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Reverend Ross Hidy

Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by
Richard Cándida Smith
in 2004

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Interview with with Ross Hidy
Interviewed by: Richard Cándida Smith
Transcriber: Nadine Wilmot
[Interview # 1: 12-01-04]

1-00:00:07

Cándida Smith:

We'll just go into our own world.

1-00:00:12

Hidy:

Alright.

1-00:00:20

Cándida Smith:

Well, I'd like to thank you for participating in the project. The first question we ask is usually fairly simple, when and where were you born?

1-00:00:29

Hidy:

I was born in Springfield, Ohio, in May, 1917. Small town of about 60,000, great town to grow up in.

1-00:00:39

Cándida Smith:

And that's where you grew up?

1-00:00:40

Hidy:

That's right, I was there until I was a junior in high school. And then during the Depression, our family moved to Pennsylvania, and moved to a little farm in Buckingham Valley twenty-five miles north of Philadelphia.

1-00:00:55

Cándida Smith:

What did your father do?

1-00:00:57

Hidy:

My dad was a railroader, a train dispatcher. And during the Depression, the railroads had less traffic, less freight, and so they thinned out their staff and my dad was furloughed. He wasn't fired, but until there was need for more dispatchers, he had no work. And there was no work in Ohio, so we moved to Philadelphia.

1-00:01:23

Cándida Smith:

Had he been a farmer before?

1-00:01:25

Hidy:

He grew up on a farm. But this was a little five-acre farm, that's where my grandfather lived, and so my mother and dad and my younger brother and older brother lived there and then my older brother left and got a job. But I moved into the Philadelphia and lived with my aunt and uncle. He was a very successful Lutheran minister. And I lived with them for ten years.

1-00:01:55

Cándida Smith:

What was his name?

1-00:01:56

Hidy:

His name was Ross {Stouffer? Stover?}. He had the largest church in the whole area, a radio broadcast Sunday morning and Thursday night, a lot of music and it was excellent preparation for what happened later in the housing area. [chuckles]

1-00:02:10

Cándida Smith:

So, in a way, he was your mentor as a pastor?

1-00:02:14

Hidy:

Yes, he was truthfully my mentor. I was named after him, in fact. And he had no sons, so when I lived with them, it was a very ideal situation. They had somebody to take care of the lawn and put out the trash and shovel snow. [chuckles]

1-00:02:32

Cándida Smith:

Were you already feeling that you wanted to enter into the ministry?

1-00:02:37

Hidy:

For a while, I wanted to go into music. I was a jazz band fan and in Ohio, I'd played in symphony orchestras and chamber orchestras and in a dance band. And that was a time of all the great bands, and I thought that would be what I might enjoy doing.

1-00:02:56

Cándida Smith:

What instrument did you play?

1-00:02:57

Hidy:

Well, I played clarinet, saxophone, oboe, picked up trumpet, but my main interest was reeds. Oboe and trumpet, not as much, but saxophone I played.

1-00:03:11

Cándida Smith:

So you liked swing?

1-00:03:11

Hidy:

Oh, that was it, yeah, and I handled all the vocals and the radio and all.

1-00:03:19

Cándida Smith:

Who were your favorite musicians?

1-00:03:22

Hidy:

Oh, my gosh. {Isham?} Jones and {Saxy?} Manfield from Springfield was their {live?} tenor man. And Woody Herman, who was with Isham and who later had his great band, all of them, I knew them all. I knew [Count] Basie and I knew Oscar Peterson, and—you know, I've got a collection of jazz records that won't stop.

1-00:03:50

Cándida Smith:

So your love for jazz continues.

1-00:03:53

Hidy:

Oh, yeah. Count Basie gave a benefit concert for our church in San Francisco.

1-00:04:08

Cándida Smith:

So, then you went to {inaudible} to college I guess.

1-00:04:11

Hidy:

Yes, I went to Temple University. And from there, I went to Seminary in Philadelphia. The most unusual thing in Temple, I was in the Glee Club. And there was an unfortunate situation, and two weeks before a national broadcast, our Glee Club director was dismissed from college, and the dean called me in and said would you take over for the broadcast. So I took over the club and we had a national broadcast, and then he said, "Well, why don't you them the rest of the year." So, I directed the Men's Glee Club at Temple University for five years, while I was in Seminary, too, and that paid my expenses. So, I had a whole lot of fun with music. That was a bird that hit the window. [referring to a bird that hit the window] Oh, it flew away.

1-00:05:09

Cándida Smith:

And you met your wife there.

1-00:05:12

Hidy:

I met my wife at Temple University. She's a very gifted person who was an outstanding student, and she has been a great teammate. Today, she is out with {Lolbach?} Literacy. And she has been an active leader in the church.

1-00:05:30

Cándida Smith:

And her name is?

1-00:05:31

Hidy:

Evelyn.

1-00:05:34

Cándida Smith:

Was she a Lutheran as well?

1-00:05:35

Hidy:

Yes, she grew up, happened to be a Lutheran, which was a happy situation, and we've had a great life.

1-00:05:44

Cándida Smith:

So what brought you to decide, "No, I'm not going to be a musician, I'm not going to be a salesman, I'm not going to be this that or the other thing, I want to be a man of the cloth."

1-00:06:02

Hidy:

A simple experience. We were riding from Ohio back to Philadelphia on the train. The train was filled, but there was man whose wife had suddenly died, a Jewish gentleman. And we found that he was seated there with my uncle across the way, and my wife and were there, and he was in deep grief. And my uncle listened to him and talked to him and reminded him of the Old Testament promises. I watched this man kind of gain comfort. And I watched my uncle, who was a very loving, kind person, quietly minister to this fellow. And afterwards, I couldn't help but think, "You know, that's a great way to spend your life. One night dance stands, traveling around the country, that's no life." But this would be something. So I reevaluated things and then I decided to go to seminary. And I've never regretted it.

1-00:07:19

Cándida Smith:

Which seminary did you go to?

1-00:07:20

Hidy:

Philadelphia Seminary in Germantown. Excellent seminary, I had a good experience there. I could live with my uncle, continue at the church but attend seminary, and I had the best of both worlds.

1-00:07:38

Cándida Smith:

So you actually were assisting your uncle in parish duties?

1-00:07:41

Hidy:

All during the time I was with him, I was there, we sang every Sunday and Sunday night, and then we sang on the radio on Thursday. At times, I would direct the Thursday night hymn-sing. We had a half hour hymn-sing! And it was a great deal of music, but I was a kind of a young student assistant. But then when I finished seminary and was ordained, I stayed as his assistant for a year, until I had a call to come into the war housing area.

1-00:08:22

Cándida Smith:

I want to get into that, and so how did your name come to the attention of the Lutheran ministry as a person who would be good for a war time—?

1-00:08:34

Hidy:

A very interesting way. We had a guest preacher one August, and it was the Secretary of our national church. And we were having dinner that afternoon before he spoke—he spoke at the morning and evening services—and then he mentioned, “You know Ross, there’s a new a need in the Church. These emergency communities have grown up around war housing, around war plants. And the Lutheran chaplaincy quota has completely filled. They don’t need chaplains. But we need industrial chaplains to minister to people who live in these mushrooming communities. And I think you ought to write and learn about that.” So, I wrote to the director, Dr. Hoyer in Chicago and said, “Tell me about this situation. What is it? And what about these war housing ministries?” Two weeks later, I got a letter from Dr. Hoyer, a call—not just information—but an invitation to come and go to Richmond, California. Well, I hadn’t been ready for a call, I wanted information. But here I was now, with the situation and my uncle at that time, had a touch of walking pneumonia and he had to take a month off, six weeks, and he said, “Oh, Ross, don’t leave right now. Stay at least for a month or two.” So I wrote back Chicago, said I couldn’t come but I could come a little later. So they said alright. And so I stayed and then I came West about Thanksgiving in 1943.

1-00:10:25

Cándida Smith:

So the war was already on—

1-00:10:29

Hidy:

The war was on. It was terribly hard to get a car. We had to have a car. I was able to get a car, we got a Plymouth Club Coup. Finally, got it about five days before we had to leave. And so we drove across country, stopped in Chicago, saw the director, learned some rather shocking things. He told us, “We don’t know how to do this. This is a new kind of ministry. You go there, you’ll worship in a community building. Try something, if it works, fine. If it doesn’t, try something else. The only time I’ll bawl you out is if you sit there, and do nothing.” [chuckles]

1-00:11:10

Cándida Smith:

His name was again?

1-00:11:09

Hidy:

His name was H. Conrad Hoyer. He coordinated all these programs around the country.

So, we drove across country, got caught in a blizzard in Tucumcari, New Mexico, just last car to make it from Amarillo. Cars going in the ditches and trucks going in the ditches. We made it to Tucumcari and had to wait two days for the roads to close and open up. And we drove and got there, Richmond, a few days later.

1-00:11:48

Cándida Smith:

You had been assisting your uncle in the parish for the first two years of American involvement in the war.

1-00:11:55

Hidy:

Yeah.

1-00:11:56

Cándida Smith:

Had the war changed how your uncles' responsibilities? Was there a specific challenge to the church with Pearl Harbor?

1-00:12:10

Hidy:

Well, Pearl Harbor changed America. But our congregation continued its ministry there. But we were involved through the church and what it was doing throughout the world. And so I would say, it didn't change that parish ministry. But it changed the lives of a lot of people, of course, including mine.

1-00:12:34

Cándida Smith:

Because of the ministry?

1-00:12:35

Hidy:

Yeah, because we got involved in that. And I should mention one thing. When we got to Richmond, we went to the pastor I was supposed to see. And I went up to the door, and told his wife, who came to the door, that we had just gotten there from Philadelphia, we're the Hidys and we were coming to work in the housing area. She looked down at me and she says, "Well, go tell your father and mother to come on in." She thought I was a student, you know, because I looked real young. Her husband came then shortly, had been away, and he took us up on the hill above Richmond. He showed us the Bay Area. And down below, we could see the shipyards, and it was dark, and the welders working in the four yards, they're flashes were like little diamonds that sparked. It was very unbelievable to see these shipyards from the hill, four of them in a row. And then the darkness of the bay and then in the distance, we could see San Francisco. And all of a sudden, we could see why the shipyards had been built right there, by deep water, railroads nearby, and they could just sail right out into the ocean. So that was our introduction to the shipyards. That was an exciting view that night.

1-00:14:13

Cándida Smith:

I had two questions I wanted to ask you particularly about the Lutheran Church and way. One had to do with—one of the things that's written about in the histories of World War II is that the National Council of Churches made a very conscious decision not to go down the path of being super patriotic, to not do what had been done in World War I. Was that something that affected the way in which you would operate at the parish level? To be more focused on the individual need rather than support for the government?

1-00:15:00

Hidy:

Well, I would say that in the situation in the European War, the tragedy of the rise of Nazi Germany, all of us were aware that this had done some vicious things. We were becoming aware of what they were doing with the Jewish people. We knew that there were Lutheran pastors in Germany who protested. [Martin] Niemoller was in prison. Later, so was [Dietrich] Bonhoffer. A great number of them were in prison. Some of them supported the Nazi regime, which had started very innocently at first. Then, it moved into a tragic chapter. But I would say that the Lutherans, in that situation, we sent chaplains with the service people, we had worked to try to ameliorate suffering, but we were certainly not always ready to sprinkle holy water on war. It's the least successful solution to problems.

1-00:16:09

Cándida Smith:

Had you personally entered thought about entering into the military service?

1-00:16:16

Hidy:

Well, I was involved in an important ministry and there was no need for chaplains. There was no shortage. They weren't saying, "Please, Lutheran pastors come." We had more Lutheran pastors, so this opportunity to go to the housing area was a very obvious thing. My uncle had always taught me, you know, "All you need is people. Then go minister to them. And when they told us there were a hundred thousand people living in temporary housing in Richmond, well, you couldn't say, "Well, there are no people there." And there were new people and living in crowded conditions. Obviously, there was a need for the church to be with them.

The Lutheran motto for this program was his Church must go where his people go. And many of the people who came from the West were from the Midwest. Some were from southern—Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas—but a lot came from up in the Dakotas and Minnesota.

1-00:17:22

Cándida Smith:

So you had a lot of Lutherans then?

1-00:17:23

Hidy:

In our housing projects, very few Lutherans, an awful lot of Pentecostals, Assembly of God, Southern Baptist. But we loved them and they were wonderful people. We just ministered to them whoever they were.

1-00:17:41

Cándida Smith:

The Second question I had about the Lutheran Church and the War was what was the position of German American Lutherans at the beginning of the War, really before Pearl Harbor, which clarified it a bit. Many German Americans were quite divided and particularly opposed to the U.S. getting involved in the War. Did that affect your ministry at all or your uncle's ministry?

1-00:18:15

Hidy:

Oh my, no. My first ancestor came before the American Revolution. And we had so transitioned into being Americans, we happened to have had German background, or others—my family was German, English, Scotch, and Welsh, so we had very minimal amount of what you call sympathy for Germany. Everything quite to the contrary. But, in some situations, there were little bits of that, but that happens with everybody, it depends on when they came and what was the condition in Europe at that moment. And there weren't a lot of people trying to fly the German flag right then in America. They were part of this country and this was their homeland.

1-00:19:11

Cándida Smith:

So, there you are, December, '43, I think it is—

1-00:19:13

Hidy:

Right.

1-00:19:15

Cándida Smith:

And you're in Richmond, California. And could you describe where you first lived and where you set up shop, as it were?

1-00:19:27

Hidy:

Oh, sure. Well, when we came, we first stayed in Bluebell Auto Court on San Pablo until we got an apartment. We had been given a letter in Chicago officially making us serving the people in the housing project, so we qualified for housing. And we went to the Richmond housing project and showed the letter and they gave us the key to an apartment on 33rd. And so we drove over to see where we would be living. And these families were what they call maritime buildings. There were certain types of government housing, and they followed a standard plan. And these plans were thirteen-family, two-story apartment buildings. And we had the middle apartment upstairs. And it was a simple {Stet?} furnished with standard furniture. You opened the door and here is the living room/dining room, simple furniture, and then there's a hallway to the bedroom. Along that hallway is a sink and a stove and an icebox, and a doorway into a small bathroom with a tub. Then, a bedroom in the back. And that was our home.

We lived there for a whole year. Later, we were allowed to go across the highway into the Harborgate project. But, we sometimes say that that family building that we lived in had thirteen families and 30,000 cockroaches. Because it was infested with cockroaches. So, when you finished a meal, you had to clean up, put the food in the icebox, get everything there, because the cockroaches would be coming out at night to look for something to eat. And I got a lot of spackle and filled all cracks and everything. But you never really got rid of them. It was a headache. We were glad to move.

1-00:21:32

Cándida Smith:

And then you move into Harborgate.

1-00:21:33

Hidy:

We moved over to Harborgate. Those were one-story buildings, looked like boxcars, 840 of them in Harborgate. And there was a community building, a grade-school, a small double unit that was a health clinic, and over to one side, a big supermarket on {Carlson?} Boulevard. And in the community building, there was a post office. There was the administrative office for the project, and there were rooms that could be used during the week for recreational programs and on Sunday, the church groups could use those rooms. So that was it.

1-00:22:19

Cándida Smith:

Where did you set up your office?

1-00:22:21

Hidy:

Well, in the housing, when we were in our first unit, our office was a table and a box, and my portable typewriter. I had a little Royal Portable I used in college and seminary. We didn't have much else. But it was merely meeting people and—. There had been a Sunday school starting before and we continued that program and tried to do our best to help it grow.

1-00:22:50

Cándida Smith:

So, how did you go about introducing yourself to the community or to the people that were already there doing religious work? How did you fit in?

1-00:23:01

Hidy:

Well, the interesting thing is that they knew that I was coming and they had about a hundred people coming to church and 150 people in Sunday school. So, when I came on the first Sunday, we came over and people were kind of friendly. They said, "Welcome Brother Hidy! Welcome Sister Hidy!" That's the way people from Texas called their minister, "brother" and "sister."

I decided that we had no church bell so I took my trumpet and I went out in the front of the community building and I played as loudly as I could three hymns. I pointed my trumpet above the houses and it echoed in the whole area. And I played "I Love to Tell the Story" and "What A Friend We Have in Jesus." A funny thing happened—oh, I went to the back of the community building and I played over the lower part of the Harborgate project. Inside of ten minutes, the doors came open and a hundred more kids were in Sunday school. And then I had a request to get pictures. Six weeks later, when we had a photographer come, the Sunday school had 363 people. So, I guess my trumpet was the most effective part of my announcement. [chuckles]

1-00:24:34

Cándida Smith:

So your primary activity initially was to organize or to take over the Sunday school?

1-00:24:42

Hidy:

Well, we had a parish worker, Lois Johnson. She had been there for some months. And she kind of helped orient me, and our Sunday school grew, and our problem was to keep up with the growth. And where do you get Sunday school teachers? So that was the next project.

I did a very simple thing. I went to the University of California. We had Lutheran student group there, they had a house. I went to them and told them we had a great program over in the housing area. So a number of them came and became teachers. And that was a source of some of our extra teachers for that. Now, of course, Dr. Henderson was the coordinator for this. And he had a daughter, Peggy. She came out and played the little organ for our church service, taught a Sunday school class. There was some other Presbyterian students that they knew and they came out, too. So, we filled in the needs by recruiting teachers from other groups.

1-00:25:53

Cándida Smith:

Were the troop services you organized and the Sunday schools organized along a Lutheran model or did you try to be ecumenical?

1-00:26:03

Hidy:

Oh, we sure were ecumenical. When we got there, they had a {Coxbury?} hymnal, that's a Methodist hymnal. It was a nice collection of hymns. Well, we didn't change them. I knew all those hymns by memory. And so we sang the hymns they knew. We didn't have a full liturgical service, we just had a simple worship service. We didn't have anything in the room, we put a card table up at the end, we put a cross on it, and a couple candles, and then we had a simple rostrum or lectern. And that's all we had for it to make it a church. Of course, we modified it later, and added other things. But we just ministered in a very simple way and they loved it.

1-00:26:51

Cándida Smith:

So most of the people who would come to the church service and most of the Sunday school children were not Lutherans.

1-00:26:56

Hidy:

Oh my, no. No, it was funny. I was curious what our children's background was. So one day, I asked some of the boys and girls in Sunday school, "Where did you go to church back home?" And one of the little kids said, "I went to the {Baptistarian?} Church." And another one said, "Oh, I went to Cafeteria Church." And the one that really was the pay-off was a little kid with a Texas drawl who said, "Oh, back home, I went to the Episco-packin' Sunday school." [chuckle from interviewer] And we found that the kids really didn't have too much knowledge, they went to their church and it was their church. We didn't put a whole a Lutheran banner out. The fact is, we made a very simple ecumenical service, and it worked.

1-00:27:56

Cándida Smith:

Were you part of an interfaith group in terms of the wartime housing ministry?

1-00:28:02

Hidy:

Harold Henderson, who was the former missionary to Korea, contacted the different denominations and invited them to send staff. The Baptists sent a wonderful black pastor from Florida, Isaac {Mickens?}. And we had some interfaith services, but they had their own program in the afternoon, and we had the church community building in the morning.

We also had a program in Richmond Terrace. When I arrived, there was a seminarian, Otis Lee, and his wife, Kay. And they were living over in Richmond Terrace and taking care of the Sunday school and a worship program there. I talked to Otis the other day. I called Otis, he lives in Washington, and I said, "How did you happen to come, Otis? I never knew." And he said, "Well, Dr. Hoyer came to our seminary and said he needed some seminarians. So I was going to do a year training program, they call it internship." So, he went to Richmond. When I was in Harborgate, Otis and Kay were out at the other end at a housing project built on the side of a hill, overlooking one of the shipyards. So, that's how Otis came.

And there were some other seminarians that came from seminaries in Berkeley. But there were only really two full-time pastors: Isaac Mickens and myself.

1-00:29:48

Cándida Smith:

And you had how many people to minister to?

