids in the neighborhood.

It was that time or a time in the United States when neighborhoods were felt to be safe, and kids were left to roam by themselves. After school and on the weekends during summers, Buffalo had a very nice parks system, and South Buffalo had a couple of very nice parks, all of them—you know, most of them designed by Frederick Law

Olmstead. And so when you're growing up in that neighborhood, there were always baseball games, sandlot football, that sort of thing, basketball everywhere.

So it was a pretty typical, small city. Buffalo was never a very large city, half a million population, I think, at that time. it's smaller now. And the regional population was probably always around a million, and it's probably more than that now. But the city, itself, has shrunk considerably recently.

BURACK: Did most parents of your friends or other kids in the neighborhood growing up work in the industry, in the flour mills?

OSCADAL: Well, Buffalo had a number of industries. People in the First Ward—a lot of them worked in flour mills, but many other people worked at steel plants. There were two huge steel plants in Buffalo, Republic [Steel] and Bethlehem Steel [Corporation]. Bethlehem Steel ran five or seven miles along Lake Erie.

BURACK: Wow.

OSCADAL: So there were a lot of factory, industrial kind of jobs and then a lot of industry that supported that kind of work. There were also automobile-related industries: the Ford [Motors] Stamping Plant. General Motors [Company] had a plant there. There were tire manufactures in Buffalo. Trico windshield wipers had, like, four or five plants. I mean, it was a huge blue-collar city. The money—white-collar people or the people with real money in Buffalo at that time lived in the north part of the town. Italians had the west side. The Irish had the south side, and blacks were on the east side. And it was a divided city in that sense.

BURACK: Yeah, I was about to ask: Did you feel the—like, growing up in the '50s, did you feel, like, the economic divides and the ethnic divides?

OSCADAL: Ethnic, yes. The economic, no, I don't think kids were aware of that. I mean, sometimes you read about people who grew up in the Depression and they didn't know they were poor because everyone was in the same boat. And socioeconomically, I think, South Buffalo was pretty—everyone was pretty similar, although there was—there's certainly a mix of incomes, but people weren't building

McMansions at that time. You know, people were living in more ordinary homes.

So, for example, on our street, Ridgewood Road, a judge—a city judge lived a few doors down. A very important doctor in one of the local hospitals lived at the end of the street. So there was a mix of both professional and blue-collar people living together.

BURACK: But in your neighborhood, as you said, it was largely Irish or Irish-Catholic.

OSCADAL: Yes, yes, very much so.

BURACK: Yeah. Were both your parents raised like that as well, as Irish Catholic?

OSCADAL: Well, yes. I mean, my father was—both my parents were raised in the First Ward, and even then, back at the turn of the 20th century, the First Ward was very Irish. There was a mix of people, but the Irish were dominant. And that was true—and then when people from the First Ward got some money, they generally moved either to South Buffalo or to one of the southern suburbs, and so it was a very similar—

BURACK: Experience.

OSCADAL: —experience, yeah.

BURACK: And you mentioned before, in an earlier conversation we had, that your dad had served in World War I.

OSCADAL: World War II.

BURACK: Oh, World War II, excuse me. [Chuckles.] Not World War I. Can you talk about what your impression of that was like from him? Like, did he talk about it? Did it shape your–

OSCADAL: My father was in the [U.S.] Army Air Force, so that was the Air Force before it became a separate branch of the service. And my recollection of his stories were that he didn't leave the States until late in the war. He trained I think it was in Georgia, where he learned to fly. And I can remember him telling stories about coming home from training, and I don't know why he—I'm not sure when he went into the service,

how long it took to be drafted or why. I don't recall why he was in training as long as he was.

But when he did go overseas, he went to the Pacific. And I remember that he went to the Philippines, and he arrived when things were pretty much over militarily and that the Philippines had been retaken from the Japanese. I remember him saying he got there in time to see Japanese soldiers who had hung themselves rather than be captured. And he brought back from the war a sort of large, one-volume history, and I'm not sure if he acquired this or if it was given to soldiers when they left, but I remember going through that as a young kid, and that was one of my first—that and his stories were one of my first experiences with veterans.

At that point in time, virtually everyone's father had served in one capacity or another in the military, at least all of the ones that I was aware of. And they all had that in their background, and it was obvious, as a kid listening to them talk, that this was one of the most significant events in their lives. Some of them had much more difficult experiences than others. I don't think my father had a very tough time.

My father-in-law, who's also passed away now, served in the [Allied invasion of] Sicily and Italian Campaign, and I never asked him about it, but I'm told he would never talk about it.

BURACK: Interesting.

OSCADAL: Actually, coincidentally, I've just finished [Lawrence R.] "Rick" Atkinson [IV's] book on the Sicily and Italian Campaign, and so I know have an idea of just how difficult and awful that campaign was, so it's understandable that he wouldn't want to talk about it.

BURACK: Yeah. I can imagine. So as a kid listening to your dad talk about these war stories, did you ever feel like you wanted an experience like that as well, because it was so significant for him and for the other fathers in the neighborhood?

OSCADAL: What I took away from those things was their sense of duty and the camaraderie, the shared experience and, to some extent, the shared suffering. They all lost friends. And, yes, that to me was—that was somewhat inspiring, and I looked for that in my own life. And I know—since I've been a kid, I

read a fair amount. I probably went to the library as a kid, even as a young kid, seven or eight years old, once a week to get books. I've always read history.

I can recall reading young people's or adolescents' histories of this and that, and a lot of it had to do with—well, a lot of it was American history, and a lot of American history is war, and so you couldn't avoid that. And I was somewhat attracted to it. And, again, it was the sense of duty and the camaraderie that really impressed me.

BURACK: So in school, in elementary school and middle school—you said you went to Catholic school?

OSCADAL: Mm-hm.

BURACK: Did this love of reading carry through, and love of history, and how was that tied in with your Catholic education? How was it taught, and just kind of what was your school experience like?

OSCADAL: Uh,—

BURACK: Broad question.

OSCADAL: Well, in parochial school at that time, it was basic courses. I mean, you took history and literature, basic sciences. The arts were sort of a luxury in terms of Catholic schools. There was a little bit on it, but not enough, and not in terms of both things like painting and/or music. And, of course, they always taught religion, so you had a pretty basic education.

One of the things that they dwelt on, and everyone remembers this, is the discipline. And it was both discipline in terms of right and wrong but also discipline in terms of being a good student, their idea of being a good student. And so you learned good work habits, and I suspect most students went along, and we all got positive things out of that. And the students who didn't, they sort of rebelled, and they may or may not have gone on to school. Well, everyone went to high school, of course.

But the main thing that I think most of us remember from Catholic schools is the discipline that they required. Everyone got homework every day. You were expected to get it done. The clergy had a very high status in these

neighborhoods, and your parents would always back them up, right? You weren't right; they were right. And that carried over—you know, and so they had, as teachers—well, it was always a mix of religious and lay teachers in these schools, but you were expected to toe the line and do as you were told and do the work, and you were there to learn.

And in our neighborhood—and I think this was—in terms of the '50s and the 1960s, all of these blue-collar, working-class people wanted their children to go to college. That was seen as a way out and up. Most of them did not. Some of them lost promotions or they hit a ceiling because they didn't have a college degree, and so whether they went or they didn't go, they wanted their children to go. And so education was very important. As in so many other places and with so many other groups of people, it was seen as a way to improve your lot.

BURACK: Would you consider yourself a good student, growing up and were always within the discipline?

OSCADAL: I studied—I was a mediocre student. I think I'm a better student now. I can't remember—you know, in parent-teacher conferences, I was sometimes described as being a daydreamer, so—I had decent grades, but the atmosphere was not totally—you know, academics weren't the most important thing. Certainly parents encouraged that, the teachers encouraged that, and kids sort of rebelled against it. But everyone was bright enough or above average enough to do well enough, certainly to get in to go to college and to do go reasonable colleges.

BURACK: So if academics weren't the most important thing, what would you say the most important was, the religion, the aspect of it, or that was included within academics?

OSCADAL: Well, for me, academics were pretty important; I just wasn't that great a student. Athletics were very important in our neighborhood. Everyone played sports.

BURACK: Did you play a sport?

OSCADAL: Everyone played baseball and basketball. Well, mostly it was rec league things. Like, during the summer the police in Buffalo and the Police Athletic League [of Buffalo]—and so there were baseball games all summer long. I didn't mention,

but our residential street—the Catholic church happened to be right across the street, and so there was a gymnasium in the school building that we had access to, if parents would supervise. There was a parking lot that had a full basketball court, and so people were playing basketball every night after dinner. We played softball, every night after dinner. So that was a big deal. Started to be an athlete.

BURACK: Yeah. Did that carry over when you went to high school? Did you play for any—

OSCADAL: I didn't play on organized teams. I still just played pickup things, but, yes, athletics were very important in my high school, at least as important as academics. I went to a high school that was run by Franciscans, and they were great guys, also disciplinarians, but they weren't the greatest teachers. It was pretty well understood that—and it's still fairly well understood that if you want to be taught by the best in terms of Catholic education, you are taught by Jesuits or Dominicans.

BURACK: That's what you go for.

OSCADAL: That's the top.

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: And there was a Jesuit high school in Buffalo. There were neighborhood high schools. Buffalo was a very Catholic city, and so there were any number of Catholic grammar schools and then high schools, and there were some that were almost like neighborhood schools. The high school I went to was a mile from my home, so most people I think went to schools close by. But there were schools like—Canisius High School was the Jesuit school, and that was considered the top.

BURACK: So you would have started high school in 1963?

OSCADAL: Mm-hm.

BURACK: Is that correct? So was living in Buffalo, were you aware of anything that was beginning to happen in the world in terms of America's involvement, beginning involvements or—

OSCADAL: Yes. Yes. Of course, John [F.] Kennedy was elected president. It was a big deal in places like South Buffalo, South Boston. He was Irish-Catholic. He was a Democrat. And so his presidency was followed very closely, certainly by everyone's parents, and all of that sort of trickled down. Kennedy was not the first to involve the United States. I mean, we became involved in Vietnam—

BURACK: Earlier.

OSCADAL: —earlier on.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: And certainly [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower sent some advisers. Kennedy picked it up. And I was aware or became aware in 1963, '64—more aware of Vietnam. I started following it. I can remember discussing the 1964 presidential election. Kennedy had been assassinated. [Lyndon B.] Johnson is now the president. He's running part of Kennedy's record. He creates the Great Society. He has to address the idea of Vietnam and our presence there. So I can remember his discussions—or not his discussions but the differences between he and [Senator] Barry [M.] Goldwater, for example, as to how they would approach Vietnam.

And there were events—more events were being reported in the paper. We had two newspapers in Buffalo. *The Buffalo News* was the better paper. It was considered a Republican paper. But it was one of the better regional papers in the country at the time. And they had many reporters. They had a full Washington bureau. I don't know if they had people overseas. But between the two papers, they did a good job of reporting. Kids at that age were probably reading the sports page more than anything else.

But it was hard to ignore, at last for some of us, what was going on there, and I know that I was reading about it. I was interested in it. It was another military endeavor that the U.S. was beginning to be involved in, and one didn't know at that point which way it was going to go, how deep the involvement would become.

But with the presidential campaign of Johnson and the discussion of that, and then Johnson's activities afterwards

or the path he took—there's the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the more or less open-ended resolution that followed that. So I became more and more interested in it, even as a 13- and 14-year-old.

BURACK: Just to back up quickly, before we continue onwards.

OSCADAL: Yeah.

BURACK: So when JFK was elected, was your parents—do you remember how they—they were in support of him or—because of his Irish-Catholic background?

OSCADAL: Everyone was very excited. Well, everyone—the working-class people in Buffalo, the blue-collar people in Buffalo were, I would guess—my impression is they were overwhelmingly Democratic. Even as a young kid, when Eisenhower was running against [Gov. Adlai E.] Stevenson [II], it was—we knew the difference between Republican and Democrat. Virtually everyone—

BURACK: Everyone was Democrat.

OSCADAL: Everyone we knew was a Democrat. I found out later that there were people who weren't, but it was quite the dominant party. So, yeah, everyone was excited. You can remember—people hung photos of Kennedy on their wall. I don't think we had on, but you'd go into homes and—

BURACK: There he was.

OSCADAL: —there he was. So when he was assassinated, it was devastating. I mean, it was devastating to the whole country.

BURACK: Do you remember kind of your reaction to it or where you were when you heard the news?

OSCADAL: Uh,—

BURACK: It's one of those events where, you know—

OSCADAL: I was home sick from school that day, and so I heard it on TV, and I ran to tell my mom, who was upstairs in the house, and so then everyone was glued to television for the next—for that weekend. I think that occurred on Friday. So, yes,

that was devastating for a number of reasons in this particular community.

BURACK: Yeah. Did people have the same type of enthusiasm towards Johnson?

OSCADAL: No, not the personal connection.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: I mean, Kennedy was charismatic, and Johnson was more of a politician—

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: —in the traditional mode.

BURACK: So the first—so when you enter high school in ’63—the ’64 election, you talked about being very aware of—did you start having, like, political—when did your, like, political opinions begin to really solidify and form? Was it in high school or earlier?

OSCADAL: My opinions about Vietnam solidified in high school, and I can remember deciding, when I was 15—so then I’m either a sophomore or a junior, and I’d read enough about the war that I had decided that I wasn’t going to serve in this war, and I had a feeling that this war was going to be there for me, even though I was 15 and the draft would come at 18.

BURACK: Why did you have such a feeling?

OSCADAL: Just from what I was seeing, reading the papers, the idea of this being a war against communism. This was the huge bugaboo at the time. It struck me that it was going to be there for us, that we just—with Johnson—after the election in ’64, it just seemed to be creeping incrementally toward a deeper and deeper involvement, so I just had a feeling, and I decided at that point that I wasn’t going to serve.

And that was sort of a big deal for me because I had this personal background of admiring these things about the military: the sense of duty and camaraderie that I mentioned before, the shared sacrifice. And those are attributes and qualities that were imbued in us through our families and

through school, and I don't know if that was because it came out of parochial school or just schools at that time.

But the church, too. I mean, we all went to church on a regular basis. We had religion every day in school. And you were hearing these things over and over again, and the Catholic church years and years ago, in the 19th century, early 20th century, when it was coming out in support of unions, folks would say things like, "An honest day's pay for an honest day's work." And there's a sense of duty and honesty built into those statements and those feelings.

And so if you were attuned to that, you were imbued with it. And so when I decided for myself that I couldn't participate in this war—and at that point, it would have been participating in this war. I couldn't say that I was morally opposed to war at that point. I don't know if I was that mature or if I was that ready. But from what I was reading about this war, I already knew it was a mistake. There were enough articles in the paper, and if you went looking for critiques of the government policy, you could find them.

One of the things that I did was to subscribe to *TIME* magazine. We did not subscribe to news magazines in our house. We had—

BURACK: Why not?

OSCADAL: My parents weren't great readers. We had things like *LIFE* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, their mix of easy text and pictures, but we didn't have things like *TIME* or *Newsweek*. Friends of mine down the street did, so I saw some of theirs. And I thought, *Well, I want to know what's going on,* and so I subscribed for myself. And there's an irony in that because later on I found out that the reporting in *TIME* in particular was slanted to *support* the war—

BURACK: interesting.

OSCADAL: —because Henry [R.] Luce, the publisher, was having reports coming out of Vietnam revised so that they could be more positive about our presence there.

BURACK: But you read it as an antiwar—

OSCADAL: No, I just read it for information.

BURACK: Just to, to get some information.

OSCADAL: But there were other things to read.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: I mean, as I said, I was used to going to the library on a regular basis, so either the local library in our neighborhood or the library downtown, which was the main library. So I was reading enough. And I began to look for things. And you could. I can remember a couple of the books I was reading that were published at about that time, so, say, ’65, ’66, ’67.

David Halberstam published a book on *The Making of a Quagmire[: America and Vietnam During the Kennedy Era]*. And Halberstam was a *New York Times* reporter who—Kennedy asked his bosses to remove him because he was writing too critically about the U.S. presence in Vietnam. So it wasn’t that I was reading *The New York Times*, but just an example of where things like that could come from. So I know I read his book.

I read a book by a reporter, Marguerite Higgins [Hall]. I think it was entitled *Our Vietnam Nightmare[: The story of U.S. involvement in the Vietnamese tragedy, with thoughts on a future policy]*. She wrote—what I remember about that now—she wrote about the [Ngô Đình] Diệm coup and his assassination. I think she was a supporter of his. But she was a critic of our presence there.

Bernard [F.] Fall was a famous reporter. I think he grew up in France. He wrote a number of books, and by then, by the mid to late ’60s he would have had a few books out. He wrote on the French defeat at Điện Biên Phủ. He wrote about the U.S. presence there. His books would have been published, as I said, in the mid to late ’60s.

So even though I was relatively young, I was reading things like this, and obviously, the way I’m describing this, I was no different than many people, then or now, who look for things to support the views they hold.

BURACK: What I’m curious about is where did you begin to kind of develop these notions? Was it in classrooms, talking to your

brothers? Were your parents opposed to it? Kind of where did it come, your awareness of what was going on?

OSCADAL: I think it came from my reading,—

BURACK: From your reading.

OSCADAL: —because I don't know that a lot of other people were talking—as I said, I remember talking with friends in high school about the election in '64,—

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: —and that had to do with—some of that had to do with Vietnam. I can remember talking to a guy who was a year or two older than me in high school, and he was a Barry Goldwater supporter, and we would argue about this, and he would say, "It doesn't matter who's president. They're going in." Goldwater was as in favor of military action then as, say, some of the Republican presidential candidates are now for going back into Iraq.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: Anyway, we would have these arguments and discussions. So—

BURACK: So it really started around that '64 election for you, when you remember talking about it.

OSCADAL: Oh, sure, yes.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: And it seems early, but I don't think that meant that I was precocious in any way. I think these things were beginning to be out there. If you exposed yourself or allowed yourself to be exposed to newspapers and magazines, this stuff was being written about, and it was current events at that time. Now it's history.

BURACK: And as someone who was an avid reader, I'm sure you were pretty exposed, in general.

OSCADAL: Yeah. But, again, even today, you have to put yourself in a position to find this material. But, I mean, I've been working

in a library or academic libraries for 40 years. One of the great things about that is having access to all of these things.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: It's hard to stay informed. It's hard to be informed. So you have to go looking for published material.

BURACK: So as you started, around 14, 15 to kind of think, *No, this is not for me* or *I don't want to participate*, did you talk to your family about this, or did they agree with you? As a vet, what did your dad think?

OSCADAL: We wouldn't—I don't remember talking specifically about whether or not I would go in the service.

BURACK: More just general feelings.

OSCADAL: We did talk about the war,—

BURACK: Yeah.