1-00:29:50

Hidy:

Well, there were 850 homes in Harborgate and there were 3,000 apartments across the highway. One of the things we did, we knew that there should be some communication, so we printed a little newspaper. We called it the *Harborgate Herald*. And we printed that every week and we distributed to every house in the area. That told them what was happening and invited them to come. By the way, it wasn't weekly, it was monthly. [chuckles]

1-00:30:26

Cándida Smith:

Monthly, the services?

1-00:30:28

Hidy:

No, our paper.

1-00:30:30

Cándida Smith:

Oh, your paper.

1-00:30:31

Hidy:

Yeah. We did do one thing that proved to be unbelievable successful. We encouraged our boys and girls to bring other boys and girls. And we kept record of if they brought a new person. They would introduce and the name would be recorded. Then we decided to have what we called The Missionary of the Month. And the one that brought the most the month before, we put their

picture in that little paper with a little biography and congratulated them for being The Missionary of the Month.

Well, we had some servicemen who were coming to help in the Sunday school and to attend. And one of them was a pilot of a PBY—that’s a huge airplane that flies long distances to Hawaii and out to the South Pacific, two motors. Well, {Kermie?} was a pilot on one of those. So, Kermie often stopped at our house and we knew him well. So he said, “Well, if you want to, bring out The Missionary of the Month over to Alameda Naval Air Station. I’ll take him inside one of the PBYs and then we’ll take ‘em in. They can go swimming in the pool and we’ll take ‘em in for a hamburger and a milkshake.”

Well, when the first Missionary of the Month got back, and said, “I was over to the Alameda Naval Air Station and I got to go in a PBY and go swimming! They took me in and I got a milkshake and hamburger,” the kids were so eager to be The Missionary of the Month, that it wasn’t safe to be a boy or girl at Harborgate, because the kids would after you to get you in. So that helped our Sunday school grow like crazy!

I heard stories of when a family moved into a house and drove in, the kids were watching. And when the family got out to go into the house, new residents, the kids would get out of the car, and there would be kids grabbing them and saying, “You’re going to Sunday school with me!” “No, you’re not! You’re going with me!” So, it was unbelievable. [laughs] We had a great time.

1-00:32:54

Cándida Smith:

So you must have gotten to know the kids pretty well.

1-00:32:57

Hidy:

Yes, we did. I should tell you a story that proves how well I knew them. Two or three years after I’d been there, I got the word that some of the kids were cutting school, high school students were truant. Now, at first, there were so few schools, that they had not two, but four shifts of kids. And then later two shifts. But I found that some of our kids were deciding, “Let’s play hooky, let’s not go to class.” Well, that worried me because I knew—all of us know—that if you lose attendance, you miss class, and you get behind, and you’re going to fail.

So, I talked to my wife, said, “I’m going up to high school and talk to the staff up there.” I went up, saw the principal, I went to see the dean of students, you know, and I told him, I said, “I’m from Harborgate and we have a lot of young people and some of them are students here. I hear that some of them are now not coming to class. Would you help me? I want to know who’s cutting.” And so, he opened up the attendance records. So I went over the attendance records for the past month. And I knew all my kids, so I found the name of a kid and I put the name down. And then I found another one—and then I went through, I put an x or a mark by each name. So I had the name of all our kids and I knew exactly how many times they played hooky. And I felt, “Well, now, how can I use this?”

So, that afternoon, I decided to make a few calls. So I stopped at one of the houses where I knew they had a high school kid. And I went in and was talking to the mother and the other little kid there. And the high school kid came in, a girl, and we talked. And then before I left, I just said to

mother, “I’m a little worried. I understand that some of our high school kids are not going to school. They’re cutting classes.” And she looked at me and she says, “Well. If you hear that our kids are cutting, you let me know. I’ll take of that.” And this high school kid looked at me, you know, “What are you going to do?” And so, I didn’t say a word.

So, I finished and had prayer and I left and the kid walked out with me! And she said, “Pastor?” I said, “Yes, I know you’ve been cutting. The fact is, in the last two weeks, you’ve cut seven days.” She looked at me, she said, “You going to tell Mother?” I says, “Well, should I?” She says, “I’m not going to cut school anymore.” I said, “You sure?” She said, “Yeah.” I said, “Well, get the word around, will ya?” “I sure will.”

I was surprised. They stopped cutting because they knew that their parents would know and that I had the facts on them. That was a tempest in a teapot. But that was a simple little thing. It wasn’t very amazing, it wasn’t too brilliant. It was a simple, caring action. And it worked.

1-00:36:25

Cándida Smith:

Do you think it may have been because you were so young that it worked to your advantage, that they trusted you in some ways?

1-00:36:33

Hidy:

I don’t know. They knew I loved them. I played ping pong with them and I played basketball. Like, one of the kids who later became and unbelievably effective pastor. He did some amazing things in Texas helping old churches come alive. I found out what he did and then I learned what his technique was and I commended him. I said, “Harvey, I’m proud of you. How did you get those ideas to do that?” He looked at me and he said, “You’ve got to be kidding. All I did was what you did. You lived with us, you visited us, you played with us. You got us a job in the summer, you got us a job in the laundry at Yosemite National Park. And I just did what you did.” And I looked at him and I couldn’t believe it. But, we didn’t know what we were going when we went there, we just reached out and tried, and what we did worked.

1-00:37:40

Cándida Smith:

Did you work with adults as well?

1-00:37:45

Hidy:

Oh, yeah. But, you see, we had women’s group, a ladies aid. And they were amazing. They did some helpful things in the life of the church. Some of them taught Sunday school. And they helped in other ways. We formed a choir. They made robes for the choir. And the most unusual thing they did, one day, a couple of the women came to the door—we were living over near the community building—and she came and she said, ‘Pastor, you know one of the families had a fire, they had a burnout. And we went around and got some money to give to them and I’d like to give it to you and maybe you would like to take it over to them.’ It was about \$107.00. And I didn’t ask the women to do that. This is what they did back in Oklahoma! Somebody had a fire, they helped. They raised some money. So, I said, “No, I want you to take it over to ‘em.”

So, these two women and I walked down, we went to this house. It wasn't completely burned out. The woman had been cleaning some stuff and she had been using gasoline. And the fumes went down to a heater and a flash fire, and it started a little fire but they got it out quickly. It didn't burn out the house at all, they were still living there. So the women talked to her and they said, "Well, we're sorry—." By the way, this was a Spanish-speaking family, but she could speak enough—and they said, "We're sorry you had a fire, and we just want to say we want to give a little gift to help you." And she was so astonished that these people had come and make a gift to them. That was typical of what that group did. They wanted to help one another, whatever the emergency. We didn't tell them what to do, they just did it. And it was typical of their life. They were a wonderful group of people.

One Christmas Eve—we had been there about two years, not Christmas Eve, a couple days before Christmas—we heard Christmas Carols. And we realized someone was singing outside of our door. And so, we went to the door, and here, the women of the Aid were all there, about twenty of them, singing carols! And they had a package! And so they came in and they said, "We have a gift for you, Sister Evelyn." [laughs] And they gave her a package and she opened it up, and it's what is called a "friendship quilt." Each of them had taken a square of cloth and written their name and then they sewed that in. And they put all of those together in a quilt and they gave it to my wife.

Now, years later, we were living in this house. And a woman came from Fairfield, driven by her grandson, came down to visit us, she just wanted to say hello. And Evelyn realized that she had that quilt on the guestroom bed. She took this woman in and says, "I want to show you something." And here was the quilt. She was so pleased. But that's the kind of demonstration of what that group did. They were really kind and loving people.

1-00:41:42

Cándida Smith:

This is the sort of community help networks that people were doing all the time?

1-00:41:51

Hidy:

Oh, yeah. One other thing happened. Dr. Henderson, the head of the Defense Area Community Program, they wanted to have a dinner for about 125 people, the churches of the city and the staff, and they had no place for it. And I went to the women of the ladies' aid and I said, "The Housing Area group needs a dinner. We don't have any dishes or pots and pans in the kitchen, but if we could get those, could you prepare a dinner for them?" And they said, "Sure! No problem, we'll be glad to." So I went down to the Lutheran Church and I got pots and pans and dishes and silverware, and brought it out to Harborgate. And our women came and made a lovely chicken dinner. They made cream chicken and a full dinner with pies for dessert, and they put on this. And that was the kind of people they were. "We're here to help. What do you need?" [chuckles]

1-00:43:09

Cándida Smith:

As a pastor, what kind of issues were you having to deal with in the wartime housing? What were typical concerns that arise, that would come to you directly, as a minister?

1-00:43:28

Hidy:

Well, I would say some of the problems that would come, didn't come because we had a positive community fellowship. Those in our group didn't suffer from acute loneliness. They had a whole new set of friends. They had a network. The kids were in a Sunday school class. The Sunday school class would sometimes have activities. We had a youth program. We had a junior group. We were part of what we called Christian endeavor. That was an ecumenical youth group. All the churches of the area were in it. And they would have their meetings. I would say that the positive impact of the ministry of what we called The Friendly Church of Harborgate was so helpful, that it prevented some of the real sense of lonely and isolation that some would have had without it.

That doesn't mean that you didn't have some counseling, sure you did. We had a tragic thing happen one day. One family had built a couple of bid poles and a crossbar and put a swing on it. And a little boy was out in the swing. We didn't know what had happened 'til it was all over. It was at a house some distance away. This little boy was on this swing and so he began to go around and around and around. And he didn't realize that the rope was cutting his breathing. Then, he kind of lost consciousness and he wasn't there. Nobody knew it. The poor boy suffocated and died. It was a real shock in the community. And of course, you minister to the family. We had the funeral in the community building. That was one thing you ministered to.

That was only one of two funerals. A young woman was working in the shipyard and they had what they called the shipyard railroad. It ran along the bay and came across and came down to the shipyard. I don't know what happened, but she had a fall. She fell and was injured and her shoulder and arm were badly damaged. She was hospitalized and died. That was a funeral I had to have. I learned one thing there that I had never met before: the mother had a custom in their community where they were back in Oklahoma area that is someone died, they wrote a song about them, about their life and all, and then they published it. And here was a tribute to this young woman. And it was the first time I ever saw that. But that happened.

There was a young husband in the community who had a motorcycle. And one day, he was riding along the East Shore Highway and he got caught in an accident and he was killed. I'll never forget that service. It was a very sad service, unexpected death, you know.

So those are three funerals that I conducted. There weren't many marriages because all the guys were in the service! There were very few young men working. That's why they brought in so many women in the shipyards. But I didn't have any weddings in the housing area. We did have some baptisms later. But that was what was happening. You ministered to people.

Oh, I should tell you about one thing that happened. One Christmas, some of the kids—I don't know what got into them—they wanted to have presents to give and didn't have any money. So, some of them began to, down in the shopping area, reach into cars and pick up packages that were all wrapped. Some other kids thought that was a good idea. I didn't know about this. And then I learned that quite a number of them had been doing it. And finally, over twenty of them were picked up and were taken to juvenile hall in Martinez! There were some of our kids, I couldn't hardly believe it, you know! I went over to the hall and visited them. They felt pretty sheepish and shamed of themselves. I visited them, and a couple of weeks later, they were going

to have a hearing with a judge there. So I went over just to be there. I met Judge {Vrey?} who was handling this as a juvenile judge. And when I told him I was from Harborage and these were some of our kids, he looked at me and said, "Sit right here, Pastor." He had me sit next to him. They brought in one kid at a time. And a social welfare worker gave the case study, told what their situation was and then they finished the report. The kid was there and the social caseworker. And then, the Judge dismissed both of them! So, then Judge Very turned to me and he says, "Pastor, what'll I do?" Oh, all of a sudden I realized I was being brought into the team. And for a minute I thought, 'Well, I know these kids, most of them.' So I just simply told him, I said, "I've known this kid for years. This is the first time I think that they've ever gotten into any thing like this. Is this kid a bad kid? I don't think so. I don't think so." So the Judge put him on probation! Let him go, let him go back home!

But one kid came through, and he was the kid who had been kind of hostile, not active in any programs. To me, I had any real knowledge except that he had been a kind of a loner. So when he asked me about him, I said, "Judge, I'm not sure about this young man. I do know that he's kind of been a critical kid. I don't really know. But I can't say the thing about him." And the Judge made him go to a foster placement out in the Valley. And this strange thing happened. He was put in a family out there that was a very dedicated, caring family and very active in a church out there. And this boy lived out there with him for about a year. And he became a dedicated believer. He came back completely changed. And I thought to myself, 'Well, maybe God kind of guided us in this, I didn't know.' You're always just trying to do the best you can. So you ask the question, "What did you do to kind of meet their needs?" Well, those are specific little stories, and out kids were not always angels [laughs] but most of them came through pretty well.

I want to tell you one thing we did. We heard that the navy guys had a program called "Bible Memorization." It was the Navigators. The Navigators were a group within the U.S. Navy that would meet for bible study wherever they were, on a ship or—and among the things they did, they had these navy boys memorize bible verses. And they had a little cardboard envelope, and they had ten bible verses on it. And each bible verse had the place in the bible it was, and the bible verse and then repeated where it was. John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that heareth my word and believeth in him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24. And they called this "fore and aft." You put the location, they {memorized?} and the location. They gave them ten verses. Well, we gave each kid one of these packets. And in Sunday school class, they'd have them go through one of these, then all of them. And these kids began to memorize the Bible. They went through those packets. Some of them memorized a hundred bible verses. Then, they would memorize whole chapters, they would memorize psalms, and these kids just became saturated with the scriptures. And I couldn't believe it, how successful that was.

1-00:53:29

Cándida Smith:

You had about 350 kids—[inaudible and talking over]?

1-00:53:33

Hidy:

Well, it grew at—for a while it averaged over 400. We wanted to see how big it could go so we, among other things, we would have a parade around the project. And we would invite the kids that weren't coming to come, you know? And they would take invitations to them. And the

Sunday school kept growing. And Sunday school kept growing and then, we had one day, we wanted to see how big it was so we said, “We will give a bible to the biggest family who comes.” We had two families that came with ten children, so we gave two bibles. But, that’s the Sunday we had 593 in Sunday school. That’s the biggest.

1-00:54:22

Cándida Smith:

How many kids total do you think?

1-00:54:23

Hidy:

Over the years, because there was a turnover, quite a number, I guess 800 or 1000 maybe. But, it touched an awful lot of lives.

1-00:54:38

Cándida Smith:

You had mentioned while we were setting up, you had something like ten of your Sunday school students then later went on to become ministers?

1-00:54:48

Hidy:

Oh, those are unbelievable stories. Well, one of the boys that came out to teach came from the navy. He was in the electronic school. His name was Earl Anderson. His father was a seminary professor. His father always said, “Well, Earl, you’ll end up in the ministry.” And Earl didn’t want any part of it. He said, “Dad, I’m not going to be a minister. I just am not interested.” Well, that was his attitude. And then he came to electronic school on Treasure Island. And then one day, he went to Cal, to the football game with a friend who wanted to go to the game. So after the game, they went to the student house and they talked to the students and then this student says, “Hey, we’re having a lot of fun. We’re going out to the housing area and teaching Sunday school! Come on out with us!” “Aw, we don’t want to come.” “Come on, we’ll have a great time!” So Earl came out with these students. Well, the time that he came, we just lost a Sunday school teacher so I said, “Earl, we’ve got a job that needs a guy like you. Here’s a Sunday school class and we’d like you take it.” So, he did. He taught that fall. Then he began to come out on Saturday. He stayed with us and slept overnight with us and then, after church, he taught Sunday school, went to church, he came back for the afternoon, and we went to Sunday evening, and then he would sing! With a trio or something. Then, on the second weekend of January, he got leave and he was going back to Rock Island, Illinois on holiday. And so we heard about this, we said, “Well, come home for dinner, and we’ll run you down to Alameda to the airplane.” So, he came home for dinner. We were eating dinner that noon, and in the middle of it, Earl said, “Well, my dad’s going to laugh.” I didn’t know what he meant and neither did Ev. So we said, “Earl, what are you talking about?”

He said, “Well, my dad always told me I was going to be a minister and I said, ‘No way!’ but I’m going to tell him when I go back, when I get out, I’m going to seminary.” [laughs] Well, I was kind of shocked. And he did. He went to seminary, became a pastor, had a fabulous ministry. We visited him two months ago in Eugene, Oregon, and he’s one of them!

A little kid that lived across from the community building, after I played the trumpet one day, he came to me and he says, “Brother Hidy, I got a trumpet, too. Can I play with you?” I said, “Sure.” I got a picture there of him standing with me at the front of the community building playing a trumpet. He went back to Oklahoma Baptist University and he went to Southwest Baptist Seminary. And in 1964, I was in Berlin at a World Congress on evangelism, I was in the press room and there was a guy next to me and I got to talk to him, John Selig, and he said, “Oh, I’m on the development office, Southwest Baptist Seminary.” I said, “You are? Did you ever meet a kid there named Harvey Kneisel?” “Oh sure! Harvey’s one of our fine young men! He’s a missionary now.” And I just simply said, “Oh, I remember leading him to the Lord back in the housing area in Richmond.” He said, “What?!” [laughs] I said, “Yeah, he got active in our program and was very active,” and he said, “Isn’t that a small world.” Well, Harvey has had an amazing life. He’s visited us here, I have a picture of him in the backyard. And we keep in touch. He’s one of them.

Of course, the unbelievable story is a kid named Roger. Roger lived around the corner from us in Harborgate. He was visited by Lois who got him to come to Sunday school. And then they were going to put a play on called “When the Chimes Rang.” Lois got him to be in that play. He had a part. And he became so active in the program and in the Sunday school that you really saw a transformation. We learned the heartache that this boy lived with. His mother had wanted to marry a fellow back in North Dakota but her father wouldn’t let him. Wouldn’t let her marry him because he wasn’t a Lutheran, he was a Catholic. Well, she was broken hearted and she was also pregnant. So she had to marry a Lutheran. But he wasn’t a very nice guy. And that family moved out. They had three other children when they came out. Roger was the older one. Roger told me that his step-dad would come home Saturday night drunk, he’d go out and drink beer and he’d come home, and he’s get mad thinking about this boy that wasn’t his boy and he’s go drag him out of bed and beat him up. And poor Roger would go to bed Saturday not knowing if he was going to get beat up or not. He didn’t only beat him up. Sometimes he threw him out of the house. And Roger would come around the corner and knock on our door. He would sleep on our daybed in the living room.

The big thing that happened to Roger is that when he started, he was a C minus student. He began to grow and he ended up in the honor roll. When he finished high school, he was in the state honor society. On one spring Sunday night, he came to me after church, and I remember he wanted to talk to me. We went out in the car, and he said, “Pastor, I want to be a minister.” I was absolutely stunned and I was also frightened because I thought, ‘Gee, his family sure won’t help him. I don’t know if it’s possible for this kid to go to college.’ And so I wanted to stall. I said, “Roger, that’s wonderful. I want you to think about it for two weeks.” [laughs] “And in two weeks talk to me again.” In two weeks, Roger says, “I’m even more decided. I want to be a minister.” So, to shorten the story, I was very unhappy about it because I didn’t think he’d do it. And then they sent me back east. I had to go back and I stopped at the home of a parish worker, Virginia {Hughesby’s?} home—

[interview interruption while recording media are exchanged]

Start Hidy, Ross2 12-01-04.wav

Cándida Smith:

—You asked him to think about for two weeks.

2-00:00:10

Hidy:

Oh, yeah. And then later, we were traveling back east and we had visited his family—

[interview interruption]

2-00:00:21

Third Voice, David Washburn, videographer:

Yeah, you're on.