BURACK: —certainly. And initially, my mother wouldn't voice an opinion one way or the other, but my father trusted the government initially. I mean, he'd been in the service. You know, he thought he knew what it was about. But then, as—I mean, this war went on and on, as our current wars do, he saw it I think as a mistake. He saw it as a waste of young people's lives. I don't know what *he* would have done had he been a young man at that point. And eventually, when I determined that I was a conscientious objector and that I would go for that status, I don't know if he agreed with me. I don't know if he fully understood my reasons for that. But I think at that point he was opposed to the war in the sense that he didn't want his sons—at that point it would have been primarily males—his son—and he only had sons—or anyone else's son at that point to be wasted in this conflict,—

BURACK: Right.

OSCADAL: —because at that point it seemed like a waste. This would have been a few years later.

BURACK: Yeah. So, but while you were still in high school, still Catholic education, was it ever talked about in classrooms, or it wasn't part of discourse from teachers?

OSCADAL: In high school, I don't really remember if we talked about this in high school. In college, it would have come up. The idea of the just war theory—I also went to a Catholic college in Buffalo, Canisius Collage, and everyone had to take four or five courses in theology, three or four courses in philosophy, and the philosophy was basically Catholic philosophy.

And so we certainly would have discussed the idea, the just war theory that comes out of the Catholic tradition, and there's both—there's also the idea of a tradition of nonviolence in the Catholic faith. And to study the early history of the church, the first 300 years are basically pacifistic until Constantine [the Great] discovers Catholicism or the Catholic church.

So, yeah, there would have been some exposure to that.

BURACK: So can you just expand on what the just war theory is? I'm not too familiar.

OSCADAL: Well, there are some wars that are worth fighting or you can justify them from a moral standpoint, and there are other wars, wars of aggression, that are unjustifiable. And there's also—part of that—I haven't read about it or studied up on that in a while, but part of that just wart theory is the idea of proportionality, that you can defend yourself—just war—basically, you should be defending yourself rather than being the aggressor. And so the idea of defense is one piece of it.

Also an idea of proportionality. Slaughtering innocents and civilians. Killing soldiers is one thing; slaughtering innocents and civilians goes against the just war theory. And there's a very famous book by Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars[:A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations]*, which— well, hadn't been written at that time; I think it was written in the late '70s or early '80s. But that's a classic work.

But those are the two things that I recall about the theory, is you fight defense wars. They may be justified if you're attacked. And then the proportionality of your response. And that would have come up at the end of the Second World War. Is it just—well, of course, they didn't quite know what

they were doing when they dropped the atomic bomb or what the lethal force of it would be, but in hindsight that would be a just war and just war discussion.

BURACK: Question, yeah. So going from high school to college—was that transition kind of more—did it make you more aware of, like, theories and discussions like this or it was kind of it felt like the same type of thing?

OSCADAL: Well, it was a gradual—

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: It was an evolution, I think.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: Your thought evolves and matures somewhat the more you read, the more you talk with people.

BURACK: So you started college—sorry to interrupt you—in 1967?

OSCADAL: Yes, the fall of 1967.

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: And my first year of school, I was at Marquette University, another Jesuit school. And one of the interesting things about *that* year was I discovered how many people were in college to avoid the draft. I had no idea. I went to college because my parents—as I said earlier, you know, "You are going to go to college."

BURACK: That was assumed.

OSCADAL: That was the idea. And I had already decided that I was not going in the service, so I didn't really think about that as a reason. I wasn't avoiding the draft; I was just simply going to refuse. I didn't know that the conscientious objection existed. I didn't learn about that until I was 19—sometime in '69. So for those few years, I just assumed that I would refuse induction and that I would be convicted.

And I decided early on—and I'm sort of digressing here, or backing off—but I decided that I would not leave the country, that I would serve the time. One way or another, you're

being—you're deciding how you will witness to this event—right?—this decision that you've made. And my decision was (a) not to serve in the military and (b) to accept the consequences because this is my country. It's not that I don't appreciate the good as well as the bad here. I am a citizen, and if I'm going to refuse that obligation, then I will witness it by going to jail and perhaps have an effect on someone by doing that.

But when I was at Marquette, I realized for the first time how many people were in school, why many people went to school: to avoid the draft. A lot of these guys would not have been there. Being at a Catholic college at that time, in 1967, dormitories hadn't been integrated by gender, and I don't know how many are at Catholic schools even now, today.

And I also encountered ROTC [pronouncing it R-O-T-C; Reserve Officers' Training Corps] for the first time at Marquette. It was not mandatory, but there were several guys on my wing of the dorm—I lived in an enormous dorm. There were 800 students in this dormitory. It was like a Holiday Inn. It was ten stories with about 800 students in it. They made the mistake of putting—there were 40 students on a wing. They made the mistake—I think it was a mistake of putting 40 first-year students together on this wing.

BURACK: [Chuckles.]

OSCADAL: We had absolutely no clue. But anyway—and amongst this group there were a number of ROTC [pronouncing it ROT-cee] students, and so we had discussions about our positions on these things. So that was interesting.

Had I stayed in Buffalo and gone to Canisius, for example—I transferred after a year at Marquette and did go back to Buffalo and ended up at Canisius. At Canisius College, all first-year male students were required to take ROTC. So had I gone to school there my first year, I would have had to make a decision. And I'm not sure if I knew enough at that point to have made that decision, so—that was—little things. I'd been pretty fortunate throughout life, and that was—it wasn't a decision, it was just coincidence that I didn't have to address that at that point.

But when I transferred back and I went to Canisius, I remember meeting with the dean of students, being

interviewed, and he asked me if I wanted to join ROTC as a second-year student, and I just sort of laughed and said no. We didn't discuss it, but I was able to turn it down.

BURACK: Turn it down, yeah.

OSCADAL: He didn't press it.

BURACK: So coming into Marquette, you were ready to go to jail for not being in the—

OSCADAL: Yes.

BURACK: —for not serving.

OSCADAL: Yes.

BURACK: So how did that kind of impact your relations with the ROTC members? Did you, like, talk about their motivations or if they wanted to go into war?

OSCADAL: Yes, we had those discussions. Again, I can't recall if I would have discussed my moral reasoning with them. There were enough points, political points to argue about—you know, the intelligence of being there, whether or not we were doing any good or not, whether we were winning or losing. I honestly don't recall if I had discussions with those guys. And it wasn't that we weren't friendly to one another. A couple of them *were* friends of mine. We just differed.

And that was true, too, in the neighborhood in South Buffalo. A few of my friends also applied for CO [conscientious objector] status, but most of them did not. One thing that I realized is that society makes it very easy to go along, and when you go against the grain, you have to work hard at learning about your position and work even harder to be able to explain it both to yourself and to your friends. And so I know we had those discussions in the neighborhood. And, you know, people agreed or disagreed.

We were still friends. A number of people that I grew up with went to Vietnam. Some of them were very damaged by it, and some of them weren't. We're still friends. I see a couple of them every year, on a regular basis. We understand each

other. We know each other well enough, and we understand why we made different decisions.

It's interesting to me that people growing up in very similar circumstances, as we did, made these different decisions. Sometimes I wonder if it *was* a moral decision for them. I think it wasn't. For some of us, it became a moral decision whether or not to go to Vietnam or whether or not to participate in the military, and for other people, they just didn't think about it in that sense. And, as I started to say earlier, society makes it easy just to go along. To against that grain takes a lot more thought, I think.

BURACK: So do you think your objections were based primarily on moral reasons rather than political?

OSCADAL: Eventually. As I said, I think when I was 15 and I said to myself initially that *this is not—this is crazy*, that was probably a more political decision and opinions. But my reasoning evolved. I read a lot more. I mentioned—well, part of the just war discussion we had earlier—one of the book—Ronald [H.] Bainton is a historian who wrote a book on *Christian Attitudes Towards War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation]*. That had a great influence on me. Eventually I read [Mahatma] Gandhi's autobiography. There's a woman who wrote a book based on the Gandhian theory of nonviolence. Joan [V.] Bondurant wrote a book entitled *The Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict]*, and that was sort of a religious, philosophical extrapolation or an explanation of Gandhi's theories. So the older I got, the more I read, and the more it became a moral position, not just political.

I mentioned a little while ago—until I was a junior in college, I did not know about—and I wonder—I still wonder today: How could I not have known that there was this exemption? But I didn't. And one day, a friend of mine—we met in the student union at Canisius, and he more or less informed me of this. He said he was going over to the [Military and] Draft Counseling Center [of Buffalo], and he was thinking of applying for CO status. And that was an epiphany.

So we talked about that, and—we can move on to that discussion if you want, or I don't know if you have any other—

BURACK: Just one more question—

OSCADAL: —questions.

BURACK: —before we talk about kind of how you became a CO—

OSCADAL: Mm-hm.

BURACK: —and what that process was like. Were your moral—as you had read more and kind of got older and advanced into your college years at Canisius and whatnot—do you think it was based in what you were reading, and was what you were reading religiously based? I'm just kind of wondering the influence of the Catholicism on it.

OSCADAL: Some of it was religiously based, but for me, coming from my background in the Catholic church, there's enough of this tradition in the church that you could go back to it. At the same time—'63, '65, '67 and beyond—there is a Catholic antiwar movement, and the Berrigan brothers [David J. and Philip F. Berrigan] are Catholic priests. One's a Jesuit; one is another order. They were conducting nonviolent protests against the war, so there is this Catholic tradition. The Catholic church isn't officially a peace church. There are many, many more Catholics who joined the service and are not either COs or pacifists than are, but there is a tradition in the church, and it was easy enough to find those examples at that time. The Berrigans were famous, or infamous, depending on your perspective.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: They were destroying draft records. They were breaking into draft offices, Selective Service offices, and destroying records, pouring blood on things like that. That was in the paper. You could, if you chose, get beyond, you know, the news reports to read their reasoning behind this and where they were coming from. And even within the church, itself, there's enough in the Gospels, there's enough in the life of Jesus—this is what—I also went back to that. As I said, I'm still a religious person, and I realized—it's a combination of religion and history in my life. Both are important to me, and at some point fairly early on—I was always interested in history in high school; it was my major in college—at some point you realize that religion touches everything. You can't

study anything without some religious aspect, even if it's science, economics, anything.

BURACK: For sure.

OSCADAL: So my position was, I think, based on both my Catholic background and faith and the other things I was reading. There's an Eastern part of this.

BURACK: With the Gandhi.

OSCADAL: Yes, and even Buddhism. But some of that came later. But certainly in college—I mentioned no matter what you majored in in a Catholic college at that point, they had—most of them had requirements. I mentioned theology and the philosophy. If you took one extra course, you had a minor in theology; you had a minor in philosophy. And they—you know, they had a broad spectrum of courses. This is where Catholic education is, in addition to history and English and business and other things. So, no, I think it was based both in my Catholic faith and the other, more general things I was reading about nonviolence.

BURACK: Could we take a quick break before we get into that, just I can use the restroom? I don't know if you want a break.

OSCADAL: Sure.

BURACK: Okay.

[Recording interruption.]

BURACK: So we're back after a brief break. It's still August 20th, 2015, and we're still in Rauner Library. So we just left off talking about your thoughts on your moral and political oppositions to the war and whatnot, so can we get, now, into kind of what led you down the path of conscientious objection and what that process was like? You mentioned briefly that you didn't know about it until you were a junior.

OSCADAL: Yes. So I discovered that in fact you could ask for an exemption. At that point, of course, I was 2-S, which was the [Selective Service System classification for] student deferment. And there were any number of—you know,

there's a whole range of deferments for various things. And going to school, as I said earlier, was—you know, that was just understood. You grew up, you were going to college. That was fine with me because I liked school. I was an ordinary student, but I liked school, and it put off my day of reckoning, as far as I was concerned.

So then, around early spring, I think, in 1969, because I can remember the weather was pretty nice, so it must have been spring, I met this friend of mine, and he told me about this classification. There happened to be, fortunately, a military and draft—what's called the Military and Draft Counseling Center in Buffalo, and it was run by—it was housed at the Quaker Meeting House, and there was a guy there—I believe he was a Quaker; they weren't all Quakers—Larry Scott ran the counseling center, and he was said to be an excellent source of information.

And so I learned that on Saturday mornings they did an introductory thing for people who wanted to apply for conscientious objection status, and so you showed up on a Saturday morning at the Quaker Meeting House, and he spoke to you, to the group for a few hours, going—

BURACK: What he talk about?

OSCADAL: He talked about what conscientious objection meant, how it's defined by the statute, and this is all based on the statute having to do with Selective Service. Some of the things that I remember from that—I remember when I left, I was frightened about some of the things that I'd heard, because this was a serious responsibility you were taking on. It was not only—it not only had to do with you, but it had to do with people who came after you because if you were thinking about doing this and applying for this exemption, what Larry Scott and others wanted to be sure [of] is that you are sincere, that you're not doing this to avoid the draft, that you're doing this because you feel you must; for moral reasons, you can't accept this obligation, because if you were to go through this process and be denied and then turn around and join the military, then your draft board has every reason to think that there are going to be other people who are faking it as well.

And so he made the argument that, you know, you must approach this in a responsible way. You have to be honest

about this. It's a very serious undertaking that you're doing. You have to think about the consequences. If you are denied, what are you going to do next? And there are options, right? You can leave the country. There was an appeal, of course. You could always appeal. And anyway, he went into all this, and he tried to be very honest. He tried to let you know the score. It was a very detailed presentation as to the Selective Service law, what it meant to be 1-O, which is the classification you would apply for if you felt you could not serve in the military, even as a noncombatant; or 1-A-O, which you would agree to go in the military as a noncombatant and most likely end up as a medic.

So to explain that, explain the law, explain the process that you would go through, give an outline of that, and then to leave you thinking about where you stand in all of this. You know, what are your arguments? They probably—I don't recall everything, but he probably gave us a copy of the form, and I have a copy here,—

BURACK: Oh.

OSCADAL: —if I still have the papers that I compiled in doing all this. I can't find them. But I did find on the Web a copy of the form, and it's Selective Service Form 150, and it asks you whether or not you want to apply for 1-O or 1-A-O status. And then it asks for questions. And basically, they want you to describe the nature of your belief and is it—they don't use the language of "supreme being"; they had to remove that, but—do you want me to read this, briefly?

BURACK: Yeah, sure.

OSCADAL: So the second section, after you decide which exemption you're going to ask for, is the religious training and belief, and "Describe the nature of your belief which is the basis of your claim and state why you consider it to be based on religious training and belief." And I think the things we've discussed earlier are probably the things that I wrote there. My answers, I think, were relatively brief. So mine, as I said earlier, was based on a religious upbringing and the moral position that I ultimately came to, and that's also based on my religion.

The second question they asked was "Explain how, when and from whom or from what source you received this [sic;

the] religious training and acquired the religious belief which is the basis of your claim." So, as I recall, I said, "My church and the readings that I had done, conversations with people."

And the third question is "To what extent does your religious training and belief restrict you from ministering to the sick and injured, either civilian or military, or from serving in the Armed Forces as a noncombatant without weapons?" And as I recall, the argument there is—if you chose 1-O, the argument there is, and was that anyone who joins the military is there to promote and to advance the military mission, and the mission is, on one level, the defense of your country, but in order to do that, you have to engage in killing, and you're not willing to do that, and so you're not willing to serve in the military in any capacity. And so they wanted you to make that argument.

And the final question is "Have you ever given expression publicly or privately, written or oral, to the views herein expressed as the basis for your claim?" And to "Give examples."

So after the first session at the counseling center, they send you away to think about things, and they give you materials to read, and then invite you to come back if you're going to go through with the procedure. And from that point on, you make appointments with a counselor, and they talk to you about your beliefs as, to some extent, the way we're talking now. They question you, and they help you formulate your ideas and articulate the reasoning behind your position.

And when you think you're ready, you request the form from Selective Service, and as I recall, once you make the request for the claim, you have 30 days to submit your form, so it was important that you have your thoughts together and be able to articulate what you want to say. And then you submit—this went on over a few months, at least. I think I did this through the fall of '69. I went before the draft board in January or February of 1970.

And my recollection about the meeting with the draft board: You could bring a witness, and so I brought my cousin, the priest. [Both chuckle.] And we went to the Selective Service offices, and there were three or five members of the board there.

And in counseling, before you got to that point, one of the things that I recall now is there were—you know, there were clearly things you should do and should not do. One of the things you should not do is get into a contest of exchanging Bible quotes, for example, because, as we all know, you can use the Bible—

BURACK: In so many ways.

OSCADAL: —to support many positions, and very often, we were told, in draft boards it would not be uncommon to find a minister, for example.

BURACK: Interesting.

OSCADAL: And they're going to know the Bible a lot better than you are, so certainly, you know, you're going to use—if yours is a religious claim, you're going to use your religion, and you may use—you're going to make references to Jesus, to whatever. But you don't want to get into a Bible quoting contest.

That's practical as well as—information, because they had a lot of experience. As it turned out, this was one of the most important draft counseling centers on the East Coast. I found this out later, because I went back to be a counselor. But even being there and going through the process, you quickly learned that these people really knew their stuff. They were taking calls and sharing information with places in Boston, New York and Chicago and Philadelphia and Miami and Atlanta. So these people were very good, and they had a lot of experience at that point.

One of the things you did after your meeting with the draft board was to go back and be debriefed so they could hear what questions were asked of you (or asked of me). And so they built up a knowledge base, and so they could give you a pretty good idea of what was going to occur in your meeting. Of course, you were still nervous, but you had a pretty good idea of where things were going.

And in hindsight, my background and growing up in church, still being in a church, attending Catholic schools, basing this claim on my Catholic faith, showing up [chuckles] with a priest [laughs]—

BURACK: [Chuckles.]

OSCADAL: —it all went pretty well. I don't remember—the questions they asked I think were, for the most part, to expand on my answers. One of the questions that was quite commonly asked and was asked of me was, "What would you have done in World War II?" The unspoken text is that World War II was the good war. The evil was obvious. Today the question might be asked, "What would you do about ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham]?"

And I recall my answer to that was to recognize it as a hypothetical question but to say that "if I was raised the same way then as I was today, I would probably have come to the same conclusion." And so you try to make that point as clearly as possible. But that was a common question.

And the only thing they asked of my—they didn't ask anything specific of my cousin. He's several years older than me. They asked if he had any comment to make, and he just said something general about he knew me to be a sincere and an honest person, so he didn't say much.

And that was it. I think the interview lasted 25 or 30 minutes. They were polite. They were not adversarial. And then, you know, you wait for the decision. And fortunately it went my way. And afterwards, as I said, I would have gone back to the counseling center to be debriefed and to let them know how it went.

And for Selective Service at that time—I already had a deferment; I was a student, so now I had the 1-O deferment as well, but that wouldn't kick in until my student deferment disappeared, and that wouldn't disappear until I left school. So everything is in abeyance until your situation changes.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: So that was, as I said, January or February of '70. Prior to that, in December of '69, the first draft lottery was held.

BURACK: So it's right as you were applying for that CO?