2-00:00:23

Hidy:

Okay. My wife and I had to go back east and on the way back, we decided stop in Minneapolis and visit Virginia Hughesby's parents. She wanted us to do that. And so we did, spent a pleasant evening with them. Then I had some pictures that I had Ed Hill take and it showed different things. The family wanted to know what their daughter was doing and what it looked like, so I showed them that. We were going through all the pictures and one of them was a picture of a Sunday school class that Roger had recruited twenty-some young adults and high school kids. And just passing, I said, "It's a sad story because he would like to be a pastor but I know that's not possible because his family cannot help him and I think it's unfortunate." So, we went on. The next morning, when we came down, I came down the stairs and Ginny's father said, "pastor, would you come here?" He called me into his study—he had a lovely home up on a lake in Minneapolis—and he said, "I couldn't sleep last night." I said, "Oh, I'm sorry." "Oh, no, you don't understand. I couldn't sleep because of that young man that wants to go to college and be a pastor." And then he said, "You know, we always wanted a son, we only had one daughter. I think we would like to help him get a college education. Our daughter went to St. Olaf and we will send him to St. Olaf. We'll make arrangements and have him come back early, and we'll buy a wardrobe for winter weather and take care of him going to St. Olaf." Well, I couldn't believe it. And it happened!

In December of that same year, we had in the meantime been called back east to work on a project with European refugees and displaced persons and we were on our way back west. So, we had stopped there and were traveling through Iowa, making speeches, three a day, and I realized we were very close to St. Olaf. So, one night, we went up and visited Roger. And we found to our surprise that he could hardly walk. He had been injured playing basketball. He was scrimmaging under the basket and some guy had kneed him in the back and tore a muscle in his back. He could hardly walk, so he couldn't take Phys Ed, he couldn't do anything. All he could do was get to class and study. As a result, he was doing alright but then in January, his host who was taking care of his costs wrote to him and said, "Roger, I'm sorry to tell you, we've had financial reverses in my business. Next year I can't help you at college." And Roger was pretty disappointed.

But he kept plugging away in school and in March, the dean called him into the office. He said, "Roger, I have some interesting news for you. The faculty has been impressed with your

unbelievably fine record at school and you have been given a full scholarship for the rest of your years at St. Olaf, all your expenses will be cared for.” Well, that took care of that. And so Roger finished St. Olaf. Not only finished, he graduated *magna cum laude*. And then he went to seminary. And seminary, he got a scholarship from Lutheran Brotherhood. And so he went all the way through college and seminary.

It was a humbling experience for me, because here was a young man who wanted to go to college and instead of doing what I always told people should do, trust God and believe he will provide, I was looking at the problem, but not the promise! And it worked out. And Roger had a wonderful ministry, married a wonderful young woman. They’ve been here to visit us, sat at that table, and he told some stories while he was here. So he’s one of the young men that went into the ministry from Harborgate. Probably, one of the most unusual stories of all of them. But then, there’s about six other stories that are rather interesting, too.

2-00:05:11

Cándida Smith:

Do think this is because you were there? Not necessarily you personally but, because there was a ministry there—?

2-00:05:21

Hidy:

Yes, and I would say that I had a part but I surely wasn’t the whole reason. I think there were a number of reasons. The parish workers were just our secret weapon. They made calls, they met people, they brought them in. They helped strengthen the Sunday school, they helped the classes be there. Anyone who came, became a part of a class and a fellowship group. We had young peoples’ activities. We took them over to Muir Woods to a camp and they spent two nights there and went over to Muir Woods. In other words, we have them other experiences besides in the Sunday school and in the community.

I should mention that Richmond was not always kind to the people in the housing area. The kids in the high school had been taught by their parents, “Some of those folks in the housing area, we don’t want you to associate with them.” And one girl came and talked to one of our parish workers, she had a friend that she was beginning in high school. And then one day, he just said to her, “I’m sorry, I wanted to take you to the dance next week but I don’t want to.” And she found out that his parents had said, “She lives in the housing area, we don’t want you to go with her.” And this was a heartache for her. Now, that didn’t always happen but it happened some times.

Well, now, let me tell you, years later, I was having luncheon with the department heads at the University of California. We had a friend visit our church in Berkeley who was the head of the Sociology department at the University of {Heidelberg?}. He was coming through on a visit. And when Dr. Lucia, who was for many years a professor at Berkeley in Bio-statistics, she said to me when I said to her that this man from Heidelberg is coming, “We must have a luncheon for him! I’ll arrange it.” She said, “We’ll get the department heads to come. I’ve taught every one of them.” So, we were sitting around a table in the Faculty Club at Cal. Then she said, “Let’s go around and get acquainted.” And so they went around. When it came to me, she said, “Pastor, tell them what you’ve been doing.” So I said, “Well, we came West in 1943 and we spent years in the housing area out in Richmond.” As I said this, the faculty mouths dropped open. And they said, “You lived in the housing area in Richmond?” And I said, “Sure. There were wonderful

people. We had a great time.” Now this shows that there has been a feeling that the housing area is a group of not the finest people, which is terribly unfair and decidedly untrue. So that was one of the things that we found. But it was a great experience.

2-00:08:31

Cándida Smith:

What was your wife’s involvement in this? What is the responsibility or expectation for a Pastor’s wife?

2-00:08:37

Hidy:

She first got a job at the junior high. We had had to buy a car, had to pay it off, my income wasn’t much, so she took a job to help pay off the car. Then, later, she worked as a secretary for Dr. Henderson. But Eve has her degree in teaching in commercial subjects. She could have gotten a job in the shipyard office easily. But she didn’t. She stayed in the housing project and did what she did so beautifully. She taught Sunday school, she led the primary department of a hundred little kids, and she was just one of those amazing people who did things so well and so graciously that wherever she’s been, she’s been beloved.

2-00:09:34

Cándida Smith:

What was your relationship with the housing authority? Did you work closely with them, say social workers and—?

2-00:09:44

Hidy:

Well, I didn’t have an awful lot of reason to. I did have this one situation where I shared with you. Maybe I should tell that story.

2-00:09:56

Cándida Smith:

Maybe, yeah.

2-00:09:56

Hidy:

We had a family move in next to us. Usually the housing area Harborgate homes, two were put back to back. Of course, that’s functionally very good, you have all the water lines together for your two houses. And there was a family moved in, a father and an older daughter and younger twin boys. They lived in the house next to us, we knew them but didn’t really see them much. They didn’t come to church, although they did come once on a Sunday night. And then we realized that the daughter was pregnant. And I decided I would go visit her. It was one those difficult things, you want to find out what the situation is. So I said to her after we had chatted for a while, I said, “Help me understand, who is the father of your baby? Is it someone in the shipyard?” And she looked at me and says, “Oh, no! I wouldn’t do that.” And that kind of let me know what the situation was. I wasn’t sure exactly what I should do because this wasn’t an ideal situation, but—.

So I went to the social worker, a Mrs. Edgar at the housing area office, and talked to her about this, and I said, “I have a situation, our neighbor—” and explained it to her. She wasn’t very

pleased about it and didn't say a great deal more to me. But, a few days later, that family moved out. They had their car and a little trailer and they took their things and drove away. Didn't talk to me before they left. So, I was kind of uncertain about what had happened, but I was rather sure I knew what had happened, that Mrs. Edgar had made a decision and they had been asked to leave.

So that was really the only time I talked to the social worker. Most of the problems within the housing area were problems that we could handle just out of interest and kindness and cooperation with the members of the community, of what we called The Friendly Church of Harborside. [laughs]

2-00:12:36

Cándida Smith:

What was your relationship with the Kaiser shipyards or the {Ford plant? floor plan?}? did you go over there as part of the ministry?

2-00:12:46

Hidy:

It's really sad. As I look back, it's unfortunate that I did not do that. I should have gone right to the shipyard administration and talked to them. Because I think they would have been pleased and might even have shown some interest in it. But, we had financing from the Lutherans, we didn't lack financing. We had all the assistance from the housing area we needed. By the way, we decided towards the end of it that it would be nice to have some chimes. I knew a firm back east that had {Shulmaric?} chimes and they had a simple thing where you could play phonograph records through speakers, and we decided to get those. And so we bought some and the family members of the church made gifts and covered the expense. The housing authority put a little box on top of the community building with these speakers in it. Four speakers, different directions. At twelve noon, we would go down and play a record, a chime of a hymn, and also at six o'clock. It became a burdensome little chore, but we did it. We did contact the housing area for that.

Across the street from us was a two three-bedroom unit, back to back. And for a while, that was the clinic, one of the Permanente Hospital clinics. Later on, they found they didn't need it and they were going to terminate it. And we made arrangements to rent-to-buy it. We rented it. It cost us thirty, forty a month for each one, but it gave us a parish house. And we had study groups met there and youth groups meet there, committee meetings met there. Our youth meetings would have special little programs. And then I realized that we were having a real, fine program. So I wrote the housing area, and I said, "You know, I think it's fair for me to write and tell you what we're doing with these buildings and also we are doing all this with a limited budget. And I wonder if it would be possible that we could have the use of those two units without the expense." And I got a nice letter back, said, "Why, we surely agree. If you will give one dollar a month, you will have the use of both of them. That will keep it real on the record." And so we had fine relationships whenever we needed it with them. But that was a part of what happened.

I didn't tell you one story and I should. When we got to Richmond and started off, I remembered that at seminary they had told, "Whenever you go to a new parish, write a news release and take it the local newspaper. Tell 'em who you are and where you're going to be and what you're doing." So I wrote a little news release and I took it to the *Richmond Independent*. When I got to

the *Richmond Independent*, I found that the office, two great big rooms, were packed with people and they were busy as could be. Well, I found the editor and I introduced myself and gave him the news release. He looked at it and I said, “Well, we’ve just gotten here from Pennsylvania and we’re now going to be at the Harborgate Housing Project and take care of that ministry there.” He looked at me and said, “So what?”

Well, my seminary professor did not tell me that he would say that! I was kind of stunned and shocked and angry. So all I did was look at him, and I said, “Well, there’ll be news coming from there and I’ll see you get it.” And I turned around and walked out. Well, I can show you news stories with our scouts and the county fair we had that had a whole wonderful attendance, big story in the paper. And Isaac Mickens and our programs. So, we weren’t always welcome, but we had to earn our way. What the church did became important and so they covered the news.

2-00:17:42

Cándida Smith:

Did you get to know a reporter there? Was there a reporter you could call up and say—?

2-00:17:47

Hidy:

No. We would—. Well, I should tell you that my uncle in Philadelphia had probably the best news program you ever saw. I watched him and I knew what you should do. If you want a good news story in a newspaper, you do something worth reporting, and you give ‘em a good picture, and you send it to them early. So, because of that, wherever we were, we got excellent news, good coverage.

2-00:18:26

Cándida Smith:

What about your relationships with community organizations, civil rights groups, trade unions—other community groups but non-religious?

2-00:18:39

Hidy:

I had a surprise. We had been there about five years and I had a group come to see me from El Cerrito because some of our kids I guess, went there to school. But they came and they said, “We would like you to run for the school board.” I said, “No, I hadn’t thought of that.” They said, “We would like someone like you to be on the school board because we think you are concerned about the things that we are.” So I said, “I don’t have time to run or anything.” She said, “It’s no problem, we’ll take care of that.” So, the election was held and I’m a member of the El Cerrito School Board! And about June, I went to the first meeting, no about May. And one of the first meetings, we were reviewing the plans for a new junior high school. And that was a meeting I went to.

Then, I had a phone call from New York, saying that it was Dr. {Empy?}, the director of the National Lutheran Council. He said, “Ross, I want to call you back to New York in July, I want you to be here in July. I want to send you to Europe. We’re making a movie about refugees, about displaced persons. We have to have that movie on schedule. Church World Service has had a movie crew in Salzburg for a year and they don’t have a movie. I’m sending you over and we’re going to shoot a sequence in a DP camp and then we’re going to do a wrap around it, and

that will be released next January. So I have to have that done on time and you're my expediter, I'm sending you over." So I had to tell the people and Dr. Henderson that I had to leave in July. And I had to tell the El Cerrito School Board that I was leaving. And so I had to leave. And that was the only community position like that I had and I couldn't sustain it. But I had a fabulous time.

The other thing that happened, Dr. Empey said, "Bring your cameras. Because there's a lot to take pictures of." So, I went to Ed Hill, who was Henry Kaiser's top photographer. And I said, "Ed, I've got to go to Europe. They want me to bring cameras. I'm going to work with refugees." "Oh, you'll need a Speed Graphic, I'll loan you one." "I don't know how to use a Speed Graphic." "I'll show you." So, he started a two-week course, and he would take me out and have me take pictures. And in the middle of one of his training sessions, he looked at me and he got mad! He said, "Damn it all, Ross! I can't teach you what I learned in twenty-five years. But I tell you what I'll do. If you'll let me get with you and get permission, I'll buy my plane ticket to Europe and back." So, Ed Hill went with me to Europe. And we traveled together for seven weeks. And we became close friends. That's how my photography grew into another dimension.

And those are the answers to "Did I have a relationship with a reporter at the newspaper?" No. We didn't need it. We had access to Henry Kaiser's photographer. [laughs]

2-00:22:21

Cándida Smith:

Did you ever meet Mr. Kaiser?

2-00:22:23

Hidy:

I never did. I feel badly. I didn't meet Clay Bedford either. And I should have! I should have gone down! I really should have. Because, I guess I was focused on the housing area. Well, I was given some other assignments in the Church in the region but no, that was a thing I missed.

2-00:22:49

Cándida Smith:

Within the Church, you were working for Hoyer in Chicago, was there a regional person that you worked for?

2-00:22:59

Hidy:

Well, there was a regional coordinator in Seattle by the name of C.P. Rasmussen. And they moved him to Chicago. So then, Chicago called me and said, "Ross, we need somebody to coordinate the ten ministries on the West Coast and C.P. is leaving so I want you to do that." So, I would also now keep in touch with—if there were staff changes, I would work with that. If there were staff changes needed, I would recommend them. I became the West Coast coordinator and for two and a half years, every six months, I would fly to Chicago and meet for two days with the Mission Committee of all the Lutherans. And I would report on the West Coast temporary housing ministries. And that was a very, very important opportunity to learn. And I would report on—make recommendations about what should be done. And that broadened my interest.

It was a tremendous exciting thing when I got a phone call from Vancouver. Pastor {Howgsie?} called me, he was so excited, he said, “Ross! You gotta come up! Vanport!” Which had 40,000 people, near the race-track, between Vancouver and Portland on the flat area. They had built a great big earth {burm?} around this area and built these houses. There was a big flood in the Columbia River and the water came up and flooded all that area. And then the pressure of the water got under the burm. And the water began to come up inside of Vanport. And people had twenty minutes to get out. Not all got out. And so that ministry was just wiped out. And I had to go up there and we did follow up with the members who got scattered and helped them relate to other churches.

But, I would help set up a conference for all the people who worked in the West Coast, and arrange for meetings. Yeah, that was another thing I had to do. And that really led to my call to go to Europe.

2-00:25:39

Cándida Smith:

During while you were pastor at Harbogate, were there regular meetings of the other war ministry pastors?

2-00:25:48

Hidy:

Yeah, we met with Dr. Henderson periodically, full-time people did. And he kept touch with the weekend people. So, we kept in touch, and then of course, I knew what was going, because my wife was his secretary. [laughs]

2-00:26:07

Cándida Smith:

You had a lot of people in the housing projects who weren't used to living with each other, who came with all sorts of ideas about what other people were like. Some of this was race, but it wasn't only race. Some of it was religion, some of it was region. How did people get along given that they were coming from all over the place and had all sorts of ideas?

2-00:26:32

Hidy:

Well, the first thing that happened was, if they were strong in their denominational preference, they went to that church. They would go to Berkeley, they would go to Richmond, wherever their denominational church was, they would go there. And so that meant we didn't have that kind of theological disagreement. The one thing I did was I had them each Sunday, repeat the Apostles' Creed, which in liturgical churches is used all the time. Catholic churches, Episcopal churches, many churches use the Apostles' Creed. Not the Baptists. The Baptists have a statement, “No man-made creeds. We believe the bible.” So when we wanted to use this, I knew I had to do some interpretation. So, I preached a sermon which I called “The Thirty Second Miracle.” And I told them that one of the nice things about being a bible scholar is to know the highlights of the Bible teaching, and the basic truths. And I said, “In the early years, they began to use a statement. First it was Jesus is Lord. And then they expanded it and they developed what was called, The Teaching of the Apostles or the Apostles Teaching or Creed.” And I said, “The one thing I want you to know is that every phrase of that creed is based on the bible.” And then I went through the Creed and I went to the Bible passage that teaches that. And I went right to the

whole Creed. I said, “Now, if any of your are unhappy to use the Creed, tell me which part isn’t from the bible and we’ll talk about not using that.” They didn’t have anything that wasn’t from the bible. But what I would say here is that that was about the only thing we did where there could have been discussion or argument.

The second thing was, after a few years, I realized, these kids, some of them should be baptized. So I told the people that we were going to arrange for baptism and if any of the children, their parents wanted them baptized in Baptist Church, we’ve arranged with the Baptist Church down at 13th and Barrett and they will have the Baptism there. And the Baptism will be done by the Lutheran Pastor for the others who are willing to be baptized. And they’re not going to be baptized as Lutherans but as Christians in the Lutheran Family. And so I taught them the essentials for baptism. And then when they were taught about the Baptists, we drove downtown and the Baptists went in the Baptist Church and the Lutherans went in the Lutheran Church. And I told the kids, I said, “Now, look, we’ll have one ground rule. There are two ways to look at baptism and you’re not going to argue about it. Both ways are okay. Each way is as good as the other. And so you’re going to agree not to argue. Okay?” “Okay, we won’t argue.” So we didn’t. And that’s the way we handled that.

2-00:30:12

Cándida Smith:

What about working with Catholic families and Jewish families that were in the war housing?

2-00:30:16

Hidy:

There were very few Jewish people in the housing area. If they were, I mean I didn’t know a single Jewish family in the Harborgate project. Catholic families went to St. Mark’s Catholic Church. The Catholics had no staff in the housing area. If people came to them from the housing area, they ministered to them. But they were not a part of the Richmond Defense Area Council.

2-00:30:46

Cándida Smith:

Oh, they weren’t?

2-00:30:46

Hidy:

No.

2-00:30:47

Cándida Smith:

So that was a Protestant—?

2-00:30:49

Hidy:

Yeah, they were all Protestants. But there was no antagonism. And if we found anybody who was Catholic, we made sure they knew where it was. It was St. Mark’s Catholic Church.

2-00:31:00

Cándida Smith:

So you did refer people to a variety of churches—?

2-00:31:05

Hidy:

Well, it was interesting. The letter, I have a copy of the letter. We sent a letter to every home in which we said, "First, we're here to minister to people who wish to come. If you do not know where your church is, please let us know and we will tell you where the nearest church of your denomination is. If it's convenient for you to come, we welcome you to be a part of this group which ministers to people of many backgrounds, The Friendly Church of Harborgate." There was no misunderstanding. We weren't proselytizing. The fact is, in Chicago, they told me, "You're not going to organize church. You're going to minister to people."

2-00:31:50

Cándida Smith:

So you were not supposed to encourage people to enter the Lutheran community?

2-00:31:51

Hidy:

Oh, no. No. Now, when the whole thing ended, there was a residual group that moved over to Cutting, and one of the young men, Captain Harry {Durkie?}, who by that time was going to seminary, he became a kind of pastor for them and then they did organize Peace Lutheran Church. But that was by their decision.

2-00:32:23

Cándida Smith:

You had—Pastor Mickens worked with the black community in the war housing projects. Were there interracial activities where your people and Pastor Mickens' people came together?

2-00:32:37

Hidy:

Well, the most unusual time we did was on a Good Friday. One of my last Good Fridays, I realized that we were not having Holy Communion. If they wanted that, they would go to their church. But I realized that this was not good, that we should have Holy Communion. By that time, we had a beautiful church picture and an altar and an altar rail. So I went to Pastor Mickens and I said, "You know, on Good Friday, it would be nice to have a Holy Communion service together. Would you invite your people and would you help conduct it?" "I would be pleased to," he said. So we had Holy Communion and they came together and they came up and knelt together and received the bread and the grape juice, we didn't use wine out there. And it was a beautiful service. As we did this, I realized, here were Texan Baptists kneeling next to a black Baptist, you know? It was the first time they'd ever communed together. It's about time! [laughs]

So we did have a great fellowship.