OSCADAL: Yes. It would have occurred—yes, when I was going through the process—

BURACK: The counseling.

OSCADAL: —of being counseled before I had applied, probably. So everyone is—you know, everyone is waiting to see what their lottery number would be. And I knew I wasn't going, so it didn't make much difference to me. I wonder how many of us still remember our numbers. I do. Mine was 162, and so then, at that point—that was interesting. That was an interesting time because at that point, a lot of people knew they were done. If you had a number, they were guessing, higher than 200 or 225, perhaps, you were probably safe.

BURACK: Yours wasn't.

OSCADAL: Well, mine was 162. No one knew how far they were going to go. In fact, I think they went to 195. My number was called, but I still had—you know, I was still in school for another full year, a year and a half. And so that was good for some people, and for some people it was—they knew they were going to be drafted at some point. And for people who were graduating that spring, it was a very serious thing.

So I received the 1-O classification, and things went from there. At one point, I was called for a pre-induction physical, and I can't remember why. At some point, I received a 1-A [Selective Service System] classification [available for unrestricted military service].

BURACK: Could it switch like that?

OSCADAL: If they made a mistake, and I think they did. So now I had three—

BURACK: Different ones.

OSCADAL: Yeah, three classifications and two deferments. But that was a mistake, so that was corrected.

When I finished school—I'm not quite sure—I can't remember—and I asked a friend, and he couldn't remember, either, a guy who was called with me—we had to go to our pre-induction physicals. And when I got that notice, I went back to the counseling center because once I was eligible for the draft, I wouldn't be called for the draft, but I would be

called for alternate service. And they had to give you a physical even to do your alternate service, so that was it.

So I went back to the counseling center to let them know, because they could help you find a position. And so then they know you're going—at the counseling center, they know you're going for a physical, and they want to talk to you about the physical, and they start going—they ask you from head to toe if there's anything physically wrong with you.

BURACK: At the physical or the counseling center?

OSCADAL: No, at the counseling center.

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: And so I went through that, and I have flat feet. So they said, "Okay, we're going to send you to a doctor, and he may or may not write you a letter." And so they sent me to this guy who—he was a young doctor.

BURACK: Do you remember his name?

OSCADAL: No, no. I remember going for the physical with this guy. And so he examined me, and he wrote me a letter for the draft board saying that I should get out of service—

BURACK: Alternate service as well?

OSCADAL: —because I—or I should fail the physical because of flat feet. And I took that letter to the physical, and you go through the whole thing, and there are some guys—so it's like a lock- —you're in a locker room. You're down to your T-shirt and shorts, and you walk through the door, and the door is a scale. So some guys don't even—they literally get out of the locker room and they failed because they're overweight. And I remember that because the sergeant who was yelling at us and pushing us along was furious when anyone would be overweight. And he would start swearing at them and everything. And these guys would immediately go to the back of the room. They were done. They had already failed.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: So then you go through the physical. You go station to station to station, and at the very end, if you have a doctor's letter or some other letter that you want them to see, you go up to the table and there's a group of doctors, and you hand them the letter, and they read it. The guy that I sat before was relatively young, and he looked at the letter—

What I was also told was that they generally throw these doctors' letters away. They absolutely—they ignore them. They know who he is, they know what he's doing, and they ignore them.

So I had this letter, and I went, and I handed it to the doctor, and he looked at it, and he looked at me, and he looked at the letter, and he looked at me, and after 15 or 30 seconds of this, he said, "Well, I'm sorry, son, but I'm going to have to fail you." And the reason—obviously, he did me a—well, on one level, he did me a favor.

BURACK: a huge favor.

OSCADAL: And the reason he did it was because 1-O's do not count or did not count toward that draft center's, that induction center's quota for inductees, so—every induction center had a monthly quota of people they were expected to induct into the service. 1-A-O's would go to the service. They would go to the military. 1-O's did not, so—

BURACK: At this point, you already had the 1-O.

OSCADAL: Right. And he knew that. He knew what my classification was. And so he failed me, and, as I said, on one level, he did me a favor, and we can talk about alternate service and the idea behind it. On another level, it would have been better, I mean, for me growing up, maturing as a person—it would have been better for me to do my service, I think.

BURACK: Why do you say that?

OSCADAL: Well, it would have pushed me out of my neighborhood, out of my house, out of my comfort zone. It would have forced me to grow up a bit. But I was just—I said earlier so many people go with the flow, and they simply go to the military. Well, in this counseling situation, I was going with the flow.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: And in hindsight—it wasn't long after, I was not proud of avoiding alternate service. I'm still not proud of it. And I think that that was an aspect of the counseling center that was political. At one level, it was a contest for the counselors to see how often they could beat the Selective Service System. I understand that, but I don't totally agree with it. And I felt badly about that.

So I never had to do my service. [Chuckles.] I then received my fourth classification, which was 4-F [not acceptable for military service].

BURACK: Which was what?

OSCADAL: Which means you're either physically or—I can't quite remember how they phrase it—you're physically or morally unable to—

BURACK: Unable to serve.

OSCADAL: —to serve, yes. So if you're a depraved person as well as a physically disabled person, you can get a 4-F deferment.

BURACK: Wow. So you had four deferments at this point. You were still a student.

OSCADAL: Well, they're in there in hierarchical order.

BURACK: Exactly.

OSCADAL: But that's how it ended.

BURACK: So you were still in school when you did the physical?

OSCADAL: Yes. Yeah, I think I was.

BURACK: And just to back up a little, do you remember if the counseling center had told you there's anything you should say or should do, either during the hearing that you had before Selective Service or during the physical? Was there anything that they made sure that you did in terms of presenting your argument or—

OSCADAL: No, nothing other than, I think, what we talked about.

BURACK: To not quote the Bible.

OSCADAL: They knew the sorts of questions—

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: —that might be posed, and they wanted you to be aware of those and to have thought about them beforehand.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: They wanted you to be sincere in your statement. "Don't make statements that you can't back up verbally, and articulate." So, no, they weren't pushing an agenda in that regard. But, yet, they were also part of the antiwar movement, right? I mean, this was not just a—this was a center for military and draft counseling, so they were also counseling people who were *in* the military, so people who went AWOL [absent without leave], people who deserted from the service and went to Canada or to Europe.

I mentioned a moment ago that I eventually went back to train to be a draft counselor, and I did that partly because I wanted to do it a little bit differently. I wanted—

BURACK: You didn't totally agree—

OSCADAL: —it to be a little less political in some instances than they were. And in doing the training, I learned—one of the things in doing the training or in—yeah—was that I would be on the phone, taking phone calls. And we were careful to say, you know, "No last names, and don't tell me where you're calling from," because these people could be on the run from the military at that point. The phone was tapped. That was interesting.

BURACK: You knew. This was a fact

OSCADAL: Everyone knew the phone was tapped. We kept—there was a log that—if you were on phone duty, the log was there, and a call would come in. It was very crude. You could hear clicks and buzzes, and you would dutifully log in this information on the log, and this was before the breakup of the telephone company, so it was all "Ma Bell" [Bell System]. And every month, the counseling center would dutifully report this to the phone company, and every month, the

phone company would say, “There’s nothing wrong, and there’s nothing going on.” But it was obvious. It was so crude.

BURACK: So with that phone being tapped—I want to go back into how you became a counselor in a second, but with the knowledge that the phone was tapped, how did that inform kind of what you were saying? Could it get you in trouble?

OSCADAL: No. I mean, giving basic information, as long as you weren’t telling people to break the law, you weren’t encouraging them to break the—many of them had already broken the law—and many people were just calling for information. I mean, you know, there are people like when I started, I called to find out about—

BURACK: What it was.

OSCADAL: —conscientious objection counseling or draft counseling, so many people are calling for information. Other people were calling because they were in more dire straits. They had already—they had made a decision. You know, they had run from the draft. They may have been calling from Canada. They may have been calling from anywhere. Calls came in from a lot of different places. That was another—

BURACK: To your center in Buffalo.

OSCADAL: Yes. Somehow people got the number. You know, other places—I mentioned other—these were other, much more major cities. They were getting the same kind of calls. So they did a fair amount of military counseling as well. People who were in the military and who felt that—came to a determination while they were in the service that they were COs, so there were a variety of reasons why military people might call.

BURACK: So was it your—the counsel center that you went to—was it part of a network? Did they kind of communicate with each other or, as you said before, it was sort of a competition?

OSCADAL: No, the competition was between the counseling center—

BURACK: Oh, the counselors themselves.

OSCADAL: —and Selective Service.

BURACK: Oh. Interesting. Okay.

OSCADAL: That was—you know, they—

BURACK: Oh, I got confused.

OSCADAL: —they considered themselves part of the antiwar movement,—

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: —what they were doing. They were doing—they were doing good, but they were doing it for both moral and political reasons.

BURACK: Political reasons, yeah.

OSCADAL: Some of the people there were—

BURACK: Were active in the antiwar movement.

OSCADAL: Yes. Well, this was their basic activity.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: Many of them—several of them were law students at SUNY Buffalo [State University of New York at Buffalo], and they were very, very bright. They knew the law inside and out. But they'd been doing it for a few years at that point.

BURACK: Were you at all involved with antiwar—in college?

OSCADAL: Protests, but just participating in protests. I was never an organizer or anything like that. You know, I was part of the crowd. And there were—you know, certainly during college years, there were any number of major protests in 1968, '69, when there was the March on Washington, there were protests around the country that coincided with that, for example. So there were protests that occurred [in] downtown Buffalo. They occurred on individual college campuses, and you attended things like that. SUNY Buffalo was drawing a lot of speakers at that time, so you could go and hear relatively famous antiwar people, so things like that.

BURACK: What was your impression of these protests and these speakers?

OSCADAL: Uh,—

BURACK: Like, in terms of kind of do you agree with their methods, their message?

OSCADAL: Well, the protests that I attended were—they were loud and nonviolent. Police were probably present. As I remember, there was a large, large protest in downtown Buffalo at one point. That may have been—that may have coincided with the March on Washington, and so there were police everywhere, but it was nonviolent, and there's a large square in front of City Hall, and there were probably several thousand people there.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: I didn't agree with violent protests. And one of the other things that one heard about and still hears about in Vietnam was the way veterans were treated when they returned. You know, people held them guilty of something, one thing or another, and spit at them and that sort of thing. That was something that never occurred in our neighborhood. People who went to the service, went to Vietnam, people who didn't have to make a decision, people who chose the CO path—we never had a problem with one another. We knew each other as friends, first and foremost. And this was a neighborhood where you made a lot of friends for life, and these people are still my friends, as I said earlier. So I never understood blaming the service people. They were more or less victims of this, as far as I was concerned. They did what they thought was right. They were caught in a very, very difficult and sometimes savage situation, and they hoped to come out of it alive, and we hoped they did, too.

BURACK: Did you have friends that went through the CO process with you who were then denied?

OSCADAL: No.

BURACK: Everyone—

OSCADAL: I had three other friends that I recall, and everyone went through. And later on, when I was training to be a counselor,

I learned that this counseling center had a very high success rate, like 90 percent or something like that.

BURACK: Wow.

OSCADAL: So the preparation—they prepared—anyone who went through—you were prepared very well. But this is self-selecting. If there were 20 people the morning—the first morning I appeared there to hear Larry Scott speak about this, probably very few of them came back, and people may have dropped out along the way. And so by the time you went through the whole thing, you were very well informed, and you should have thought things out for yourself. Not that the draft board couldn't make, you know, oddball decisions. I mean, they could look at your form and turn you down for pretty weak reasons, if they wanted to, if they wanted to be that way about it.

The four people that I'm—well, myself—the three others that I'm aware of, we all had very similar backgrounds, so I know we all based it on religion and the church and all of that, and so—but every—every instance was different. It could go either way.

BURACK: You said before that the counseling center was based in the Quaker Meeting House?

OSCADAL: Mm-hm.

BURACK: Did you see a lot of impact of Quakerism or Quaker theology on kind of how the counselors went about—as you started training for it as well?

OSCADAL: As I mentioned earlier, I know Larry Scott was a Quaker, but I don't know if any of the others were. So the Quakers were doing—they were contributing to this by supplying the venue—

BURACK: The place, yeah.

OSCADAL: —and a place for it to operate. So that part of it coincided with the Quaker philosophy and their religion, but it wasn't—

BURACK: It wasn't, like, the dominant—

OSCADAL: No, not necessarily. I mean, nonviolence was a large portion of it, but not necessarily from the Quaker tradition.

BURACK: Mm-hm. So you got your 1-O designation in, like, January and February of 1970?

OSCADAL: I probably would have heard in—yeah, in February or March.

BURACK: And then you graduated the following year.

OSCADAL: Seventy—yes, yes, in spring of ’71.

BURACK: So you had the student designation and the 1-O took effect after graduation. When did you wind up—think about becoming a draft counselor? Was it while you were still in school, in undergraduate school?

OSCADAL: Let’s see, after I—when I graduated, I left town that summer. I moved to Washington, D.C., where a couple of my friends were living. And one of them was a CO doing his alternate service in D.C.

BURACK: What was alternate service? What was he doing?

OSCADAL: What was he doing?

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: He was working in a hospital.

BURACK: Okay. Was alternate service mainly a domestic—

OSCADAL: Yes. Oh, yeah, we could talk about that. Once your were—say I had passed my physical. I would receive a notice eventually calling me up, and then I had 30 days to find a job that would be acceptable to the draft board. And while you’re going through the CO process, you’re also being counseled about alternate service. And they kept a manual there of possible job openings. These were things that were probably shared, because you could tell all this stuff was Xeroxed and mailed around. These were things that were shared among counseling centers, and so they had a binder that—you know, the jobs fluc- —the number of openings that they knew about fluctuated over time. So you had a certain amount of time to find a job or the draft board would find a job for you.

So my friend, Mike, found this job in a hospital in D.C. And you were assigned to alternate service for a two-year period. Draftees went in for two years. I'm pretty sure that the statute was written so that COs doing alternate service would serve for the same amount of time as a draftee. And the concept of public service was sort of vaguely—I don't know if it was defined, but it was vaguely understood, right?

And one of the main things was you would not work in your home community. They wanted to disrupt your life. I don't think they were being vindictive. They wanted to put alternative service at an approximate level to the disruption that was going on for anyone who went in the service.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: And, of course, the disruption for anyone going in the service was much, much greater.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: But you were given an opportunity to find a position and then have it approved by the draft board. If you didn't find one, they would find one for you. What I can recall from the draft counseling center, being told about alternate service, is that they weren't really concerned about you doing—really providing service to the country; they wanted to disrupt your life. whether or not that was true or not.

So people looked for jobs in hospitals or with nonprofits of one sort or another, social service work. You know, they were usually low-paying jobs somewhere.

BURACK: Mm-hm. So many went to D.C. Your friend was completing his alternate service. And what did you do that summer?

OSCADAL: I was working—I ended up working for a publishing company. I was working in the Library of Congress to microfilm congressional hearings.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: Do you know what microfilm is?

BURACK: Yes.

OSCADAL: Good.

BURACK: [Chuckles.]

OSCADAL: Because most students don't now. So the company was Greenwood, Greenwood Press, and they were going to set up their own camera in the Library of Congress, and my job was to run around the library and gather up—literally gather up copies of congressional hearings and set them aside and make them ready to be filmed. And I was starting two or three months before the camera was supposed to show up—

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: —so that there would be a workflow. And I stayed there for about six months, and then I went back to Buffalo.

BURACK: So, like, winter, fall, winter of '71?

OSCADAL: Let's see, I was back in Buffalo by Christmas, so I was there for five or six—

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: —I was down in D.C. for five or six months. And when I went back to Buffalo, I can't even remember what I worked at. I had a job. I may have been working in a department store because I worked in a department store when I was an undergraduate. It was a part-time job. So I worked for a while, and then I applied to graduate schools, and I was accepted for fall of—

BURACK: Seventy-two.

OSCADAL: —'72, into the history program, a master's program at SUNY Buffalo.

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: And it was—after I returned to Buffalo, and I don't remember exactly when, that I went back to the counseling center and signed on to learn to be a counselor. And so I did that for a period of time, and after I trained, I was, you know, a

neophyte counselor, so I did very basic first interviews of people coming to the center. I worked at the phone bank, just gaining experience. And I did that in ’72. And then the draft ended in January, I think, of 1973, so for about a year, I was at the counseling center.

BURACK: What was it like being on the other side of the process?

OSCADAL: Well, it was the same—most of the same people were there.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: So we knew each other. And I thought it was very interesting. I don’t remember many of the people I met with. I remember a few of the cases.

One that I recall, because it was just so blatantly unfair what the draft board was doing—it was a young black guy who had the hardship deferment, so in his case the hardship was that he was married and he had a young child. During Vietnam, they phased out that deferment by virtually denying anyone who requested it, but somehow this guy had it. And as I recall, he hadn’t finished high school. He was working. He had a wife. He had a child. And he had the deferment. And out of nowhere they took it away from him.

And so he came in, and I met with him, and my job, my role was to take, you know, basic information, ask basic questions.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: I was supposed to know what questions to ask and write down the answers and, you know, a basic interview to get background information and all of that. And then, as I recall, we would go upstairs or wherever, into where the more senior counselors were, and then the three of us would have a further discussion or, at that point, the client would then talk to a more senior counselor who would go over the statement and everything and see what was what and then go from there.

So I was doing these very preliminary interviews. And another one of the sessions I remember was a young student. He may have been a first-year student at SUNY Buffalo. And he came with a friend of his, and we met, and

the three of us were talking, and then at one point he asked his friend to leave, and so we were having—we continued the interview, and he told me he was gay. And he hadn't come out to his parents. He hadn't come out to his friends. But he had to admit this to me because it was relevant—

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: —to his situation with the draft. And so—you know, I just felt so much empathy or sympathy for this kid because at that point—I mean, this is the mid '60s—

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: —gay rights is—well, [the] Stonewall [riots] occurred in New York City—right?—in 1969.

BURACK: Mm-hm. Yes, just beginning of the movement.

OSCADAL: So gays are beginning to be more proactive about their rights and everything. So I didn't know, you know, what was going to become of him in terms of the draft, but that was a very—I remember some of it, but I don't remember all of it, the meeting and everything. But that was a moving experience that, you know, this young kid would have to make this explanation. And he was going to have to make it to his draft board in order to—

BURACK: Was the explanation based on his sexuality?

OSCADAL: Yeah, yeah. So, again, people came there for a number of reasons,—

BURACK: Yeah, for a number of reasons.

OSCADAL: —you know. It wasn't just the CO exemption. So it was a very interesting experience. And then when it ended, I—

BURACK: Mm-hm. From the draft center. When the draft ended.

OSCADAL: Well, when the draft ended, my work ended because I was just still an apprentice, really. They went on with military counseling for—

BURACK: But you weren't involved in that.

OSCADAL: —a few more years. I don't know that they're there now. But military counseling wouldn't have ended, even though the draft did.

BURACK: So you were only involved in the draft side of this counseling center.