2-00:34:10

Cándida Smith:

One of the things that you must have had to deal with was peoples' sense of worry about loved ones who were fighting for the war effort. How often was that a—how many people were affected by the war—?

2-00:34:33

Hidy:

There were hardly any families that didn't have someone. And we had prayers within our services as all churches did for that, prayer for protection for them. Our next door neighbor, Millie, was engaged to a fellow who was in the service, you know. Some of the kids who came and taught were in the Navy or were pilots. And this one that taught Sunday school, Earl Anderson, there was another one whose picture is there [points], he was in electronic school and he shipped out towards the end of the war. And I tell you, one of the most traumatic time in our church was when we had VJ day. The afternoon of VJ day on the news bulletin, the news that the Indianapolis had been sunk by a submarine. One of our teachers, Russ Ferguson, was on the Indianapolis. He had been assigned to it and shipped out as a radio operator. He lost his life along with many others on that ship.

It so happens that Russ had been in college where I went. And he had sung in the Glee Club that I directed. His father was my English professor. We were close friends. And I got a letter from them and I have the letter from them and my letter to them about Russ.

So, the answer to, "Did you have any opportunity to minister to them for their people in the service?" I sure did. And some of it, for example, our VJ service, a prayer of thanksgiving was a very mournful service because we were thinking of Russ who was lost, and had been a very active member while he was at school at Treasure Island. Oh yeah, we had a lot of contact with them.

2-00:36:56

Cándida Smith:

So a lot of people in the housing projects lost people over the course of the war?

2-00:36:59

Hidy:

Some did, yeah.

2-00:37:09

Cándida Smith:

One of the things that people say about Richmond is that it was a very unstable place, that people were violent during that period, there was unhappiness between the old-timers and the newcomers. What was your perception? You mentioned that people had a negative attitude towards the housing projects.

2-00:37:34

Hidy:

Well, I told you about the girl whose friend said, "I'm not going to take you to the dance. You're from the housing project." Our approach to that was to develop of self, a sense of worth, enjoy by being in the housing project, that they earned the respect of people.

For example, one of the boys, when we had a parade one day, he was a kid who had finished high school—no he had dropped out of school and gotten a job in the shipyard. And he was coming home from the shipyard, graveyard shift, and one of the kids in the parade saw him and said, "Carlos, don't watch us, join us." So Carlos stepped off the sidewalk curb and walked to Sunday school with him. And then he began to come to Sunday school. He quit his job, went

back to high school, he joined the track team, and Harvey told me that he was a star of the track team in the 220 and 440. And so, my point here is that Harborgate kids joined the ranks at the high school and earned their respect! And that was our goal. Our goal wasn't to stop fires, but to build bridges. And instead of letting them cut class, we made sure they went to school. And they didn't just get there, but they got in the honor roll. We had pretty high aspirations and we made sure they knew it! We expected great things from them. And it happened.

Now, our young people, every Sunday night—or not every Sunday night, maybe once a month—would go with the other young groups for an evening of singing at one of the churches. And that was a Christian endeavor hymn sing. I usually led that. We gave a banner to the biggest group from any church. And a number of times, our Harborgate got the banner. We had more young people there than anybody else. So, that's my answer. We tried to treat this positively. And it worked usually.

2-00:40:27

Cándida Smith:

And it sounds like the churches and faith organizations were very successful helping people put some stability in their lives.

2-00:40:35

Hidy:

I think it really did happen and it was a very, very reassuring thing. Well, for example, Ed Hill. When he came the first Sunday to take pictures, I had given him a list of ten pictures we wanted, and I came out front and I made an announcement, you know, and I said, "We're all going inside and take a picture in the auditorium." Later on, Ed said, "Pastor, I'm surprised. These kids do just what you tell 'em." And I said, "Well, the trumpet helps. I get their attention by blowing. And then when they're quiet, I tell them what we do next. And they do it. We don't have any problems." He said, "Well, the housing area, some kids are noted for not being very nice." I said, "Not Harborgate." [laughs]

2-00:41:31

Cándida Smith:

Did you ever have youth dances, things like that?

2-00:41:35

Hidy:

Well, they did have dances in the recreation department. And our kids would go to that sometimes. They had a jukebox in one of the rooms. And one night, we were having a Sunday night service, and some kid came in the room next to us and put a nickel in the jukebox. While we were having a service! I was so mad, I said, "Excuse me." And I walked out the door and went in that door and went to the jukebox and pulled the plug off the wire. And I looked at this guy and I said, "We don't play music during church service. You know better than that." So, he walked out. So I went back, we finished the service.

But, we didn't have much of that. We worked pretty closely together.

2-00:42:28

Cándida Smith:

As the war comes to a close and people are starting to figure out what's going to happen next with their lives, I guess the shipyards closed down very quickly, was there a change in your ministry after the war? Did you have a different set of problems to deal with?

2-00:42:48

Hidy:

There was a first group of workers who stayed for a year or two and saved their money and went back home. A typical example of that would be Fern Spence, who had three little girls. Three little steps, and they all had pigtails. She and her family were a delight. She was our Sunday school secretary. They moved back to Williamsville, Missouri, after a couple of years. And later on, we visited them, spent a couple of days with them. Had a wonderful—she wrote to us every year. And then finally one Christmas, we didn't get a letter and then we learned that she had died.

Now, there were different waves of workers. Some more skilled workers came at one time. The victory ships were a bigger, complicated ship. So, we worked with different groups. But, then came the veterans when the war was over and the GI's wanted to go to Cal. There wasn't any room in Berkeley. So, the University dealt with the housing area and got permission for them to move in vacant units. So, we had veterans come.

Two of them, I'll tell you quickly. We had a phone call, {Kaye McClary?} called and talked to Ev and they were coming from {Pullman}, Washington. Mac was out of the service, he was a captain in the army, he had been in the Reserves, he had fought in Guava Canal and a couple of others and then was brought back to be a teacher. Then they were coming down and the student pastor at Pullman had told them they should contact me. So, I got a call Evvie said, "Well, come on over for lunch." So, she told me, she said, "I don't have much for dessert. I only have one jar of canned peaches. If I like 'em, we'll have it. We'll have waffles." Well, she had peaches. They were delightful! They moved in two doors from us! And then Mac became active and became assistant scoutmaster. Kaye taught in the school and she and Ev had a junior choir. They became our closest friends and we kept in touch with them. Kaye died some time ago and Mac is in the hospital now in North Carolina.

But, the other one was Harry Durkee. Lillian Anderson made a visit over across the apartments and found a Captain Harry Durkee and his wife, Norma, from North Dakota. He was a patient at Letterman Hospital. He had been wounded in the Vosges mountains in France. A metal piece of a shell hit him in the skull and he had a thousand injections of penicillin. So, he came to church and they became active. I got him to teach Sunday school. He was a magician. He taught a junior boys' class. He would have these kids hanging on his words. If some kid got a little uninterested, a coin would appear in his hand. And the kids would just, "What's happening?" [laughs] He, then, became a pastor. So, great things happened

2-00:46:51

Cándida Smith:

A Lutheran pastor?

2-00:46:52

Hidy:

Oh, yeah. Yeah, he lives down in Burbank now. I talk to his wife. Harry now has a touch of Parkinson's. He had a great, great ministry.

2-00:47:09

Cándida Smith:

As you look back on those years, are there lessons that you feel were important to you, that out of that experience that shaped the way you approached the ministry subsequently, as you were assigned to other jobs in San Francisco and Berkeley, I think?

2-00:47:35

Hidy:

I was pastor in Berkeley, right by the campus, for five years. Yeah, and helped to start the seminary and later on worked with the Graduate Theological Union. I was a trustee.

I would say it deepened my sense that you should just meet people and love them and let them love you. And try to help them, meet their needs. In seminary, I had been taught to listen. I had a fabulous teacher, professor, and when I was back at seminary five years ago to get special award from the seminary, I talked to them that night and told them how much that one course meant. Where for two hours and one whole semester, we listened to case studies. The professor would read a case study and then he would pause and then he would read it again. Then he would say to the class, he had the whole student body, "What would you do?" And so somebody would offer an option, and then another one. And then he would tell them finally what happened, you know. But we learned you had to listen. [pronounced "lerssen"] to find out the thing that's hidden between what they're saying. And I would say I learned also in that housing area to keep on listening.

But I learned in Roger, "Don't tell God what he won't do." Roger wanted to be a pastor. Well, as his pastor, I should have said, "Yeah, and God will help you!" But I didn't do that. But God did help, despite me.

I would say yeah, the housing area, my wife and I agree it was our most fun parish. We had some interesting parishes. Twelve years at St. Mark's, the oldest church in the state and built five million dollars worth of redevelopment there on that block.

2-00:49:51

Cándida Smith:

That must be quite an enterprise.

2-00:49:56

Hidy:

Yeah, well, that's all the story in one of these books. I didn't bring that one out. The story of St. Mark's Square. Yeah, that was a fabulous experience.

2-00:50:14

Cándida Smith:

You were in the middle of—you were on the border between downtown and the Western addition between—

2-00:50:18

Hidy:

We were in the Western Addition.

2-00:50:22

Cándida Smith:

In the inner city, what have you learned about the role of the church in terms of addressing racial division in this country. Because you were right there in the heart of it, it seems.

2-00:50:35

Hidy:

I'd like to read you the letter that Mayor Alioto wrote. He said, "I had phone call from President Johnson, who said to me, 'Mayor Alioto, all the big cities in America are burning, why aren't you?'" And he said, "Well there was a little lady at St. Mark's Church that changed the city." And that's true. Her husband was a bus driver. And on Tuesday night, the night of Martin Luther King [Jr.]'s funeral, some kids got on the bus and robbed him and as they left, they shot him, and he died.

2-00:51:24

Cándida Smith:

And he was one of your parishioners?

2-00:51:26

Hidy:

I baptized, I married him to Dixie, his wife, baptized their children.

When we went to plan the funeral—I had to leave the Human Rights Commission to go to the mortician— and we were making arrangements for the funeral and we went to leave and I said, "Oh, I forgot one thing. The newspaper will want to know what do you want for memorial gifts. How do you want them used?" And Dixie looked at me and paused and then she said, "Instead of flowers, I would like memorial gifts in memory of my husband to be used for the children of Hunter's Point. He loved those kids a great deal."

And when I went back to my church that day, I thought on the way back, 'This story's got to get out.' So I called Hadley Roth, the mayor's secretary, and I said, "Hadley, a strange thing happened this morning. The bus driver's funeral is going to be held and the widow asked for memorial gifts for a fund to use for the children of Hunter's Point." I said, "I can write the news release, but I can't get it to the newspapers or the television station." "You write and it and get it down, I'll get it." So, I went down and I took one of them, and I said, "Look, Hadley, there's a TV station across the street from me, I'll take it there on the way back." So, I went over to the news station, Channel Five, and I told the girl, the secretary, I said, "I want to see the news editor." She said, "Well, give it to me, you can't go upstairs." I said, "Now, wait a minute, I have to talk to him personally. This is imperative." So, I went up and I gave this news release to the news editor.

He read it, what she wanted, you know, he looked at me and he said, "Will she read that on camera?" I said, "I'll find out." So I called Dixie and she was home. I said, "Dixie, Channel Five wants to know would you read that on camera for them for their news?" She paused, she said, "Do you think it would help?" I said, "Dixie, I think it might help a lot." "Okay. Where will I

come?" I said, "Well come to the church basement, our church there." So, then I told them that we would meet at four o'clock. So, they came with a camera man and with a still camera man. And Dixie sat down and I had a backdrop for her. She read this on the camera, very low voice, low-key, just simple. It was on the news, six o'clock. We watched it. It was very powerful. We watched eleven o'clock news and on the bottom it had, "Send gifts to St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 1111 O'Farrell." So the next morning, Good Friday, the newspaper came and the front page of *The Chronicle* had a three-column, center picture of Dixie, with a story! [laughs]

I went to church, to get ready for twelve o'clock service and the phone rang. It was a news editor, Channel Five, "Pastor, can you come over?" So I went over. He said, "Come here." He took me in his office, he said, "You know, we handle a lot of stories, we've got to kind of just handle them and not get involved. This strange thing happened after that news broadcast, every member of my team came in and put a gift on my desk! And as soon as the news was over, the lights came on, the telephone wouldn't stop ringing. 'Where do we send out gift?' So at eleven o'clock, we put it on the news. Saturday mail brought \$1000." So, did we have any action? That became the most important thing in racial relations in San Francisco. Mayor Alioto said she's got to be the most remarkable woman in the whole city.

The bus drivers were going to go strike on the day of her service. We could have had it on Saturday, but that was a bad time, so we said Monday. On Monday, the church was filled. All the supervisors from San Francisco were there. There were a hundred bus drivers there. It was videotaped and shown in Los Angeles. So, that's the answer.

But you see, people do that. It's not preaching, it's preaching to people who live the faith. And that's what Dixie did.

A year later, Mrs. Medgar Evers came to San Francisco. On that Sunday, they gave the first twelve awards to students in Hunter's Point. At the end of our church service. The Human Rights Commission chairman was there. Sister Mary Bernadette was there, she's the youth leader, and she announced the names and gave the hundred and fifty dollar scholarship to each kid. And the mayor came at three o'clock. And Medgar Evers' wife and Dixie were honored, yes, and the mayor gave the key to the city to Mrs. Evers and to Dixie {Whitten?}. It was a powerful day. [laughs]

So, I would say it's what people do that heals the racial divide. In the Human Rights Commission, one of the black members made a statement, she said, "Dixie {Whitten?} didn't blame all the blacks in Harborgate {Hunter's Point?} because four teenagers robbed her husband and killed him." Now, there's a secret, see. Dixie got a thousand letters after her story was in the *Readers' Digest*, letters from Europe, people who were touched by what she did. That's the answer. It always surprises you.

And Dixie, I keep in touch with her. I married her daughter, and we will keep in touch.

2-00:59:07

Cándida Smith:

That kind of faith, did it surprise you at he time?

2-00:59:15

Hidy:

Well, I was astonished! I was astonished because some people on the Human Rights Commission said, “Well, you got to her.” I said, “What do you mean?” “ You got to her.” I didn’t tell her to do that, I just said what do you want to do for memorial gifts. And she said it. I wouldn’t dare say anything like that to a widow who just lost her husband. And so, they said to me, “She just is like that.” And as the Mayor told her, it was from her innocence—oh, it’s in the *Readers’ Digest* article when he analyzed it. He went and visited Dixie and then his conversation with her, he realized, she wasn’t doing this to improve race relations, she was being a Christian, just doing what came naturally for her. And that’s the only secret for it, you know. That’s the only secret for Iraq. They hate us because we haven’t been Christian! It’s the sad things we could do in Africa and all the other places that we haven’t done that makes America a hated community today! We’ve got to wake up some time.

2-01:00:52

Cándida Smith:

But people are afraid.

2-01:00:56

Hidy:

Yeah, but that’s no answer. Dixie wasn’t afraid. She said, “Love’em.”

2-01:01:06

Washburn:

We have about one minute.

2-01:01:07

Cándida Smith:

Do you mind if we go a little bit further?

2-01:01:10

Hidy:

Go ahead.

[interview interruption while recording media is exchanged]

3-00:00:06

Cándida Smith:

Yeah, we’re back on, so you were saying, when you married—

3-00:00:11

Hidy:

Yeah, Dixie was an amazing person and I go back now to remember Dixie had met the fellow she was going to marry, and they were living together in a little apartment out by the Cow Palace. And I got to thinking they didn’t have a car. It was raining, they had to get to church, so I called, I said, “Dixie, can I pick you up and bring you to church?” “Oh, that would be nice.” So, I went out and got Dixie and Martin. We came to church. Two people met to be witnesses and it was an interracial couple. I took pictures of them, because I always bring my camera to private funerals—I mean, weddings because they should have a picture and if they don’t have a camera, well, I do. So, I took pictures. And so, when this writer was writing the story, he asked Dixie—

he was looking through the pictures, there was her wedding! And here was a couple with her and one of them was black and one was white. And he asked her about this. He said, “Do you belong to any interracial group?” She said no. “Well, I see that here, she is your friend.” “Well, I met her at the bank, and we were good friends, so I asked her to come be a witness at our wedding.” And he said to her, “As I listened to her, I realized, it’s her innocence that causes her to do this. It’s not a technique. She’s not doing anything unusual, she’s just being Dixie.” So I realized, that’s the reason she did what she did. And he’s right! And that’s what made it so amazing. That’s why on the way back to church that day, I said, “This has got to be known.” And so we got the story out.

3-00:02:36

Cándida Smith:

It’s hard for me to imagine a part in this for someone in your position to deal with that kind of situation, to be supportive, but also it looks like you receive back. {??}

3-00:02:55

Hidy:

Oh yeah, there was one thing I didn’t tell you about this. When I got to the mortician that day, the mortician met me and as we walked back to meet with Dixie—and her brother was with her—there were two men on one side and three bus drivers on the other side of the waiting room. And as we walked back, the mortician said to me, “By the way, those two fellows there waiting are from the utilities commission. They’re worried. The bus drivers are going to go on strike the day of the funeral. And the bus drivers are there to find out when was the funeral.” Now, I’m going back to arrange the funeral with a widow. And I got to do some quick thinking. This is Thursday. It can’t be Friday, it could be Saturday. No buses on Saturday before Easter? Everybody busy going shopping, going to church, getting ready for Easter? That’d be terrible! We can’t have it on Saturday, we gotta go to Monday! So, we decided that we would have it on Monday.

Well, the utilities people heaved a sigh, they’re glad, you know, it won’t be on Saturday. And the bus drivers say okay, so we did. So, as a pastor, you have to think of all these dimensions, every time you’re doing anything. Because there is more implications than people quickly see.

3-00:04:45

Cándida Smith:

Yeah, I was also thinking of the evil that happens in peoples’ lives and the difficulty for them to deal with {unknown?}.

3-00:04:58

Hidy:

That’s right.

3-00:05:01

Cándida Smith:

On a larger level, with war, we have the Holocaust, and Hiroshima, and the challenge that goes to people thinking about the way in which life is being diminished in a totally {brutal?} way, you, as a man of the cloth, how that challenged you to think through what are you going to tell people.

3-00:05:27

Hidy:

I visited a Rabbi in—let's see, where was that, I guess it was in Frankfurt—and talked to him and listened to him. As we went into the synagogue, it was a big hallway, and it was a whole bunch of flowers in vases. And I was seeing him the day after Kristallnacht when they damaged the synagogues and all.

3-00:05:59

Cándida Smith:

So you were a young man?

3-00:06:00

Hidy:

No, this is in a trip in Europe in 1964.

3-00:06:06

Cándida Smith:

Oh, it's the anniversary.

3-00:06:07

Hidy:

Yeah, it's the anniversary, later. And so I talked to him, and listened to him, the story, and "Where's your synagogue now? How many do you have?" And he tells me now what it is with not as many Jews around, but it is beginning to pick it up again. And here are the sense of grievance and regret and the flowers that the people sent to the synagogue. He took me over to the ark and he opened it up and he showed me the scrolls and talked to me about it. I took his oral history, fabulous experience.

Yeah, the Holocaust was horrible. I've been to Dachau. I have pictures of it. Man's inhumanity to man, you know. Great tragedy. I was on the radio for three years with a priest, a Rabbi, and I was a Protestant. And the Rabbi's wife's parents lost their lives. Whenever we did anything on this subject, it was not just an academic questions, but his family lived with it, you know. So did we. Bonhoffer was executed, you know. And Lilya was supposed to be executed. But he was in that community right near Nuremberg and it all fall apart. And so he never was taken out to be executed. Oh, we're in another big subject, aren't we? [laughs]

3-00:08:04

Cándida Smith:

After the war, there's a major growth in church attendance in the United States. I think you had at least in terms of your association with the Billy Graham Ministry, you had some role in this evangelical effort. I wonder how you explain the growth of church attendance. So you think there was a change in—?

3-00:08:31

Hidy:

Well, there was a rise, right then. And I think the churches were meeting people at a time of celebration and then, there came the new mood, which has gone now into a period where it is not as easy to draw people. But I don't know the answer to that. I think there are waves of interest in spiritual things. Yes, I've worked with Billy Graham, I worked with him in eight crusades—in Anchorage, Alaska, in Seattle, in Portland, and the one in Cow Palace when I was in San

Francisco. It so happened that one of my best friends in high school was in Wheaton and was the Baptist minister of the church, there. And then he went to Baltimore and Billy became the pastor of that church. So, when I met Billy in San Francisco, I said, "Billy, we have a friend in common, John {Balbach?}." "You know John?" I said, "Oh, yeah! My best friend in high school." So, it all goes back to personal contacts. This is what the world is held together by, personal relationships.

3-00:09:54

Cándida Smith:

You have a very optimistic attitude which is very impressive.

3-00:09:59

Hidy:

I can't help but be. I've seen what God can do if people give him a chance, you know?

3-00:10:06

Cándida Smith:

I think of one of your co-religionists who's a very influential figure in the middle of the century, Reinhold Niegler {Zeigler?}, but a darker vision of life. In your own thinking, how you balance your optimism with also the reality there are the children of darkness as well as the children of light, to use Niegler's phrase.

3-00:10:36

Hidy:

That's right, that's right. And in Hunter's Point, there were the children of darkness that killed Martin. But then, his wife was a child of light and she brought light into darkness. When she came back to San Francisco that day to get the key from the city, on Friday, she came out to Hunter's Point and the Channel Five news was there. We took a picture of her at Hunter's Point, looking over Hunter's Point. Then, one of the women who got a scholarship to go to San Francisco State was there and talked to Dixie as they thought about what this meant. It was a beautiful moment.

3-00:11:29

Cándida Smith:

Well, I think maybe we should close it.

3-00:11:40

Hidy:

Wrap it up.

3-00:11:44

Cándida Smith:

Is there something you would like to say? Something that I should have asked that I didn't?

3-00:11:51

Hidy:

Well, the only thing I would say is that the privilege of telling some of these stories has made me go back into my boxes of photographs and letters. I have letters from Roger. I have letters from Earl Anderson. I have letters from Harry Durkee. I have letters from people that were a part of Harborgate. I have talked to some of them on the telephone. And it has reawakened the story of

what happened in that little housing project there by the bay, in Richmond. It's been kind of fun to think about them again and to see these pictures and to remember that God is really faithful and his promises are true. And if we trust and obey, as the hymn says, [sings] "Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." Now, we had sing songs like that at Harborgate. And it caught! And it was infectious. And it changed lives. There's a jillian stories, now I'm going to have to write another book because this story has to be in print, too. And I think I will.

3-00:13:16

Cándida Smith:

Hope so.

3-00:13:17

Hidy:

Thank you for giving me the privilege.

3-00:13:18

Cándida Smith:

Thank you.

3-00:13:24

Washburn:

One more thing, what was the address of the building that used to be the Kaiser clinic that you said you guys took over?

3-00:13:29

Hidy:

It was on Meeker, on Meeker Avenue. And it was painted white. It was the only white building in Harborgate. It was two buildings together.

3-00:13:42

Cándida Smith:

It was right across the street from where you lived?

3-00:13:46

Hidy:

From where we lived, yes.

3-00:13:48

Cándida Smith:

Do you remember your address?

3-00:13:50

Hidy:

3106 Meeker. Technically, it was on the court, so it could have been a court address. But that's where it was.

3-00:14:04

Washburn:

What did you learn of the demolition of the Harborgate? What do you remember of learning of the demolition of Harborgate?

3-00:14:20

Hidy:

Well, I knew it was going down. Before they gave permission to build, the city council demanded that all temporary buildings be removed within five years at the end of the war. Because the real estate and construction group in Richmond didn't want to lose that business. Then they built a big Safeway Depot where Harborgate was. That was there for a while, then it burned down. And then, they didn't rebuild it. But they put other things there. I flew over it one time, coming in, and here, I could look down and I could see where all the courts and street were. They hadn't put that in yet. And somewhere in my garage, I have that slide. I looked for it yesterday, I couldn't find it. But that's an interesting nostalgic picture. Empty streets where the people lived.

3-00:15:30

Cándida Smith:

Of course, it's the people that can't really—[inaudible]

3-00:15:35

Hidy:

And that cookbook is a kind of little interesting thing, I'll find that. I couldn't find the quilt, I'll have to find that. It's in a box out there, and I tried to get it yesterday but I couldn't reach it. I thought that might be worth a—well, they'd like to display it maybe at the museum.

3-00:16:10

Cándida Smith:

Well, you were dealing with a congregation—congregation is probably not the right word—dealing with a group of people who would be tested in many ways, asked to sacrifice when—I wonder how that compared with subsequent congregations you had where people were more affluent, when time were better? People are always being asked to sacrifice in ways they don't know but in the War, everybody—

3-00:16:36

Hidy:

Well, I want to be honest. The people in Harborgate did not give too much to the ministry. They made offerings and they made gifts which we sent to some benevolent causes. But I've had different types of churches, no two churches alike. The most affluent parish I had was in Mercer Island, very rich community. And it was also the most difficult parish I ever had. As I said, it was all chiefs and no Indians. But, you meet 'em where they are, you know. But after seven years, I came back to California, came to the church here on Clayton Road, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, and stayed there until I retired.

3-00:17:34

Cándida Smith:

And have stayed in the area since.

3-00:17:36

Hidy:

Yeah, we had bought this home. And my wife is a key worker in the {Lolbach?} program here. They have over one hundred volunteer tutors out every week teaching English as a second language. It's the largest literacy program in the Bay Area. And she's a tutor/trainer. And so we

have stayed here because she likes this work and they enjoy it and why move? I have a computer here, printer [laughs], books, yeah.

Interview with Ross Hidy and Evelyn Hidy
Interviewed by: Richard Cándida Smith
Transcriber: Nadine Wilmot
[Interview # 2: 12-15-04]
[Begin audio file Hidy, Ross 4 12-01-04.wav]

4-00:00:07

Cándida Smith:

We're back two weeks later with Reverend Ross Hidy and his wife, Evelyn, has joined us this time. Evelyn, I wonder if you could just tell us a little bit about your background, where you were born and raised and—

4-00:00:22

E. Hidy:

I grew up in Trenton, New Jersey, and lived there until we were married. And went to school at Temple [University] and met Ross while I was there.

4-00:00:35

Cándida Smith:

And what did your father do for a living?

4-00:00:37

E. Hidy:

He was a wholesale grocer, but it was of things like pickles and mustard and things like that that during the Depression people could do without. So, then my mother, at that point, baked beans in the oven and things like that to help out.

4-00:00:55

Cándida Smith:

And how did you come to meet Ross?

4-00:00:58

E. Hidy:

Well, he was at Temple and my sister had graduated in June. And then I went the following September. And there was a football game so she had come down for the game and we were standing outside the big hall, there, on Broad Street. And she said, "Now, there goes one of the nicest men at Temple." He was across the street. And he came across the street and came over and she introduced us. And four years later we were married. [laughter from Reverend Hidy]

4-00:01:27

Cándida Smith:

So did you start seeing each other at that time or—?

4-00:01:30

E. Hidy:

I was commuting so we saw each other at school.

4-00:01:36

Cándida Smith:

At school, right. Were you raise dint he Lutheran Church as well?

4-00:01:38

E. Hidy:

Yes, mm-hmm.

4-00:01:39

Cándida Smith:

Did you know that Ross had been planning on going into seminary?

4-00:01:44

E. Hidy:

Not when I met him. [laughter from everyone] And it caused a problem because his uncle thought that he shouldn't go to the dances after he entered the seminary.

4-00:01:56

Cándida Smith:

Oh, really?

4-00:01:56

E. Hidy:

Yeah. But we worked that out.

4-00:02:00

Cándida Smith:

Is it that seminarians shouldn't dance?

4-00:02:03

R. Hidy:

Oh, my uncle was a bit of a pietist and he thought that we shouldn't go to dances after I entered seminary. We changed his mind on that.

4-00:02:12

E. Hidy:

Well, he was directing the Men's Glee Club so we worked it out that the Glee Club sang at every dance, so then we went to more than we would have otherwise. [laughs]

4-00:02:21

R. Hidy:

Yeah, we sag at intermission and we heard Glen Miller and Glen Gray and Artie Shaw and Bunny Barrigan, all the great bands.

4-00:02:31

Cándida Smith:

Yeah. Did you like jazz, too?

4-00:02:36

E. Hidy:

I could take it or leave it.

4-00:02:39

Cándida Smith:

[laughter] But you liked to dance.

4-00:02:41

E. Hidy:

I liked to dance, yeah.

4-00:02:42

Cándida Smith:

How long were you married when you two got the call to move to California?

4-00:02:50

E. Hidy:

Just two years.

4-00:02:53

Cándida Smith:

So you had already been married for two years. And you had already settled into the life of being a pastor's wife, then?

4-00:03:00

E. Hidy:

Not really, because he was the assistant pastor, and that's quite a different thing when you have a very—how should I describe him?

4-00:03:12

R. Hidy:

Successful? Oh, you mean big church?

4-00:03:14

E. Hidy:

Yeah, a big church and a successful pastor, then the assistant pastor's wife doesn't really have that much to do. And I was working.

4-00:03:22

Cándida Smith:

What kind of work were you doing?

4-00:03:24

E. Hidy:

I was working as a secretary at the Psychology department.

4-00:03:27

Cándida Smith:

Oh, at Temple.

4-00:03:27

E. Hidy:

At Temple.

4-00:03:28

Cándida Smith:

So, do you recall your feelings when you learned that you were going to be going to Richmond, California?

4-00:03:39

E. Hidy:

I remember them quite well because I hadn't even been as far west as Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. [laughs] So it seemed like the end of the world. I remember Ross going to the library and looking up Richmond and coming back and telling me, "It's fourteen feet above sea level." That was the only thing we could find out about it.

4-00:03:56

R. Hidy:

It was in an atlas. It didn't have much on Richmond.

4-00:04:03

Cándida Smith:

And so, what was life like for you when you arrived in Richmond?

4-00:04:08

E. Hidy:

When we moved finally from the motel into an apartment, it was fine until we discovered that there were about 20,000 cockroaches living there with us. But they were the little ones, not like they have down South. But it was—it was just very interesting. And it was something that we just sort of worked out as we went along.

4-00:04:35

Cándida Smith:

Now, you got a job as well when you were in Richmond as I recall?

4-00:04:38

E. Hidy:

I worked as the secretary to the principal of the junior high school where the kids from Harborgate went. I went in to get a job as a teacher but found out that you had to have five years and I only had four years of college.

4-00:04:54

Cándida Smith:

Did you ever go back and get a teaching credential?

4-00:04:57

E. Hidy:

No.

4-00:04:57

R. Hidy:

No.

4-00:05:00

Cándida Smith:

Maybe you could describe to us what the responsibilities of a pastor's wife are?

4-00:05:06

E. Hidy:

Oh my goodness. [laughter] I've always felt that she should do what she would expect somebody else in a similar family situation should do. I think that varies with who they are. And I never had any problem with that.

4-00:05:22

Cándida Smith:

Okay. Well, then, how did you define your own level of involvement? Since it's very personal, obviously.

4-00:05:29

E. Hidy:

Well, I was always a part of the women's group and when—before we had children, I would teach Sunday school and then as they got older, why, I went back to that. I don't know, just—I didn't ever sing in the choir, I didn't impose that on them. But it was just a case of doing what other women were doing.

4-00:05:53

R. Hidy:

But you accompanied the evening service.

4-00:05:56

E. Hidy:

Oh, at Harborgate, yes. I did play the pump organ that we had, only every once in a while, I would forget to pump. [chuckles from Mr. and Mrs. Hidy] But I learned to play hymns like "He's the Lily of the Valley" and ones that I'd never heard before.

4-00:06:13

Cándida Smith:

Did you have responsibilities for cooking and entertaining and that sort of thing?

4-00:06:20

E. Hidy:

We did quite a bit of it when we were in San Francisco and other churches but in Harborgate, it was just very informal. It was mostly the people that we worked with who would eat with us and come after church and so on.

4-00:06:41

Cándida Smith:

To what degree were you/have you been involved in the pastoring duties on some kind of assistant level?

4-00:06:51

E. Hidy:

None.

4-00:06:52

Cándida Smith:

None.

4-00:06:53

E. Hidy:

Except folding bulletins and things like that. [chuckles]

4-00:06:56

Cándida Smith:

Okay. So, maybe you could describe living conditions in Harborgate. You had two apartments there.

4-00:07:08

E. Hidy:

Well, the one was an apartment and that was with thirteen families. And they would not let you move because you had roaches. So, we stayed there for a year and finally, they let us move over into Harborgate, itself. And those were little individual houses that were very close to the next one. But we shook every paper and we never found another roach. So, actually, it was fine over there. Those were furnished apartments, or furnished houses, really. We had two bedrooms and Ross used one as a study. And it worked out fine.

4-00:07:45

Cándida Smith:

And the places were comfortable? Were they warm enough?

4-00:07:48

E. Hidy:

We had a kerosene stove and every once in a while one of the people would forget to go get kerosene. And then it would be cold. But, if you remembered to get your kerosene and you were careful with it, why, it was safe enough.

4-00:08:02

Cándida Smith:

You must have gotten to know a number of the other women in the projects. I would imagine that various things that happened from washing to whatever.

4-00:08:16

E. Hidy:

Right, and we had a women's group that met and so it was a very—that was a pretty close group.

4-00:08:26

Cándida Smith:

What were some of the things that the women's group did? Was it primarily bible study or—?

4-00:08:32

E. Hidy:

We would have a bible study when we met and then that would be the group that would have a supper or we had—didn't we have a Thanksgiving? [to Reverend Hidy?]

4-00:08:44

R. Hidy:

Yeah, we had a Thanksgiving dinner, you made choir robes.

4-00:08:47

E. Hidy:

Yeah, that's true.

4-00:08:48

Cándida Smith:

Did you, as a group, do things like make socks for the soldiers overseas?

4-00:08:53

E. Hidy:

No, because most of them were working.

4-00:08:56

Cándida Smith:

Oh, in the shipyards.

4-00:08:57

E. Hidy:

In the shipyards, yeah.

4-00:08:59

Cándida Smith:

Did the women talk about their experiences on the job much?

4-00:09:05

E. Hidy:

I really don't remember much about that. I think they were just glad to get away from it. So.

4-00:09:10

Cándida Smith:

And what about they're husbands. Did they're husband mind them working as far as you knew?

4-00:09:18

E. Hidy:

Oh, I don't think so. I think that was part of the bargain when they came. I think most of them had to.

4-00:09:24

Cándida Smith:

Yeah, okay. Sounds like there was a very active social life in Harborgate. To what degree was that because you guys were at the center of this church activity and to what degree were people in Harborgate socializing with each other all the time.

4-00:09:49

E. Hidy:

There wasn't that much socializing I don't think except for us with the group that we worked with. You had people who were your own age or sometimes a little bit older because we were pretty young at that point. And so we socialized a lot with them. But you were so busy doing things that you didn't stop to think about that.

4-00:10:12

Cándida Smith:

Well, maybe we could start looking at some of the photographs. You've got a really nice archive of pictures on the Harborgate ministry. These are some of the pictures that you'd like to share and—

4-00:10:29

R. Hidy:

Well, this is a little boy! [referring to photograph] Do you want to comment about Tonto? [to Evelyn]

4-00:10:36

E. Hidy:

I don't remember too much about him.

4-00:10:38

R. Hidy:

Well, you used to tell bible stories to him and one day he said, "Jesus got a new bathrobe." Remember?

4-00:10:44

E. Hidy:

No.

4-00:10:44

R. Hidy:

Don't you? I remember that! [laughs than pauses while shuffling through papers and photos] I should have organized these—[interview interruption]

4-00:10:55

Cándida Smith:

Okay, well, I also wanted to talk to you about just sort of the everyday aspects of life during the War. We all know about rationing and the use of coupons. How did you make ends meet as a young wife? Was it easy enough to get what you needed to make meals and that sort of thing?

4-00:11:19

E. Hidy:

Well, you adapted. So you cooked what you could get. But, we would run out of sugar and there was a family that had ten children. And so they would give us their sugar coupons and we would give them our shoe coupons because we could make our shoes last a lot longer than they did. And I'll never forget going down to their house for dinner. They had a big table, and all these thirteen people around the table. It was very interesting.

But, we had trouble getting meat and then eventually we were able to get a side of beef but we didn't realize it was a utility beef and it was tough as it could be. But we had it in the freezer and so we continued to eat it and have pot roast every Sunday.

There is sort of a funny story about one of the men that Ross mentioned to you, Mac McClary and his wife came down and he was going to be a student at Cal, on his doctorate. And someone had recommended that they get in touch with Ross if they needed housing. So, they called and

they were going to come over and we were going to have them for lunch. And I said to myself, “Okay, if I like them, they’ll get the last jar we have of peaches, and if I don’t, they won’t get any dessert.” [laughing in the background from Ross] And so, later on, I told them why they had gotten the peaches. [laughs]

So, you sort of spread things out.

4-00:12:51

Cándida Smith:

How did you get the coupons, were they mailed to you or did you have to go somewhere to pick them up on a regular basis?

4-00:12:56

E. Hidy:

You know, I don’t remember. I have no idea. In fact, somewhere I still have a ration book. But you had books and then you had so many coupons that came with it, and they were just little things.

4-00:13:09

Cándida Smith:

Did you get—did Ross because he was the pastor get special allocations?

4-00:13:16

E. Hidy:

The only thing he got was gasoline. He did get a ration for gasoline because he was a pastor?

4-00:13:22

Cándida Smith:

Was it easy enough to get gasoline?

4-00:13:24

E. Hidy:

Oh yeah, if you had the coupon, yeah.

4-00:13:27

Cándida Smith:

I mean, it sounds like food, there was enough food, but you didn’t know what was going to be—

4-00:13:32

E. Hidy:

No, that was when you learned about spam and—one of the girls who came out and worked with us, her father had developed that.

4-00:13:44

Cándida Smith:

Oh, spam?

4-00:13:45

E. Hidy:

Yes. So we knew about it early. [laughs]

4-00:13:52

Cándida Smith:

What about washing? How did you wash clothes?

4-00:13:57

E. Hidy:

Well, that was a little tricky because we would—one of the women who lived several doors down told me that I could use her washing machine. And so, I would gather up all my clothes and take them over to her house and wash them and bring them back. And then after the McClary's moved in, Kay had a washing machine and so my sister-in-law, who also lived in the project, and I would both take our clothes over the Kay's and we'd wash 'em all at the same time and then sort 'em out and take them home and hang 'em up.

4-00:14:24

Cándida Smith:

Did you have to get soap ration as well?

4-00:14:27

E. Hidy:

You know, I can't remember. I don't know.

4-00:14:31

Cándida Smith:

Then I wonder did the church provide you with some kind of extra assistance? I would think probably—maybe I'm wrong on this—but I would think that the young pastor was probably making a lot less money than most of the shipyard workers.

4-00:14:51

E. Hidy:

Well, that's true, except we didn't have to pay for housing.

4-00:14:54

Cándida Smith:

Ah, okay.

4-00:14:57

E. Hidy:

So, the church paid for the housing. And I don't remember ever actually running out of money.

4-00:15:03

Cándida Smith:

Yeah, well, you made do.