OSCADAL: Yes, yes.

BURACK: Did you ever interact with the H&M?.

OSCADAL: The military people, I would catch on the phone. But, again, you would give them—

BURACK: You weren't the one giving their intake interviews, yeah.

OSCADAL: —basic information. No, you wouldn't give them—you wouldn't be interviewing them so much as giving them information.

BURACK: Mm-hm. I guess it's a different type of thing.

OSCADAL: Absolutely. Military counseling was very—that's why—it was important that several of the senior counselors were law students or lawyers—

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: —at that point. By the time I went back, after my graduation and after the few months in D.C., one or two of them had graduated and they were now lawyers, and they were still doing this, this work.

BURACK: In addition to their practice.

OSCADAL: Yeah, the one guy I remember was in a firm. And for them—you know, if they were going to continue this, they had to work in a firm that was sympathetic to this sort of thing. There are a lot of people, you know, who would think that draft counseling was more treasonous than patriotic, so that was interesting. All of that was—

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: —yeah, sort of fascinating to be a part of and just to witness it.

BURACK: So as you start ’72, you started grad school at SUNY Buffalo?

OSCADAL: Mm-hm.

BURACK: And you were still working as a draft counselor.

OSCADAL: In the fall.

BURACK: In grad school, in the fall.

OSCADAL: Yes.

BURACK: Before the draft ended.

OSCADAL: Yes, yes.

BURACK: Had you noticed a shift in public opinion or a shift in the Buffalo residents, like perspectives on Vietnam at this point?

OSCADAL: I think nationally everything—

BURACK: Yeah, had changed, yeah.

OSCADAL: —had shifted, right. I think Lyndon Johnson has a famous quote about [journalist] Walter [J.] Cronkite [Jr.]. You know, “When we lost Walter, we lost the war.”

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: I don’t recall when that occurred.

And then when Richard [M.] Nixon became president—there were still people who always supported the war, but I think there were larger numbers of people who realized—even Nixon’s “silent majority”—many of those people realized this was, you know, a sinkhole.

Well, locally, there’s a guy—he grew up in my neighborhood. He went to the service. He received several medals. He was wounded two or three times.

BURACK: What was his name?

OSCADAL: Um,—

BURACK: It's okay if you don't remember.

OSCADAL: His name was [Stephen T.] "Steve" Banko [III].

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: And Steve—he was a few years older than me. He went to my high school. Went to the service. He was regularly quoted in—one of the local papers had sort of a right-wing local columnist. He was always writing—for him, it was "my country, right or wrong."

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: "My country." Anyone who didn't support Vietnam was treasonous. He was always writing about Steve Banko and quoting him and everything. So throughout the war, there was always a percentage of people who believed in the mission. The longer it went on,—

BURACK: The smaller it got.

OSCADAL: Yeah. And the more and more—but by then, too, after the lottery was instituted, so many people knew—young people—I mean draft-age males knew whether they were in or they were out. And if you were in the clear, you know, you were much less likely to find a reason to protest. And then when the draft ended, there was less of a reason. The war still went on for a couple of more years before Nixon and [Secretary of State Henry A.] Kissinger wound it down. But people were tired of it.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: And even blue-collar guys like my father saw the score.

BURACK: Mm-hm. Were your brothers—did you talk to them about being a CO? Were they COs?

OSCADAL: I may have talked—my youngest brother is four years younger, and that was just young enough that—

BURACK: He wasn't even—

OSCADAL: —we wouldn't have talked about it. My middle brother is only a year younger than me, and, in fact, he went in the service. This was after Vietnam. What did he do? His trajectory was—let's see, he went to—he graduated from college. He was in a Navy ROTC program that—

BURACK: Did he go to Canisius as well?

OSCADAL: No, he went to a school in Rochester, New York, St. John Fisher [College]. And he was—he spent his last year at SUNY Buffalo, but as sort of a transfer student. He still graduated from the other school. And he was accepted to law school. He joined this ROTC program that—where you went—this is fascinating to me, because you didn't have much to do at all—

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: He went to Rhode Island for two summers and then was commissioned an ensign in the [U.S.] Navy. And I met a guy here at Dartmouth when I came here. He was one of the librarians. He graduated from Dartmouth, and he was in the same program years earlier than my brother. It was full of Ivy League, Ivy-plus people except for my brother and black people in this program.

BURACK: Interesting.

OSCADAL: I don't know how my brother got into this thing.

BURACK: Yeah. Was it a competitive, like, prestigious—

OSCADAL: Very, yeah.

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: Because it allowed you to—I mean, you only had to go for two summers.

BURACK: And that was it.

OSCADAL: Like, two or three months.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: And then you were gone, and you came back. I don't even think he had to attend, like, monthly ROTC—not meetings but where you'd go and drill. He did the two summers, and then he was an ensign in the Navy. And they postponed his service so he could go to law school. He graduated from law school, and then he went in the service as a lawyer for the Navy.

BURACK: Oh, wow.

OSCADAL: He was in the Judge Advocate General's [JAG] Corps. I think he had to do three or four years of service.

BURACK: So definitely a different path from what you took.

OSCADAL: Yeah.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: Yeah. And then he became an FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] agent. [Laughs.]

BURACK: [Chuckles.] Did you ever ask him about if they tapped the phones in your counseling center?

OSCADAL: Yes, I did.

BURACK: What did he say?

OSCADAL: When he was in the FBI, I asked him.

BURACK: [Chuckles.]

OSCADAL: I asked him if I had a file.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: He said I didn't have a file. He couldn't talk about the wiretaps.

BURACK: Did you expect to have a file?

OSCADAL: I didn't know. One reason I asked is because of my time at the counseling center, and the reason it seemed possible is because when I was there as a CO—you know, a potential CO—one of the counselors, a young woman, turned up on

Nixon's Enemies List, and she did not know why, and it frightened her terribly. I, for myself, determined later, much later, that she was on the list. She was on the second list. There were two lists.

BURACK: Can you explain quickly what the Enemies List was?

OSCADAL: Nixon's Enemies List? Nixon and the Nixon administration put a list of their adversaries together, and then they would—you know, they played a number of political tricks. Watergate [the Watergate scandal] brought down Nixon and the administration. But they were doing a lot of things to individuals to hurt them.

BURACK: Was this list a public list? How did you find out?

OSCADAL: It became public.

BURACK: Oh, okay.

OSCADAL: It was sort of infamous.

BURACK: So this counselor—

OSCADAL: Well, she turned up on the second list, and it turns out that most of the people on the second list were somehow connected to the [George S.] McGovern campaign, presidential campaign. Either they donated money or they volunteered. And so she was a very ordinary citizen. She was involved in the draft counseling center. You know, she was—you know, she would be considered left wing.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: The famous list was the very first—the first list. There were entertainers, several television news broadcasters, reporters and Hollywood personalities. If they were considered too liberal or left-leaning, they might end up on this list. If they spoke out too vociferously or loudly against the Nixon administration, you could end up on the list.

BURACK: So you were concerned that—

OSCADAL: I was never concerned.

BURACK: You were never concerned.

OSCADAL: I was curious.

BURACK: Okay. And your brother said you weren't.

OSCADAL: He said I wasn't, yes.

BURACK: Okay. So that's comforting to know. [Chuckles.]

OSCADAL: But he was an agent. I don't know if he was telling me the truth or not.

BURACK: [Chuckles.] Do you still wonder if—

OSCADAL: No, it's—

BURACK: No, no, no.

OSCADAL: —irrelevant.

BURACK: It's irrelevant.

So back to—where did we leave off in your time—in grad school, you were studying to become a librarian at this point or to get your degree?

OSCADAL: No, I was accepted in the history program.

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: And it was a master's program. It wouldn't lead to the doctoral program.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: The master's would have been the terminal degree for that program. But it was a very small program. I think it was experimental. There were only two or three of us in it, and the history department at SUNY Buffalo did not have a master's program, but for whatever reason, they tried this as an experiment.

A few weeks into the semester, I realized that— I was in school again because I liked school. I was not interested in becoming a historian. I liked history. They were in the

business training historians, so at that point, I realized I should probably start thinking about getting—

BURACK: Switching?

OSCADAL: —a job—

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: —and finding a life's work, because I really hadn't thought about it. For the few years that I was—you know, from, say, 15 to 19, when I had decided that I wasn't going to go in the service, I didn't know about the CO exemption. I assumed I would be convicted and go to jail and be a felon, convicted felon, so I didn't really think about what I was going to do for a job, my life's work.

I went to school—I went on to college because, as I said, everyone went to college. So now I'm in graduate school, and I realize that they're training people for a life's work, and so I thought it was probably time I should start to think about that. And I thought: What would I like to do? When I was thinking about being a felon and what I might do after that, I thought—I'd always visited libraries all the time.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: I thought, *Well, librarians seem like nice people. They would probably hire me.*

BURACK: Even though you would be—

OSCADAL: A felon.

BURACK: —a felon, yeah.

OSCADAL: You know, they might hire you.

BURACK: How long would you have served had you just refused?

OSCADAL: I think they could—if you were convicted, they could sentence you for up to five years.

BURACK: Okay. So as a 15-, 16-year-old you were ready to do that.

OSCADAL: Well, you know, I was—I didn't—I couldn't have fully known what that meant.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: I did decide that—I decided I was not going to go in the service. I was not going to be a part of this war. And, as I said, eventually that evolved into a moral thing against not just this war but war.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: And so I doubt that I fully thought through the consequences of what I was saying I was going to do, and fortunately it didn't come to that. As I was older and in college, I still had a conviction that I would not join the service, and I understood better what that was going to entail. But anyway, that all fell out to my advantage.