4-00:15:04

E. Hidy:

Yeah. [chuckles]

4-00:15:06

Cándida Smith:

One of things people say is that there wasn't—people had more money than they were able to spend given the scarcity of some of the things.

4-00:15:17

E. Hidy:

Yes. Well, and everybody was in the same boat, so, you didn't worry about it.

4-00:15:25

Cándida Smith:

What did the two of you do for entertainment while you were in Richmond? Did you go to the movies or did you continue going out to dances?

4-00:15:32

E. Hidy:

No. [laughs] Um, let's see. Mostly, we were just very involved with the project. I really don't remember ever going to a movie. And I don't remember what else we did. [laughs]

4-00:15:48

Cándida Smith:

Did you explore the area, you know, coming to the bay area for the first time?

4-00:15:53

E. Hidy:

Well, yes, we did. We went over to the beach and around when we—but Ross has never been very good at taking a day off, so we mostly worked. But we did go to Yosemite for the first time and took sleeping bags and a stove and everything else up with us on the train and in the bus. Because somebody had told us we had to do that as soon as it was nice. So we had quite an experience with that.

4-00:16:31

Cándida Smith:

So you camped out.

4-00:16:33

E. Hidy:

We camped out and it was just before Memorial Day so there was hardly anyone there. So, it was great.

4-00:16:38

Cándida Smith:

That's nice. Did you go back home periodically? How did you keep in touch with your family?

4-00:16:50

E. Hidy:

My folks came out every once in a while. Ross' folks were in Portland and they came down. We went back occasionally but not very often. It was too expensive. So unless he went back for a meeting or something, why then, we didn't go.

4-00:17:15

Cándida Smith:

[To second interviewer, David Washburn] Do you have any questions?

4-00:17:16

Washburn:

I was going to ask, where did the women in Harborgate go shopping for their goods? Can you describe the scene there? Was there a supermarket that everyone frequented?

4-00:17:32

E. Hidy:

Not right in the project, but you just went down into Richmond and shopped. And if you really wanted clothes or anything, you had to over into Berkeley. Because it was just housing and then the school. All those things don't register anymore.[laughs] I just don't remember exactly what we did.

4-00:17:59

Washburn:

Being in downtown Richmond, did you have a sense of interacting with folks who you knew from Harborgate, would you see there? When did you start to get a sense of "I belong here," in some ways? How long did it take for you to start adjusting to feeling like this town was all so—?

4-00:18:26

E. Hidy:

I don't think we ever really felt a part of Richmond itself. We felt a part of Harborgate and that was like a little town in itself. And the people there were very warm, really. And I think it was the first or second Christmas, after we move over into Harborgate itself which is quite different than living across the railroad tracks on the other side, they came with a quilt. Did Ross mention that?

4-00:18:55

Cándida Smith:

He did mention that, but it would be nice if you just told your version of the story.

4-00:18:59

E. Hidy:

It was very interesting because they came with this quilt that they had made, they called a Friendship Quilt. And it was made from—the pieces that they put together were from dresses that actually they had worn. And so, as you looked at it, you could see that person in that dress. It was very nice.

4-00:19:24

Washburn:

Why was Richmond in some ways not welcoming, when you said you felt like Harborgate was your community? What was not so warm for you in Richmond?

4-00:19:34

E. Hidy:

Well, the church, the Lutheran Church was very welcoming to us. But the city itself suddenly had this huge number of people that had descended on it, and we had everything we needed in Harborgate, really. And we were very, very busy down there.

One of the cute things I'll never forget was standing there ironing Ross' shirts, and this little boy who must have been about seven, I guess, standing there watching me. And finally he said, "Oh,

you do that so well!” [in awestruck tones] And I felt so proud of myself that I could actually iron his shirt, I felt very good, I’d ironed it just right, and folded it up, and he was so impressed. So the kids used to come over a lot.

I remember one time when I decided that we would freeze asparagus, and I didn’t know very much about it. But we had rented this locker downtown. And so—several of the little kids from next door came over to help. And I cut up all the asparagus and put all the hard ends right in with it. And it was the worst stuff you ever ate in your life! [laughs] But they thought it was great.

4-00:20:59

Cándida Smith:

Did you grow food? Were there community gardens?

4-00:21:00

E. Hidy:

No, mm-mm. It was all just housing.

4-00:21:06

Cándida Smith:

Was that because people didn’t have time to grow food? To have victory gardens?

4-00:21:12

E. Hidy:

They had victory gardens up in that town but there really wasn’t any space in Harborgate for anything like that.

4-00:21:21

Cándida Smith:

What about recreational programs for the residents?

4-00:21:26

E. Hidy:

The big building that was there was called the Rec Hall. And they did have recreation director and she had programs for the kids.

4-00:21:34

Cándida Smith:

So, primarily for the kids.

4-00:21:36

E. Hidy:

Mm-hmm. Well, as I say, all the people were working. So they really didn’t have much time.

4-00:21:44

Cándida Smith:

People were working six days a week? Seven days a week?

4-00:21:48

E. Hidy:

I don’t remember.

4-00:21:54

Cándida Smith:

It might vary, I suppose. Maybe you could just describe what a typical Sunday would be like for you?

4-00:21:59

E. Hidy:

For us? Well, we would get up and go down—Ross would blow his trumpet and the kids would start to come, and we would have Sunday school. We had about a hundred kids in the primary department and I was in charge of that. And then, after Sunday school, we had church and we had a children's church because there wasn't room to have all the kids go into the room where we had church. So we had that, and then we would go home. And usually the people that were working with us—sometimes it was two and sometimes, during the summer, it would be four or five—would come and have dinner with us. Then, in the afternoon, I can't remember what we did. And then we usually had church again at night. And then, afterwards, people would come back to the house. But we learned how little you could get along with.

4-00:22:58

Cándida Smith:

And Sunday school, was there any way in which the Sunday school lessons are different because the war was going on?

4-00:23:05

E. Hidy:

I don't think the Sunday school lessons were but when we had Bible school, I remember we couldn't find material that we felt was appropriate for in the housing area. Just because of the children that we had. It was meant for an established church. And so we wrote our own. So, I had had some training in teaching, so we wrote the whole thing out and we had our aims and we put everything together, you know, the handwork and the memory work and the stories, and the whole bit.

4-00:23:44

Cándida Smith:

Now, this was because this was ecumenical and so you were dealing with people from many different Protestant backgrounds?

4-00:23:53

E. Hidy:

Yeah, but they were just ordinary kids and we just didn't like what the other groups were putting out because it usually had an angle to it. [clock begins to chime]

4-00:24:03

Cándida Smith:

An angle, I'm not quite—

4-00:24:07

E. Hidy:

I mean a Lutheran angle or a Methodist angle or something and we felt that what they needed was just real basic stuff.

4-00:24:20

Washburn:

How much of the material that you guys wrote, did it relate to current events, were there at all any parables that you integrated into the curriculum that had to do at all with the war and what these kids knew was going on?

4-00:24:42

E. Hidy:

No, we didn't—it was all Bible study. And then you'd relate as you taught it yourself but we didn't try to work that in.

4-00:24:53

Cándida Smith:

Did you have to deal with issues of people losing close family members? Did that come up?

4-00:24:59

E. Hidy:

It did come up because—it came up in a very real way with us when one of the fellows that had taught, come out from Treasure Island to teach Sunday school was lost. So that affected all of us.

4-00:25:17

Cándida Smith:

Was this a—how frequent of an occurrence was it that people in the projects lost somebody in the war?

4-00:25:26

E. Hidy:

It wasn't actually that frequent with the people that were active in our group. I'm sure it was frequent as far as the total group was concerned.

4-00:25:40

Cándida Smith:

So, your church covered what do you think—ten percent of the population, twenty percent, fifty? Do you have any sense?

4-00:25:51

E. Hidy:

I really don't. We had, of course, many more children involved than we had parents. So, I don't know how you'd figure that out.

4-00:26:02

Cándida Smith:

Did anybody ever complain about Ross blowing the horn?

4-00:26:05

E. Hidy:

Just the first time he did it. The man across the street didn't like it because it woke him up. Then Harvey started to blow it with him and it all worked out.

4-00:26:18

Cándida Smith:

It all worked out. The guy who complained learned to live with it.

4-00:26:24

E. Hidy:

I think so, yeah.

4-00:26:25

Cándida Smith:

What kind of tunes was Ross playing?

4-00:26:29

E. Hidy:

He would play hymns. And then eventually, we got the {carol on?} which was put on top of the building. And then that played hymns. And so, then they played those, I think it was at noon and six, I'm not sure.

4-00:26:46

Cándida Smith:

So, Sunday school started what time?

4-00:26:50

E. Hidy:

Probably ten, I don't remember.

4-00:26:54

Cándida Smith:

And did you have midweek services?

4-00:26:56

E. Hidy:

No.

4-00:26:59

Cándida Smith:

No. So then Monday through Friday, you were at work.

4-00:27:02

E. Hidy:

Well, during the day, yeah.

4-00:27:10

Cándida Smith:

And there were a number of seminarians that were working with you. Maybe you could—

4-00:27:20

E. Hidy:

There wasn't any seminary then out here for the Lutheran Church, but they were people from the student house in Berkeley, the Lutheran student house, who came out and then eventually they went to seminary. And some of them, like Harry Durkee hadn't been intending to go to seminary at all, but ended up going. They were just kids that came out from there. And then several fellows that came over from Treasure Island who were in the Navy. And they would come over on Saturday night and stay overnight. One would sleep on the couch, and one would sleep on the floor on the pillows from the couch. And so it was very much a family.

4-00:28:06

Cándida Smith:

And you did this for five years?

4-00:28:11

E. Hidy:

Just about. Mm-hmm.

4-00:28:11

Cándida Smith:

Just about, '43 to—

4-00:28:13

E. Hidy:

We left in '49, yeah.

4-00:28:18

Cándida Smith:

Did you travel with Ross when he was the West Coast Director—?

4-00:28:22

E. Hidy:

No, I didn't.

4-00:28:21

Cándida Smith:

So you just stayed in Harborgate.

4-00:28:23

E. Hidy:

No, no, when he was West Coast Director, we lived in Walnut Creek actually in back of what is now the John Muir hospital.

4-00:28:36

Cándida Smith:

So, you got your own house, then

4-00:28:38

E. Hidy:

We had a house out there for two years, complete with a pump that would go dry and a horse that we had. It was quite an experience. Since I don't ride or know anything about horses.

4-00:28:51

Cándida Smith:

But you had to feed the horse.

4-00:28:52

E. Hidy:

Well, our son was supposed to feed the horse. In between those times we had adopted two Latvian war orphans.

4-00:28:58

Cándida Smith:

Oh, I see.

4-00:29:00

E. Hidy:

And then we also had Carol who was born while we were in Berkeley. And then Paul was born just six weeks before we moved to Walnut Creek. So that kept me busy.

4-00:29:14

Cándida Smith:

Yeah. Four children. So you stopped working for a while.

4-00:29:18

E. Hidy:

I stopped working when we left Harborgate. [voice of Reverend Hidy in the background in another room]

4-00:29:51

Cándida Smith:

So, you were saying that you worked for Reverend Henderson?

4-00:29:56

E. Hidy:

In the Council of Churches office for awhile.

4-00:29:58

Cándida Smith:

What kind of work were you doing?

4-00:30:00

E. Hidy:

Just strictly secretarial. And I did bulletins and all that sort of thing, letters.

4-00:30:05

Cándida Smith:

This was after the war?

4-00:30:07

E. Hidy:

No, this was during the war, yeah, after I worked at the school for several years and then I worked for him for about a year.

4-00:30:13

Cándida Smith:

Could you tell us a little bit about Reverend Henderson? What kind of a man he was?

4-00:30:19

E. Hidy:

I think the thing that would stick out about him was he was very gracious and very kind. He wasn't dynamic in any way but he worked very hard. I think his kindness more than anything else would be what I would remember about him.

His wife had died shortly before we came out here. But he and his children came out and one of his daughters taught Sunday School in Harborgate. And then he was working in another community, I'm not sure which one.

4-00:30:55

Cándida Smith:

The Sunday school group, you were all—Reverend Henderson as I recall was Presbyterian. So, you were Lutheran, there might have been somebody who was Baptist—

4-00:31:08

E. Hidy:

Oh, yes.

4-00:31:12

Cándida Smith:

You all had to figure out how you were going to work together on some level given that you did have some doctrinal differences.

4-00:31:21

E. Hidy:

But these kids were—you weren't trying convert anybody. [laughs] So, you just stayed away from those things. And like Ross said, he could have {catechetical?} instruction for all of the kids, but when it came to baptism, why then, he took them down to the Baptist Church and the Lutheran Church. So, we tried not to infringe on somebody else's doctrines. But there was so much we had in common that it just wasn't a problem at all.

4-00:31:56

Cándida Smith:

Was this new to you? Working with people from other denominations?

4-00:32:01

E. Hidy:

Yes, it was. Because I had been Lutheran all my life in a very small church.

4-00:32:13

Cándida Smith:

It sounds though, that it didn't take much getting use to.

4-00:32:16

E. Hidy:

It really didn't. I mean, it was the—it just sort of came naturally, I think. We were interested in the people and they responded and so things kept growing and it was just a lot of fun.

4-00:32:32

Cándida Smith:

Later, after the war, Ross was involved with the Billy Graham crusades, were you part of that?

4-00:32:38

E. Hidy:

No. I went to the crusades but I wasn't part of it. Except we did have Billy and several of his people came to our house after one of the crusades. And we did get to know some of the people who were working with him who came to our church.

4-00:33:00

Cándida Smith:

I asked Ross this question and he had some interesting things to say, but I figured—in terms of what you learned from the War years, were there things that you saw that maybe changed some of the ideas you had about any aspect of life? What women can do? How children should be raised? How churches should function? How you wanted to lead your own life? In a sense, what were some of the lesson you took away from the war?

4-00:33:38

E. Hidy:

I think one of the things would be that women can do what anything they want to do. Because I was really surprised when I'd see women walking home who were in our church, walking home with their hoods on, you know, and realize that they were welders in the shipyard during the week. And also that it certainly didn't take money to be happy, people there with very little but how happy we could all be. Nothing very glamorous. [laughter]

4-00:34:25

Cándida Smith:

Shall we—? [interview interruption, interview resumes with Reverend Hidy]

4-00:34:24

Washburn:

Okay, let's start over, sorry about that guys. That's happened to me before for longer than two minutes.

4-00:34:34

R. Hidy:

[talking about photos] We have been invited to get a picture of the church welcoming people to the shipyards so Ed Hill took this picture and it was symbolic of the church welcoming people to Richmond to help build ships. These were the victory ships, the later ships.

4-00:34:54

Cándida Smith:

So this picture, you were saying, was sent all over the country for—?

4-00:34:58

R. Hidy:

Well, they wanted the stories about what was happening and since Richmond suddenly became the largest of them all, it was often used in stories that were in magazines and church papers and all, so it was used a lot.

4-00:35:13

Cándida Smith:

Now, I gather from things you said last time that you, in fact, did not go to the shipyards all that much, so in a way this was like a staged picture. It's symbolic.

4-00:35:22

R. Hidy:

It's kind of a symbol shot, you know. Just was a created one to show the church welcoming them.

4-00:35:31

Cándida Smith:

How did you welcome people?

4-00:35:33

R. Hidy:

Well, our parish workers would make a visit at the homes. Of course, they canvassed every home. But then they would know if there was a vacancy and someone else came, why, they would stop by and visit or our children would stop by and invite them to come. And we would send a letter to every family welcoming them and tell them we'd help them find their church if they were a member of a denomination, and if not we welcome them to come to the community building, to the Friendly Church of Harborgate.

4-00:36:04

Cándida Smith:

Now, this photo looks like it was taken by Ed Hill as well?

4-00:36:07

R. Hidy:

Ed Hill took this. This was the Flurry family with ten children. The parish visitor, Lois Wagner, is making a call—

4-00:36:18

E. Hidy:

Lois Johnson.

4-00:36:20

R. Hidy:

Lois Johnson, yeah. Lois Johnson's making a call and the interesting thing, Ev and I—

4-00:36:27

Cándida Smith:

Who's Lois Johnson? Is she the—

4-00:36:29

R. Hidy:

She's the defense area visitor—

4-00:36:30

E. Hidy:

No, which one is she on the picture. This one right here on the end.

4-00:36:34

R. Hidy:

That's her. [points] She was one of those who were sent and came. No pastor ever went to a community without one parish visitor, or larger ones with two. And so we had—she was there when we got there.

4-00:36:50

Cándida Smith:

And where did she come from?

4-00:36:51

R. Hidy:

North Dakota.

4-00:36:53

Cándida Smith:

That's right, you typed it, yes.

4-00:36:56

R. Hidy:

And then I have a fascinating letter that—she left later because her fiancé sent her an engagement ring and so she went back. And before she did, she made her wedding dress. And she did an interesting thing. She cut the small pieces first. And when she went to find a big piece, there wasn't a big piece for the front. [laughs] So, what'd she do? I guess she had to—

4-00:37:20

E. Hidy:

She pieced it together. [laughs]

4-00:37:24

R. Hidy:

But she was appreciative of the friendship, everybody helped her get ready to go get married.

4-00:37:29

Cándida Smith:

Now what were the responsibilities of the parish workers? Maybe you could describe a little bit.

4-00:37:33

R. Hidy:

Well, the parish workers, they had bible hours, they would have groups come and have bible stories. Or else they would come and help in the Church service, and she had a big Sunday school class, and they were a part of the whole educational program. A busy program on Sunday, but some programs during the week.

4-00:37:59

Cándida Smith:

And what kind of training did she get to do this?

4-00:38:03

R. Hidy:

Oh, she had gone to Bible school and college and she was a very well-educated person, very, very gifted, very talented, so Lois was very effective in what she did.

4-00:38:15

Cándida Smith:

So, maybe—I don't know if the Lutheran Church is ordaining women but maybe sixty years later, she would have become a pastor herself?

4-00:38:27

R. Hidy:

The fellow she married became a pastor. And he was in the state of Iowa. And he was working with mission churches, so they were active in the church all their life. She passed away of a heart attack about eight years ago.

4-00:38:41

Cándida Smith:

Sad.

4-00:38:43

Washburn:

So, let's look at this picture real quick. If you could hold right there for a bit, okay. And describe one more time. This is where?

4-00:38:55

R. Hidy:

[describing photo] This is a Bible hour, she's teaching a little group, giving a bible story. And I guess this is an afternoon. Sometimes she would call a group in and they would—later we had a special building, two buildings, and a very full program of all kinds of activities.

4-00:39:16

Cándida Smith:

Now, I asked Evelyn this, but, I wanted to follow up a little bit in terms of how you might have adjusted bible study and Sunday school to take into account the situation in Harborgate and the War effort. Were there things that you felt needed to be stressed in particular? How did it shape the way you thought a Sunday School should be done or Bible study might be done?

4-00:39:49

R. Hidy:

I don't believe that there was any change. I think we just went ahead and were trying to teach content of scripture and the life of Jesus, teachings of Jesus. And the fact that there was a war on didn't change the message, but it did make them appreciate fellowship and the opportunity to have a group that was their family. So that was it.

4-00:40:15

Cándida Smith:

What about your personal experience before this of working in an ecumenical style, shall we say? Had you had much experience working with people from other denominations?

4-00:40:30

R. Hidy:

In the summer I'd always been part of an ecumenical group out in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. And our home church was a very cooperative church. They had a very interesting thing. Before the War started, my uncle gathered all the churches together and suggested they have a big parade, a Sunday School parade. So they did, and Sunday schools of many churches in Philadelphia had a big parade. They had 200,000 in it. They paraded down Broad Street and around City Hall and out to the art museum. It was just a kind of expression of joy at their cooperative work in a common endeavor in Sunday School.

So, I was always active in groups that were more than one denomination.

4-00:41:26

Cándida Smith:

Did your—your uncle was Ross {Stouffer?} as I recall. Did he give you any advice about how to handle the Harborgate situation?

4-00:41:35

R. Hidy:

All that he had ever said was, “Wherever you go, you want to have to people.” And he never said this kind of person or that kind of person. So when we had an invitation to come and go to a place that had a 100,000 people, we thought, “Well, it looks like it meets the standards,” so we went. [chuckles]

But no, he didn’t. I just watched him in operation and realized that he did it in a very gracious way.

4-00:42:01

Cándida Smith:

Let’s move on—

4-00:42:03

Washburn:

Can you scoot your chair over this way maybe six inches or so?

4-00:42:06

Cándida Smith:

Towards you?

4-00:42:06

Washburn:

Yeah, towards me, I just want this right over your shoulders—yeah, perfect, there you go. And Reverend Hidy, when the Christian teachings of peace and love thy neighbor are such a part of the message, how did you discuss the fact that there was so much death and destruction going on during this time?

4-00:42:36

R. Hidy:

You mean in Europe?

4-00:42:36

Washburn:

Yep.

4-00:42:37

R. Hidy:

Well, we didn’t start it, we were trying to end it. And our group over there was trying to overcome the Nazi regime with all of its devilish ways with the Jews and all. And so, that was a kind of a united effort to try to do the thing that would allow peace in Germany and in Europe and France. Remember that the northern countries had been invaded by the Nazis and that was all Lutheran country. And so, we sympathized with the suffering that was going on and hoped

that the war might bring, you know, the old [sings] “There’ll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover,” you know, when the War is over. [laughs] That was the hope and the dream and the prayer.

4-00:43:28

Washburn:

So peace was the end that was—

4-00:43:30

R. Hidy:

—we were hoping for, that’s right. These pictures, this is a part of a bible school, or could that have even been a—this is her Sunday school class on Sunday, yeah, Lois’ Sunday school class. I don’t know how long you want this on?

4-00:43:51

Washburn:

Let me film that just for one second here. I just want to get a little taste of it and then we’ll scan some other time. Okay, kids raising their hands. [referring to photo]

4-00:44:02

R. Hidy:

This is the letter where she later wrote and thanked us for helping her get ready to go get married. Kind of funny, but it was very—she was a very lovely, gracious person. We had a lot of time together.

4-00:44:15

Cándida Smith:

So as a parish worker, was that like a forty hour a week job?

4-00:44:20

R. Hidy:

No, it was like seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. [laughs] But it was a great joy.

4-00:44:30

Cándida Smith:

And was she in the housing projects as well?

4-00:44:35

R. Hidy:

She lived with a family in the Lutheran Church, the Hathaways, and that’s where she was. Her successor was from Wisconsin, from Galloway, Wisconsin, Jean Poulson. And Jean was a very vivacious little blonde with a red cloth coat, and she would walk around the community and kids would gather around Jean. She had a junior high Sunday school class and I had the junior high boys class and we had big competition who could have the most for ten weeks in a row and finally, her group had fifty-two and we had forty-eight. So, Jean’s class won the contest. She was a very wonderful person.

The big thing, of course, that happened was that we had to use the trumpet to call people and I—you didn’t get a picture of this.[showing photo] On Sunday morning, there was no church bell. And we wanted people to know something was happening in the community building so the first

Sunday, I played my trumpet in front of this building. I played hymns out over the houses and then I went to the back of the building and played for the buildings down below in the other part toward the Bay. And inside of ten minutes, our Sunday school grew by one hundred. The young boy playing with me is a neighbor boy across the street. He said, to me after the first Sunday, “Yeah, I’ve got a trumpet too, may I play with you?” So he did. And he still playing his trumpet and he became a Southern Baptist missionary.

4-00:46:26

Washburn:

Why don’t we go back to that. Why don’t you just tell the story and then hold it up for me at the very end. You don’t have to hold it up for the whole time. I just want to get a sense of what the picture is. So you don’t have to hold it up the whole time.

4-00:46:42

E. Hidy:

Just don’t hold it up.

4-00:46:44

Washburn:

Right now is good. [bell chimes] SO you see, Reverend Hidy, I want you to look at the photo, see what it is, talk about it, I focus on face, and at the very end we can go back to the photo. Okay, so, we already did that one.

4-00:47:01

R. Hidy:

Alright, very good. We had a real problem when you have 300 kids coming to Sunday school and then they’re going to go into the Sunday school class, the teacher wants a roll, wants to know who’s there. So the parish worker says, “Well, why don’t we have a table when they come in with attendance cards.” So they had a little slip of paper and everyone coming in would take one of these, write their name and their age and their address and their Sunday school class and then when they came to their class, they’d just give that slip to the teacher and the teacher would put them in the envelope and she would take the roll in about twenty seconds. And it was a great idea and it worked very, very well.

4-00:47:47

Washburn:

Reverend Hidy, can we now look at that photo?

4-00:47:51

R. Hidy:

Oh yeah. Some of these people in here I recognize. And one of them that’s there leaning over and writing his name is Roger {Villa?} who is the boy who later on said, “I want to be a pastor.” And that’s a very long story, a delightful story, and he—

4-00:48:13

Cándida Smith:

He went to Carlton, right?

4-00:48:14

R. Hidy:

No, he went to St. Olaf.

4-00:48:15

Cándida Smith:

St. Olaf, yes.

4-00:48:16

R. Hidy:

And had a marvelous record. He surprised all of us by having literally an outstanding record, receiving a full scholarship and graduating *magna cum laude*. And then he went on to seminary. This little boy was quite a story. [goes on to next picture]

Six weeks after we got there, this is what the Sunday school was. 363 were there that Sunday, I remember. And Dr. Harold Henderson came so that he could be there and in the picture we had wanted him there, so he was there. His daughter, who played our organ for is in church service, she's in this picture, too. This is a very historic photo. And that was an exciting thing that the Sunday school had grown that quickly.

4-00:49:17

Cándida Smith:

Was this done by Ed Hill as well?

4-00:49:19

R. Hidy:

Ed took all of these.

4-00:49:24

Cándida Smith:

All of these. So he started photographing, documenting your work right as soon as you got there.

4-00:49:30

R. Hidy:

Well, at the invitation of our national director who called me and said, "Get a photographer and get pictures! We have to have stories, and with the stories, we want to have photographs to illustrate it."

This is a shot—[mumbling from interviewers as they talk to each other]—go ahead? This is a picture from the front of our little chapel room showing the children. The choir is over on the left and the little choir robes. And most of the kids who came and the adults brought a New Testament or a Bible and followed in the service and in the reading of the Scripture. So, that's typical of what happened. You could get about 220 people in this chapel, which we had to set up on Saturday night. First, we just had a table with a wooden cross and above it a picture of Jesus, {Solomon's?} head of Christ. But later on, we were allowed to have a different, more formal church set up. And that was enjoyed a great deal. People liked it a lot. [moves on to next photograph]

This shows what it looked like the first Easter that we were there. You see, behind along the wall is that picture of Jesus, a candelabra there, we had special flowers. The place was packed

because it was Easter Sunday. And that's the informal worship service we had. Later, we were allowed and I was able to get a picture of {Torvaldson's?} Christ, the Inviting Christ, it's in the famous church in Copenhagen, Denmark. This one was a photograph mounted on plywood. And I was able to have it sent out and we got one of our members to make an altar and pulpit or a lectern, a reading stand, and communion rail. And Evvie and her friend made the cloth that hangs behind the picture. And that was then set up permanently. And the administration said, "You can leave it up and that's your chapel and you can have use of it all the time, anytime you want it." So, that's how things changed. [murmured instructions from Washburn to turn over image] You want the other side, huh?

4-00:52:18

E. Hidy:

And I remember something funny about that because we decided to get green velveteen for that backing, and we were going to have hangings on the altar and the pulpit. And that was fine, except that we miscalculated and we have so much left over that I had a green velveteen dress out of it. So, I matched the hangings. [laughter]

4-00:52:43

R. Hidy:

That was a good joke.

[moves on to next photograph] This is our junior choir. The women made the little white robes for them. And this is the time they sang in the shipyard right before Christmas. And they amplified it in all of the shipyards. So for one half hour, why, our choir sang carols and everybody in the shipyard heard it.

[pauses then moves on the next photograph] We did more than send a letter to every house every month, we sent a little paper and then every once in a while, we would have a parade. And there was a Presbyterian pastor, Doug Noble, who had a mobile chapel called the Wayside Chapel. And he would bring that and that would go in front of our group and we would march around the community. And then we had kids handing out papers and invitations to come. And that was one way that we got the story out to everybody.

4-00:53:56

Washburn:

Do you know the name of the street that you're on there?

4-00:53:59

R. Hidy:

I'm not sure which one that is. That's probably the one to the side, Owens Street, I guess.

4-00:54:08

Washburn:

And that's all the development right behind it in the background.

4-00:54:10

R. Hidy:

Oh yeah, that could have been on Meeker Avenue, I'm not sure. We had Sunday school everywhere. We had Sunday school everywhere.

[referring to next photograph] This is the kitchen. And one of the fellows, a young fellow, was studying at Treasure Island at the Naval Electronic School. He was a boy who had been in Temple University when I was director of the Glee Club and he sang in the Glee Club. His father was my English professor, one of the best I ever had. And all of a sudden, he came out to go to electronic school. Russ came out. He came out just when the Sunday school teacher who had taught there had had to move. So, I gave him a book and he was a Sunday school teacher. He was very much liked by all the boys. But there's a tragic end to that story. Just before the war, he finished his training and he was assigned to a ship. He went out on the *Indianapolis*. That ship carried the A-bomb components to {Tinian?}. About three weeks after that, a Japanese submarine got that ship and a great number of them were lost and we all got that news the day of VJ day. And when we gathered in the chapel to have a little Thanksgiving prayer, it was a very, very sad service. Because we knew that one of our close friends had lost his life in the loss of the *Indianapolis*. [pause]

4-00:56:01

Washburn:

This is him there in his uniform?

4-00:56:04

R. Hidy:

Yeah.

4-00:56:07

Cándida Smith:

And his name was?

4-00:56:07

R. Hidy:

Russell Ferguson.

4-00:56:15

Cándida Smith:

Did you know his family back in Pennsylvania? Back east?

4-00:56:18

R. Hidy:

I found a letter that I had wrote to his parents and they had written to me and asked if I would tell them about it and I wrote them a two- or three-page letter telling all about it and got a wonderful letter back from them.

[next picture] This is a picture of Jean Poulson's class. I don't know if you had that. [pause]

[next picture] We had a vacation Bible school every summer and this is a picture of Lillian Anderson, another parish worker. At the end of the program, why they had the parents and all come and she's there, a group of people looking at the handwork that they had made in their class.

4-00:57:04

Cándida Smith:

Where did she come from? What was her background?

4-00:57:05

R. Hidy:

Lillian was from the Midwest, I'm not positive now what state she's from, but she was a very gifted person. She's the one who visited and found Harry Durkee and his wife, Captain Harry Durkee, who came later on as a veteran.

4-00:57:23

Cándida Smith:

So the parish were assigned to you by the Synod or—?

4-00:57:30

R. Hidy:

We had a central office in Chicago at 327 South LaSalle, and they would train periodically a group of your people and then send them to different projects all around the country.

4-00:57:46

Cándida Smith:

Mostly women, then. Young white—younger women?

4-00:57:50

R. Hidy:

They were younger women. Once in a while, a little older, but they were very dedicated and they had taken special training and some of them had been parish workers in churches. But some of them were young and this was their first assignment. But they had a great time.

[next photograph] Did you get a picture like this? Shows the inside—when they would come for a vacation bible school, we'd have them all come in the big auditorium and we'd sing songs for a little while. Not hymns, silly songs. And they dearly loved to sing, "She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes. When she comes." [sings] And they would sing their heads off. They loved that so we did that. We let 'em have fun, you know. Got it?

[next photograph] One of the best parts of our program was our scout program. The black church, Pastor Mickens' church, had a troupe and we had a Boy Scout troupe and we Cub Pack and we had Dens and we had Girls Scouts and we had Brownies. Periodically, we had had an awards night, court of honor, and this picture was in the *Richmond Independent* newspaper. It shows Pastor Isaac Mickens with one of their scouts who was getting an honor and some of our boys getting an award and one of our Cub Scouts and one of our Brownies. But it was the biggest Cub Pack in the county.

4-00:59:22

Cándida Smith:

And you were the cub master?

4-00:59:26

R. Hidy:

No, no. We had committees that did all of that. I just cheered 'em on, you know. But when we had an awards thing, why, I would help and help present them.

4-00:59:38

Washburn:

How active was the *Independent* in coming out to give press to Harborgate and to your ministry? Did you know the *Independent*? You said a few times you called them to get some press but did they come by for publicity shots like that?

4-00:59:54

R. Hidy:

I would send them a news release. You didn't hear the story when I took a news release down at the beginning?

4-00:59:59

Cándida Smith:

Yeah, you told that.

4-01:00:01

R. Hidy:

But after that, all I had to do was send them a news release, tell them when it was, and they would send a photographer and do a big story. You have a good story on Evvie. [referring to something one of the interviewers is holding]

One Sunday, we tried to see how many people we could get to come on one Sunday. We had never gone over five hundred. And so, we did our best and we told the people that we will—the biggest family, we'll give a lovely Bible to. [phone rings] We had two families that came—

4-01:00:38

Washburn:

A good place to stop, I have to change this tape.

[interview interruption while media are exchanged]

5-00:00:07

Washburn:

Okay, go ahead Reverend Hidy.

5-00:00:07

R. Hidy:

Let's see—

5-00:00:07

Cándida Smith:

The twins.

5-00:00:08

R. Hidy:

You want the twin picture? One Sunday, we tried to get big families to come and we had two families that had ten children and we had to give two Bibles. But the same day, we had the twins come forward and we were surprised how many sets of twins we had in our Sunday school. They were excited to have their picture taken. And it was fun.

5-00:00:44

Cándida Smith:

Why don't you go back to the picture that Ed Hill took.

5-00:00:48

R. Hidy:

The big group?

5-00:00:50

Cándida Smith:

The big group, the 597.

5-00:00:52

R. Hidy:

Yeah, I think that was the biggest group, I think 597. Pretty much, I think we had a parade that day and then we had Sunday school. And it was an exciting time.

[next photograph] Our parish workers had a good idea. They analyzed that most Sunday schools give an award for a year's perfect attendance. We thought that was not very wise. So we gave a little picture of Jesus for four Sundays and then a big picture for eighteen Sundays in a row. And this is a group one Sunday that got their larger picture for perfect attendance for eighteen Sundays.

Our logic was very simple. If you can get them to come four Sundays, you've got a habit, and if you get 'em eighteen, {you're doing very well with that?}.

5-00:01:48

Washburn:

Could you hold that up for one more minute, please.

5-00:02:00

R. Hidy:

It was kind of crowded after Sunday school and everybody left and Ed Hill took a picture of that one day, when everybody was going home.

[interview interruption to request Mrs. Hidy to stop talking on the phone within earshot of the interview]

5-00:02:28

R. Hidy:

She's the one that started a Sunday school at our house over in Cutting! So many children around there and she was used to being a Sunday school teacher, and this was before she got to know us, so she started a Sunday school and more came and more came and we laughed when we found out what she was doing. She had so many children, some of them had to sit in the bathtub. They had 'em sitting everywhere! On the floor, on the chairs, in the bedroom. And she would have them sing songs and she would teach Bible school. And then later, we started another program over in the Cutting area. But these are some of those who taught and helped out in our program. And there's a lot of stories behind them because they are a very interesting group of people.

5-00:03:23

Cándida Smith:

They didn't necessarily come from the Harborgate projects themselves?

5-00:03:28

R. Hidy:

Many came from the University of California or from other churches. This fellow here is Kermie {Rafshaw?}, he was the pilot of a PBY, a navy pilot. He would be gone for a week and then he'd be back and then he would have been down to Solomon Islands. He would take special supplies down there and then come back.

5-00:03:51

Cándida Smith:

How did he find out about you and why did he decide to teach Sunday school in your outfit rather than say, another place?

5-00:04:00

R. Hidy:

Well, he probably met them at the student house in Berkeley and came out. He later married a girl that he met in the Navy and I helped at his service, he moved up to Oregon after that. There's a couple of other fellows in white Navy hats, they were medical students, and they came out in taught at the very beginning, then they had to go to medical school. So that's when we got some other teachers, Russ Ferguson and some of the others to come and teach. It's an interesting group of people, wonderful dedication. This is an adult group they had.

5-00:04:42

Cándida Smith:

So you had adult classes.

5-00:04:49

R. Hidy:

Well, yeah, this was—the adults, some of them were Sunday school teachers and most of them really probably were—or in the women's group, the ladies' aid that later they called a guild and they did the famous cookbook, the Friendly cookbook.

[next photograph] This is a group of young people.[pause while videographer makes some adjustments] And there's a story behind a whole lot of these people. One boy here, his dad made the altar for us and the lectern, and [laughs] there some funny stories behind a lot of them.

5-00:05:39

Cándida Smith:

Can you show us that picture?

5-00:05:42

R. Hidy:

I think this is another one of a group. Peggy Henderson came out with her father and played the organ for us in the morning and she had a Sunday school class. And I was reading in our little paper that her class won an award for having the largest contiguous attendance with their Bibles. And bringing other people. Peggy was a wonderful person, she's retired now, and lives in Florida.

5-00:06:15

Cándida Smith:

So you kept in touch with everybody.

5-00:06:18

R. Hidy:

Well, we tried to and recently, we tried to get in touch, we tried to find where Pastor Henderson's papers were put, the records of the Sunday school and all the work that was done. We can't find where they were placed.

5-00:06:34

Washburn:

Can you hold that up one more time? Can you talk about—given the fact that there was scarcity of shoes, shoe coupons and things like this—if you want to comment on it also—what was going on for the children? These girls look very well-dressed. This one to the left in the corner, they all have their hair in curls. How much was it kind of a sense of pride—given the fact that there was a little bit of shortage of clothing or shoes—that this is the time they could kind of dress up and feel good and look good to go to the Sunday school. Did you get this sense at all?

5-00:07:13

E. Hidy:

Well, they used to dress in what they had, the best they had, I think, to come to Sunday school. But there was never any competition between them over who was going to have what. And the woman on the left there is Peggy.

5-00:07:32

R. Hidy:

Yeah, she's the Sunday school teacher.

[next photograph] And this is an interesting picture. In the children's church or some of the classes, they would have the children tell the story using {flannel graph?}. And this is a picture that they happened to have of a little girl giving a Bible story using flannel graphs, the figures that they would put on this cloth, and they would stay in place. That's what she's doing here.

5-00:07:58

Cándida Smith:

Do you know what the story is?

5-00:08:00

R. Hidy:

[to E. Hidy and another unidentified person] Can you tell what it is?

5-00:08:01

Unidentified person:

I haven't studied it.

5-00:08:05

E. Hidy:

Looks like the story of Abraham and—

5-00:08:08

R. Hidy:

Oh, is it?

5-00:08:10

E. Hidy:

Yeah, getting ready to sacrifice Isaac.

5-00:08:12

R. Hidy:

Poor guy. She's telling the story of Abraham and Isaac when Isaac is to be sacrificed. And the Lord provided a ram in a thicket nearby.