And so when I'm in graduate school, I again thought maybe it would be—I could be a librarian. I would enjoy that. I mean, I knew generally what they did. And, coincidentally, SUNY Buffalo had a library school. So I went over to their office, and I spoke to the associate dean, explained where I was at. You know, I was in the history program, I realized this is not what I want to be doing, and I'd like to sign on for the library program.

And she said, "That's fine. That program begins in the summer." So this is late September, early October. And she said, "So what kind of a librarian would you like to be?" And I said, "An academic librarian." She said, "Well, then, whatever you do, don't drop the history program because you'll want that subject degree to be hired by an academic library."

BURACK: To have both degrees to show.

OSCADAL: Yes. So I stuck with the program, and in the summer I began the library program. And so through the summer and the following fall semester, I was doing both programs concurrently, and I finished both—let's see, I probably got the history degree in January of '73.

BURACK: And you had started the—

OSCADAL: I started in the fall of ’72.

BURACK: And the library program started in the summer of—

OSCADAL: Seventy- —

BURACK: —’73.

OSCADAL: The library program started in the fall of—in the summer of ’73, so that was a full year.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: So I got the history degree in January of ’73, and I think the library degree a year after that, or a year after the summer.

BURACK: So then you’ve graduated. What happens next? You stay in Buffalo?

OSCADAL: For a while. While I was in graduate school, I was hired at the library as a student assistant, and so they assigned me to the history bibliographer, and I worked for him, with him for a while. And then the guy he reported to was head of reference, head of the subject librarians, and he and I struck up a friendship, and he hired me away from the subject bibliographer, and so I worked with him. And then an opening occurred for the political science bibliographer’s job, and so they put me in that job temporarily.

BURACK: Still as a grad student?

OSCADAL: Uh,—

BURACK: Or you graduated.

OSCADAL: I may have graduated by then.

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: And so I was working full time at the library at Buffalo. They posted the job for permanent position, but I wasn’t allowed—I was encouraged not to apply because they went to the political science department and said that they had me in the position and they were going to encourage me to apply, but the political science faculty said, “No, he doesn’t have a

degree in political science, and so we really aren't excited about this guy." Which makes perfect sense—

BURACK: You had the degree in history.

OSCADAL: —to me, that they would want someone with that academic background—

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: —to be their librarian. And then in May of 1975 I was laid off. A bit earlier in the year, SUNY Buffalo—well, the SUNY system made large cuts in—well, large budget cuts, and a significant portion of the library cut from across the SUNY main campuses came from Buffalo because Buffalo was the most well-funded at that point.

In the early '70s—late '60s, early '70s Buffalo was chosen, within the SUNY system, to become the flagship campus. It was spoken of as—the intent was to make it the [University of California,] Berkeley of the East. And they hired a great many faculty, and they poured money into it in order to do that. It was very, very selective to get in, to be accepted at SUNY Buffalo at that point.

But then in 1975 the whole system took a massive cut, and so anyway, I was laid off. And I started applying for jobs.

BURACK: And you were still living in Buffalo.

OSCADAL: Yes. And then in the fall, I had a job offer from Boston University, so I moved to Boston. And Joanne [Farrell Oscadal], my wife, and I were married in August of '76. I was in Boston.

BURACK: Where's she from?

OSCADAL: Joanne came to Boston.

BURACK: Was she from Buffalo as well?

OSCADAL: Yes, we grew up in the same neighborhood.

BURACK: Oh, okay. So you had known her.

OSCADAL: I didn't know Joanne all that long. I went to—although we lived in the same neighborhood—by that I mean South Buffalo—and I went to high school with a couple of her brothers, but I didn't meet Joanne until I was in graduate school, I think. And so I was in Boston in the fall of '75. Joanne and I married in the summer of '76. We stayed in Boston till 1978, so I was there about four years.

And then we moved to New Mexico. I got a job at the University of New Mexico. We were there about four years. And we wanted to come back East because New Mexico wasn't for us.

BURACK: So different than Buffalo.

OSCADAL: It's a little different than the East.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: Actually, I had a chance to move back to Buffalo, and I turned it down. When we were trying—when *I* was trying to leave BU, we were trying to leave Boston, the history job opened up at Buffalo.

BURACK: And you turned it down.

OSCADAL: Yes.

BURACK: Why? You just didn't want to go?

OSCADAL: No. Well, Buffalo is a much nicer and easier place to live in than it is to visit. And having grown up there, had we gone back, we would never have left.

BURACK: Okay.

OSCADAL: And so I applied for the job. I had the intent of taking it. It would have been a very easy life for us. We had a lot of friends there, family there. During the interview—well, before the interview, I learned—library jobs are advertised in three or four different places. Everyone is looking in the same three or four places. And I noticed that there was virtually the same job, different subject area but the same job open at SUNY Albany [State University of New York at Albany]. And they were offering three or four thousand dollars more for the position.

And so during the interview—and I went back to Buffalo. So I knew them, they knew me; it's the same people. And during the interview, I asked the director why Albany was offering three or four thousand dollars more for the same position. And he really didn't answer me but had cut the interview short. That cut that portion of the interview short. And so he said he hoped I had a nice visit while I was in town.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: So I thought, *Well, that's the end of that. That's fine.* But then they virtually offered me the job at the end of the day, which they're not supposed to do, but we all knew each other. And I said, "Well, not for this salary." And they said, "Fine." And so then I had to go and call Joanne and tell her I turned the job down.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: And so that was—okay, so then I go back to Boston. And, like, three days later, they call me again, and they offer me the job again, and I said, "Is the salary the same?" And they said, "Yes." And I said, "No." And so then I had to tell Joanne I turned the job done again. [Both chuckle.] So that was sort of difficult—

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: —because—just the way we grew up: the neighborhood—I mean, we wouldn't necessarily have lived in the neighborhood, but there were just so many connections to town. And that would be good and bad, as I alluded to. I mean, Buffalo—one of the things I learned, even in working at SUNY Buffalo in the library with people—none of those were local. You know, they were all—they'd all come from different places. I was learning how parochial and not so cosmopolitan Buffalo is.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: But, having grown up there, as I said, it's a very easy place to live. So it was sort of difficult, turning it down, but I'm not sorry I did. And so after New Mexico, we wanted—well, we wanted to leave New Mexico because we knew that was a temporary stop. It was a great place. I went—I took the job to

work with the woman who would be my supervisor because she was incredible, and she turned out to be incredible, so it was a very good situation as long as she was there.

So then we wanted to move again, and this Dartmouth turned up, and moving back East would be nice. We'd be close to Boston, where we had some life experience, and a day's drive from Buffalo is close enough.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: You can see people when you wanted to. And this seemed like a very nice place to be.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: And when I interviewed, the library seemed very impressive. And it is. And it was. It was and is.

BURACK: Yeah. And so when did you come to Dartmouth?

OSCADAL: In the fall of 1980—no, August of 1982.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: My anniversary is August 23rd.

BURACK: So you're three days away from there.

OSCADAL: Right.

BURACK: Wow. Are you doing anything special [laughs] for your library anniversary?

OSCADAL: No. No. [Laughs.]

BURACK: So you get to Dartmouth. Was the campus different from, like, the schools you had gone to or, like—I mean, I guess being on the faculty now or working in the library.

OSCADAL: Uh,—

BURACK: Like, in comparison to Buffalo and Boston.

OSCADAL: It's different. It's different. It's the smallest campus I've worked on.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: SUNY Buffalo is 25[,000] or 30,000 students. New Mexico is 25,000. BU is probably smaller than that, but they probably had 15[,000] or 18,000 students there.

BURACK: Yeah.

OSCADAL: So the work situation or the campus situation was different in that the schools were smaller. This is primarily an undergraduate campus. Coming here and being in the social sciences and humanities—there are some graduate programs now, some master's programs, but they didn't exist then, except for MALS [pronounced like MALES; Master of Arts in Liberal Studies]. MALS existed, but it wasn't as developed a master's program as it is now.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: And even though I worked at large universities, this library was much better funded. The collection—actually, the collection at Buffalo is very good, but this is a very deep collection in the social sciences and the humanities. Undergraduates can do master's level work here without any trouble.

And also this—well, BU is a private institution, so I've worked at both private and public institutions. But an Ivy League institution is different. They're more selective in their admissions. They're more selective in their faculty hires. And my experience in the librarian—in the library, rather, was more—it was closer to the teaching atmosphere. Just because the other places were so much larger, the libraries were larger, and you didn't have the sense about undergraduate instruction there that I have here. This is a very good, very good place.

BURACK: Have you seen any dramatic changes since you've arrived?

OSCADAL: I think the student body is more balanced in terms of gender.

BURACK: Mm-hm.

OSCADAL: The balance between teaching and research I think has changed. Research has stepped up, and I think—I think

teaching is still very important here, but over time, research has become more important, and I think there were people who were on the faculty here when I arrived and into the ’90s who probably would not be hired today. They were more teachers than the combination of teaching and research. But as a librarian here, I have the opportunity to see candidates for faculty positions, and they’re all very impressive, and they all have—I don’t think they would come here if they didn’t want the balance of teaching and research, and so that’s different than what you encounter in larger universities.

BURACK: All right. I don’t have many more questions. If there’s anything you want to add to your narrative, your dialogue?

OSCADAL: I don’t. Thank you.

BURACK: You don’t think so? All right. Well, thank you so much. It’s wonderful speaking with you.

OSCADAL: Thanks, Emily.

BURACK: I think we can end it there.

[End of interview.]