[next photograph] We thought you might like this. This is a good picture of the {Thorwaldson's?} Christ, which, by the way, is in a domed church in Copenhagen. The great story about that is you know, when it was finished, somebody said, "Oh, but you can't see the face of Jesus," because it shows him head down. And Thorwaldson answered him by saying, "You cannot really see Jesus until you kneel before him and look up." And I must tell you a little story. When I flew into Copenhagen the first time, I was determined to find that church. I looked at the map and I found which way to walk but I didn't check the measure, and it's about three miles. [laughs] But I did go out, and I did see it, and I did get to see the whole thing and kneel before it, and I took a picture. It's in my study. So, it's a—

[next item] This is an important thing. This is our little newspaper. Every month, we'd publish this. It was printed in Berkeley, and we'd have The Missionary of the Month. And this is the picture of Peggy Harwell, who brought more young people to the Sunday school that month before than anybody else. And so her picture is in with a little biography. And then, she was the one who was able to go out—we went to Alameda Naval Air Station and Kermie Rafshaw met us and he took Peggy and some of us who were there over and let us go up in a PBY, not fly, but get up in it. And then, went over to the PX and got a hamburger and milkshake after we had a swim in the pool. Well, when the kids in Harborgate learned that if you are The Missionary of the Month you get to go to Alameda naval Air Station and go into a PBY and go for a swim and go get a milkshake and a hamburger, boy, everybody wanted to be The Missionary of the Month. So, our little program kind of worked very effectively.

So those are those photos. There's some I didn't get but—

5-00:11:04

Cándida Smith:

Now, how did the program change, if at all, after the war came to an end and the people living in Harborgate started to shift? [interview interruption?]

5-00:11:17

R. Hidy:

Just often, they'd sleep on one and then—

5-00:11:20

Washburn:

Do you want to start that again?

5-00:11:22

R. Hidy:

Well, sure.

5-00:11:22

Washburn:

Okay, go ahead.

5-00:11:23

R. Hidy:

Our house became kind of spontaneously a hospitality center. And some of the navy kids would come out on Saturday afternoon and have dinner with us and then they'd stay over night. We had a daybed in the corner of the living room that was a kind of also sitting couch for the dining room table, because the dining room and the living room were one big room. And one would sleep on the mattress and the other with just the springs. And they would go to Sunday school and then they'd go to church and they'd stay in the afternoon, then they'd go to evening service and we'd have a duet or a trio or a quartet. Then all the parish workers and these kids would come back afterwards and there would be sandwiches and I don't know waffles, sometimes. But, fun and talk, talk, talk. And they would laugh as they would tell stories of what happened in their class or in their Sunday school. That became a real center of activity. And Evvie just had to never know how many were coming. But, somehow she managed and we had a great time. Later, when the McClary's were there, why, Kaye would help, she would make something. We always had a Sunday night party. That was part of the fellowship of the housing area.

I was talking to Ginny Hughesby last night and we were talking about staff meetings. I told Ginny, I said, "Somebody was asking me, 'Did you have staff meetings?'" And I laughed and I said, "Ginny, do you remember? I think we had a continual staff meeting." Because we were together so much and we would evaluate what was happening. If some change was needed, it was worked out. So no wonder we worked well. It was fun. [clock chimes]

5-00:13:28

Cándida Smith:

Maybe you could tell us a little bit more about Ed Hill. You go to know him quite, quite well.

[conversation about the time while the antique clock chimes]

5-00:14:00

R. Hidy:

Ed Hill was an interesting fellow, he was a superb photographer, he had grown up in the area, he had worked in the C&H Sugar plant in Benicia, Martinez. Then, he got into photography, he studied, took courses, read a lot. And he was a very, very capable professional photographer. When I had to get a photographer, I just used the yellow pages and I saw his ad, I went down, got to know him, told him we wanted to have a picture. He said, "Fine," so we worked out a twelve schedule agenda and sequenced 'em. He came out and he took most of those pictures, a lot of them that you saw. And then later, when we had a nationally released film strip, I had no flash for color and so Ed took inside shots. They used about forty pictures in a national films trip release for all the Lutheran Churches in the United States. And then later, they would want special stories and special pictures and he would do aerial shots and take pictures for corporations and factories and all.

We became pretty good friends. He let me come and use his darkroom to print pictures I wanted to print. We became such very good friends that later when I had a letter inviting me or telling me I was to go to Europe to work with a movie crew, I was to bring my cameras. Because, the director, Dr. {Empy?} knew that I was a photographer. So, I went with this letter to Ed Hill and I told him I was going to go to Europe and I had to leave in July of 1948 and go to New York and then go in August to Europe. "Oh, you need a {Speedgraphic?}. I'll have to loan you one." So, he loaned me a Speedgraphic. I said, "Ed, I don't know how to use it." He said, "I'll show you." He would take me out and train me and had me take pictures. He would give me assignments to see if I was thinking, you know. He had twelve pictures in this cartridge and then he would give me pictures and he would tell me, "Go take three pictures." He didn't know if I remembered that I only had one left in the cartridge. I said, "Ed, I can't take three, I only have one." "Well, at least you're thinking," he said.

Then, one time, when I was trying to work on something. He got disgusted and he kind of said, "Russ! Darn it all! I can't teach you everything I've learned in twenty-five years. But, listen, I'm willing to pay my way to go to Europe. I'll buy my plane ticket if you can get permission for me to go with you. I'd love to go!" So I got in touch with Chicago, and he did go. So, Ed and I traveled in Europe for seven weeks. And he shot picture after picture of refugees and displaced people. And went to a number of places. I could talk for two hours about our exciting experiences. We became good friends. So Ed Hill was good.

I think you might find two stories about how Ed shot in the shipyards. If there was an accident, and some equipment broke or somebody was injured, he got an emergency call, he had to go out. And if it was night time, he had to take a picture. Well, if it was a picture of something, of a big piece of equipment, how do you get a picture of that at night? I said, "Ed, how do you do that?! How do you get a picture of a big piece of equipment with a break on it at night." "Oh, it's not hard," he said, "You put it on a tripod and you focus it, then you take two flash guns, and you just keep shooting and shooting and keep shooting." He said, "You paint that whole thing with light and you get your picture." I said, "I couldn't do it."

But the most interesting thing I thought, was he told me every time they had a launching—and remember they built seven hundred ships and that means Ed shot seven hundred launchings. And they had a big, fancy deal and they invite special people for a launching and a woman to be the launcher. Always, a woman had to break the bottle of champagne. Because it was bad luck if a woman didn't launch the ship. And so, he would take all those pictures. And then, after the launching, all of the honored guests would be taken to a big restaurant. They would have speeches and everything, and then, at the end of the banquet, there would be a big album of photographs given to them that Ed had taken. And I said, "How'd you get that done?" "Well," he says, "it was tricky." He would come right back to studio and develop all the negatives. "And then we would print them wet. They wouldn't be dried. You have to do it carefully. And we'd print all the things and then they would dry the prints and then they would give them that brown tint and makes them super special." They would have albums ready and they would put the album pictures in. And everything was printed up with the album, the title of the launching and all, and then, they would put the program in the front of it all. And at the end of the banquet that would present this fancy album to them. Well, I've often wondered how much Ed got paid for every album. But, I'm sure that's one reason Ed really didn't have any problem with money by

the time the shipyard work was over. But he was a very kind fellow and a very gracious fellow and a good friend.

5-00:20:15

Cándida Smith:

Did he have a studio?

5-00:20:22

R. Hidy:

He had a house in downtown Richmond. And in the back of the house, he had an area with a room where he took pictures. And then behind that was the laboratory with a place for developing and then for printing. He had a great big drum with canvass around it. You put the pictures on that and they go around the drum, and if you put the face of the picture on the aluminum, it's glossy, if you put it the other way, it's matte. I would be able to dry my pictures I took down there. So, Ed had—yep, he had all that.

An interesting thing happened. In Germany, we had to go to Berchtesgaden, had to go down to shoot some pictures down there. And while we were there, we went to see the Eagle's Nest, Hitler's house on the top of the mountain. And we visited the house below where he had lived at times and then we went in, went up the elevator and up to the top. You could look all around all the area. There weren't many people up there but we had time to take pictures and to go around. Then, there were some people up there and Ed got talking to them and he came to me and he said, "You won't believe it. See that woman over there? And that man? I was talking to them and we got talking where we're from. We're from California, she's from California, I said to her, 'Oh, where are you from?' She said, 'Oh, Richmond.' 'Richmond? Where do you live?' Ross! She lives two block form our house!" And they met in Berchesgaden." So, it's a small world. But, Ed was a wonderful guy and he was very kind to me. We became good friends and he joined the Lutheran church there, in town. So we had a long friendship and I talk to his son regularly, he lives in Utah.

5-00:22:25

Cándida Smith:

How long ago did he pass away?

5-00:22:26

R. Hidy:

He passed away about twelve years ago. Yeah.

5-00:22:30

Cándida Smith:

How much older was he than you?

5-00:22:33

R. Hidy:

When I was there, I was around thirty and Ed must have been forty-five and we were still able to communicate well. We had a lot of wonderful experiences. We had our own car, we drove around Europe and had some fine times.

5-00:22:59

Cándida Smith:

I also wanted, I think, in wrapping this up, to have you talk a little bit about the West Coast wartime ministries. What were the differences between different locations where the church was working?

5-00:23:15

R. Hidy:

In the Northwest, there were many, many more Lutherans. And in the {Van McLaughlin Heights?} housing area up above Vancouver on the ridge, there were so many Lutherans, they had a Lutheran service. There were other services there, too, but they had a Lutheran liturgy and a Lutheran pastor and a Lutheran parish worker. Also, in Bremerton, at the one up in Bremerton opposite Seattle.

In the area between Portland and Vancouver, there was a large area of land near the race track. And they built a large group of about 20,000 units for 20,000 people. It was between Vancouver and Portland, so that called it Vanport. And there was a tragic flood. The Columbia River over flowed and did a lot of damage. If flooded that whole area around there. And the area around Vanport, the water rose and then suddenly, the water bubbled under that big berm and started to rise inside of Vanport. The people had a warning, "Get out." They only had about twenty minutes and not everybody got out. So, that was a tragic thing and I had to go up there for the follow-up of it.

We had a big program in Hanford, Washington and Richland. Then in the Bay Area, we had one at Filloyd Terrace in Vallejo. We had another one in Alameda at Encinal Housing Project. In Richmond, we had Richmond Terrace, Harbortgate, and Cutting. Then, down in San Diego, Linda Vista and another one, and one at Banning Homes at San Pedro. So, we had to keep staff for all of those.

5-00:25:24

Cándida Smith:

All of these were led by young pastors such as yourself?

5-00:25:28

R. Hidy:

Well, middle-aged pastors, some older pastors. They had to get who they could get. I just happened to be a younger pastor who asked for information and suddenly got a call. There weren't many of us young guys. But those that came had a wonderful experience.

The project ministries differed because of who was there. And up North, there were a lot more Lutherans than there were in the areas down south.

5-00:26:01

Cándida Smith:

So, less ecumenical in their approach.

5-00:26:04

R. Hidy:

That's right. They would have an actual Lutheran Church and minister to the people who were there.

5-00:26:11

Cándida Smith:

Would you say that most of the or all of the wartime ministries were successful in getting Sunday schools up and going and attracting—?

5-00:26:22

R. Hidy:

They all had Sunday schools and confirmation classes and Bible hours and all those things. They had as much as they could of a normal community program for the congregation. It was just the constituents that may vary in one area or another.

5-00:26:44

Cándida Smith:

After the war, you become pastor at a church in Berkeley if I recall. Is that correct?

5-00:26:53

R. Hidy:

Yes, after the war, after I went—I spent a year with Resettlement of Displaced Persons. Then, I came to Berkeley because there was a church there, a little church that hadn't had a pastor for a year. And the Bishop, our president asked me, "Please go to Berkeley, they desperately need a pastor and we're supposed to start a seminary there, and I want you to relocate that church near the campus and find a place for the seminary." So we went and we bought a Methodist Church right by the campus. There were two Methodist churches and we bought one of them. And then we were able to find a site for the seminary. We found two estates at the top of the Berkeley Hills, gorgeous estates with eight acres. Now, two gorgeous buildings, five bedrooms, four master baths and everything. We got eight acres, two houses, for \$144,000. And that's where our seminary is today. So that's where we were, there for five years.

5-00:28:09

Cándida Smith:

Sounds like an awful lot of being a Pastor involved—sounds like you're a businessman.

5-00:28:16

R. Hidy:

[laughs] Yeah, you have to some things that are related. And then, we went into a special program for evangelism for two years. I had the fifteen Western states. I would organize mission weeks and churches from El Paso to Alaska and from Caspar, Wyoming, to Hawaii.

5-00:28:38

Cándida Smith:

Now, was this is a new venture for the Lutheran Church?

5-00:28:41

R.Hidy:

Well, it was a special emphasis. And it was really quite an experience. I had a busy time. I get home about one week a month, some months. I was travelling a great deal. But it was an enriching experience.

5-00:28:59

Cándida Smith:

Were you preaching or—?

5-00:29:00

R.Hidy:

I organized a mission, which meant that each church in a given area would have a week of services, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. And there would be Visitation and there would be special service and they would be reaching people who had been moving in the community and encouraging them to become active. So my job was to organize that. It required three visits to that community. One was about three months before and then one a few weeks before and then I was there for the week. And then I was there a couple of months later for a follow-up. So, I was jig-jogging all about the West all the time. And I might be going to one place making a first plan, going to another place and having a mission. It kept me busy. But it was a wonderful experience and I made many friends and learned a lot.

After that, we went to San Francisco, the oldest church in California.

5-00:30:08

Cándida Smith:

Which is still standing.

5-00:30:10

R.Hidy:

St. Mark's Lutheran Church. We were there twelve years. That was in a Redevelopment Area and our church got involved in Redevelopment. And we put up a senior citizen tower, 124 apartments, and a round apartment building next to it. And we built 5.5 million dollars worth of construction on that block. They were busy years.

5-00:30:42

Cándida Smith:

Again, it sounds like you were as much businessman as—or entrepreneur maybe that's a better word. [laughter]

5-00:30:47

R.Hidy:

It was interesting. It was there they started the Human Rights Commission while I was there.

5-00:30:56

Cándida Smith:

How did you get involved in the Human Rights Commission?

5-00:30:59

R.Hidy:

It's very interesting. I was in a radio program with Father Eugene Boyle and Rabbi Joseph {Glazer?}. KCBS wanted a different kind of a program so they invited the three of us to come and try it out. We would sit down in the studio during the afternoon of a Thursday or sometime and they would record two programs. On Thursday night, they would broadcast it from 9:30 to ten o'clock. And it covered the whole West Coast. We would just talk about some topic. Well, it seemed to work pretty well. And we had quite an audience. We got a lot of mail. The station was happy. We enjoyed it. And, apparently one of the fellows who was on the program once in a while, Earl {Rab?}, was a consultant to the Mayor. And when the tension of all the racial problem came, the mayor wanted a Human Relations Committee. So, he got friends to suggest names and I surfaced as the Protestant. And the reason is you have to live in town five years before you can be on a committee like that. I hate to tell you but not many pastors last five years in the city, it's not easy. So we did, and we were there. And so we were on it.

5-00:32:42

Cándida Smith:

So you started when, do you recall?

5-00:32:46

R.Hidy:

I was appointed in about 1962 or '63, I think. And I was there—

5-00:32:54

Cándida Smith:

So, was it Mayor [George] Christopher who appointed you or—?

5-00:32:56

R.Hidy:

Mayor [Jack] Shelley and then Mayor [Joseph] Alioto reappointed me, and so I was on—.

5-00:33:02

Cándida Smith:

It was under Shelley then I think it was—[talking over each other]

5-00:33:04

R.Hidy:

John Shelley, he had been a—

5-00:33:07

Cándida Smith:

'63 is when he—

5-00:33:09

R.Hidy:

Yeah, is that it? So that's when it started.

5-00:33:13

Cándida Smith:

And it started—initially the focus was probably black-white relationships, maybe Jewish-Christian to some degree?

5-00:33:21

R.Hidy:

No, it was to fight fires. He called us in, fifteen of us, we got a letter, “Come to the Mayor’s office and be there on Wednesday at 9:00.” Well, this strange thing happened, the week before, I had had to fly to Washington. And I was stuck in first class and my seatmate was Clark {Byzie?}, the president of the Bank of America. I’d never met him but I knew him by picture, you know. So I was ushered in just before we took off. I looked at him and I said, “Hello, Mr. Byzie,” and I sat down. I didn’t talk to him at all, I let him alone. When we had lunch, we got acquainted. Had a nice visit.

When we went into the Mayor’s office, one of them that came in last was Clark Byzie! And as he came in, he looked around, he says, “Oh, Pastor, how are you?” Well, I was surprised he remembered me and everybody else thought, ‘How does he know Byzie?’ So, it was kind of funny, a little funny thing.

But we had a very interesting time. And the Mayor said to us, “You’re here to fight fires. We’ve got to do something to keep this thing from blowing up.” So that was our job.

5-00:34:44

Cándida Smith:

But while you were on the Human Rights Commission, it seemed like the thing for more and more complicated, because then Mexicans start—or Latinos—

5-00:34:54

R.Hidy:

Well, they came in, too, yeah, but the first thing with attention were the blacks. And that was the strange thing when that young woman of our church did such a surprising thing and got on the paper and—she literally changed the attitude of the city. First thing, when her picture was on the *Chronicle* on page one on Good Friday, after her husband had been murdered in Hunter’s Point. And she asked for memorial gifts for the children of Hunter’s Point. And all San Francisco just said, “Wow!” It just touched them. It still has an impact, you know.

5-00:35:46

Cándida Smith:

Were there crises surrounding the hippy—the Haight Ashbury?

5-00:35:52

R.Hidy:

Oh my, that came in while I was there. Oh, we had an indirect contact. I would get a letter from a pastor in Pennsylvania: “Our daughter has gone to San Francisco. This is her address. Will you look her up? I hope she isn’t a flower child.” So, I would go out and try and find an address and try to find them. Sometimes, I would never find them. Sometimes, I would get to talk to them. I had some unusual experiences, but not that many. That was a little insulated group. But it had a big influence, of course.

5-00:36:31

Cándida Smith:

Then there was the emergence of gay rights.

5-00:36:35

R.Hidy:

That came while we were there, that's right.

5-00:36:34

Cándida Smith:

And gays not consisting of their—that they should not be discriminated upon either.

5-00:36:43

R.Hidy:

We had gay people in our church, some of our leaders were gay. We knew it, they knew we knew it. We just welcomed them. They were gifted people. But the whole movement became more aggressive, of course, later and there's still tension. They're still trying to resolve it. Canada is now taking a major step in a different direction, you know. I don't think it's going to be a quiet solution, it's going to continue to bubble up, not everybody can accept it, some people can.

5-00:37:24

Cándida Smith:

Well, maybe we should wrap up. Do you have any questions? [to Washburn] if you have sort of closing thoughts you would like to share about the wartime ministry and your years in Richmond. One of the things that Evelyn said that I found very striking was how happy people could be with so little money, or so little material things, I suppose.

5-00:37:57

R.Hidy:

I would echo that and I think that—you see, we would sometimes, not often, we had dinner with them in their homes, and what we found—I don't know if she told you about the Spences. We went to visit the Spences and the Spences had done what other people in an emergency, had taken an orange crate and made a little desk out of it, a little table. And she would put cloth around it, you know. And it was a little place to put things on and put books on the shelf. With simple things, they made a life. I think they had done that back home. We found, for example, that some of them had come from the dustbowl. They had been used, some of them, in the country, making dresses out of flour sacks. That's why the flour mills would sack their flour in cloth that had little patterns for it. And these people were used to that.

And when we—did you tell about visiting the Spences? [to E. Hidy] We stopped on our way across country later, and visited the Spences in Williamsville, Missouri, and spent a couple of days with them, had a wonderful time. And got to see where they had come from. They had saved money for some time and then they went back home. And the three little girls grew up. And every Christmas, we got a letter from Fern Spence. And then one year, we didn't get a letter and Fern had passed on. Those were people of great simplicity but great joy and integrity and kindness.

We sometimes think it was our favorite parish because of the genuine-ness of the people. There was no show, no flamboyance, no make-believe, but a real genuine love. And we found a great time there. And we made friends that we have cherished for a long, long time. So ,I would say that it was an adventure that we found a blessing. We loved it.

5-00:40:25

Cándida Smith:

Well, thank you Reverend Hidy.

R.Hidy:

Thank you.

[End interview]