

Ted Kennedy Interviews

Recorded in 1996 by Helen McCue



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Note on the Interviews:

The following interviews with Father Ted Kennedy were conducted at my place in Bowral over several months during 1996. In all there were six series of long interviews. Following Ted's first mini-stroke I was keen to conduct the interviews so that some of Ted's wonderful and inspirational life story could be collected. During the course of these interviews Ted had another small stroke, was not in the best of health and consequently struggled for memory and expression at times. These interviews nonetheless provide the reader with a partial insight into the extraordinary life of Father Ted Kennedy. (Helen McCue, May 2013)

1931-1947 Childhood Years

HELEN: Perhaps we can start by talking about your childhood?

TED: I was born in Marrickville in a house still there now occupied by my niece - 321 Marrickville Rd. I was the third of what became four kids. I was born in 1931 and besides my parents, whom I love very much ... but there was a bit of a difference in the way they stayed in my life. My father, being a local GP, worked from the house and so I think he always had his lunch and dinner in the house. When I went to school I noticed that fathers were much more absent than my father was. In addition to Mum and Dad there was my grandmother who lived in the house. When they bought it I think she put half the cost of it into buying it and that probably was one reason she was more or less entitled to live there until she died. So she was there always and I was very close to her. But there is also Maisie, another Irish woman - Maisie Rohan. She'd come before I was born. It was a time that Maisie was young and I never quite understood in my earliest days how I was related to her because she was a sort of second mother, you know.

So that was Maisie and my grandmother (whom) we called "Wowie" because my eldest brother called her a kid's name "Wowie". Maisie and Wowie were always in my life you know and my grandmother lived in a separate room. But she had a very high bed and I remember climbing up on the high bed and having long conversations with her. She was very Irish and very Gaelic I think, in her way of thinking, but I learned a lot about Ireland from her - because she loved to tell the stories and I loved to hear them. And then Maisie would fill all that stuff in with own her side of the story you know. Maisie came from Cork, had a Cork accent, and they tell me that I went to school with a Cork accent. I had a strong Irish accent alright, but I went to school when I was six.

Maisie had more terror type stories because she'd been through the Black and Tans and so she was always [talking of those times]. You know people who have been through those traumas relive them all the time as Maisie did. And so when we got to the Second World War and we had a dugout in the back yard, Maisie would gather us together and bring us down to the dugout, but she'd often say "the Black and Tans are coming". Funny! My grandmother lived until 1946 - so that was until I was 15. It was a very important relationship I think for me.

HELEN: And your mother?

TED: My mother was a very competent secretary type. She had been a secretary in a legal firm. So when she married Dad she threw herself into the practice. She was probably as important as Dad was in the ongoing work of the practice. She sent out the bills which Dad would never have done anyhow. Dad just didn't seem to think about bills and, because Marrickville was a very poor area at the time, he just didn't charge the poor.

He was a very gentle man and he came from Araluen. He had been through the country school at West Araluen. You see, his mother had died when he was three and he was sent down by his father to Araluen where his father's brother and sister were and was brought up by this uncle and aunt (brother and sister). He had just gone to whatever (level of schooling it) would have been. I don't think it was even Intermediate level. He left school and he was on the farm. So he would have been working as a farmer with his old uncle for about four years. When my grandfather had got his MA and got preferment in the State Education Department he became the headmaster at Hay which was a training school.

HELEN: Your grandfather?

TED: My grandfather, yes, Philip Kennedy. Anyhow, he wrote to my father when Dad was eighteen I think, offering him Riverview (College, Sydney), because he had enough funds to pay for it, you see. So Dad accepted that. It must have been quite a trauma I think, to shift from settling into a very simple rural life. So he went to Riverview when he was eighteen, for three years. He then started Medicine. So he was a bit late in starting, 21 or 22. He would have been 30 I suppose when he finished. He became a resident (doctor) at P.A. [Prince Alfred Hospital] and then he married. I think he would have been thirty-three when he married and Mum was twenty-eight. But Mum certainly ran the practice with a lot of expertise that Dad wouldn't have even thought about.

HELEN: Your Mum had actually been working? She'd had a job?

TED: She had. Yes. She worked as a legal secretary at T.J. Purcell and Company. So Dad was a really highly trained surgeon and he was also already a very highly trained stockman. And he combined those very well. He just loved Araluen although my mother didn't. I think she was uneasy with the rudimentary life when she had kids. She would come down to Araluen and there were no facilities at all. There was no bathroom. So, actually, the house (in Marrickville) that they moved into when they married was something that Dad would not ever have experienced. It was a lovely old federation house and very large and they bought it for 4,000 pounds. Dad had inherited some money from his mother who died when he was three. The 2000 pounds went into the house and Mum put (in) her mother's money too.

I remember the War years. Interestingly, Dad would be required to go on duty to some air raid shelter station and Mum was a VAD - Voluntary Aid. So they both left the moment the sirens started. But of course my grandmother and Maisie looked after us. I would have been nine or ten then in 1941.

HELEN: And Maisie was someone your mum had brought in to help with the family because she was working with your Dad?

TED: Yes. Well Mum never learned to cook ever until she was eighty-seven and then she became an absolutely proficient French type cook. Yes, at eighty-seven. From eighty-seven to ninety-one, that was her greatest interest in the end. But she never knew how to cook because you see my Grandmother was a great cook too - an Irish cook and Maisie was too. But Maisie came in mainly as a nanny to us. Oh, she was very close to me.

HELEN: So she and your grandmother were great mates?

TED: Oh great mates. Very good friends.

HELEN: Was Maisie someone your grandmother (already) knew?

TED: No. But Maisie did get a job with my grandmother's relatives out at Guildford. Old Mrs Donohoe must have taken her on for a while. But I don't know how she came to Marrickville. She came via someone that we knew, you know.

HELEN: And your relationship with her was obviously very close?

TED: Oh yeah. But she became the same sort of person to my niece and nephews. You know when Johnnie, my brother, was nineteen or so, he went over to Ireland and he didn't see any of his own relatives but he went to see Maisie's. Well, Maisie just had an enormous influence on us all.

HELEN: Did she tell you stories?

TED: Yes she did.

HELEN: What was it about her?

TED: I suppose she was always there and she was a great cook. Well she stayed with us for fifty-seven years, which is a long while. She hadn't gone home throughout those war years. She did start going home every couple of years after the war ended. I think she first went when I was in the Seminary. I must have been two years in the seminary because I remember being at Manly when she came up to tell me she was going home. I got a real fright because I thought that she was perhaps not coming back again. But Dad left in his will that she be allowed to go home, financed back, every year I think or two years, which she did.

She had a few brothers and sisters but they gradually died off. But it was a rather unusual sort of experience having both my grandmother and Maisie as well but it never seemed to me to depreciate the relationship with Mum, you know. Often people ask me that sort of question. The question comes up as to whether or not a grandmother should come and live. I've often found that that's a very wholesome thing to put into a relationship. It doesn't depreciate the parental relationship at all. It sometimes eases problems.

HELEN: This was your mother's mother or your father's mother?

TED: My mother's mother.

HELEN: Tell me a little bit about your mother's family. Your mother must have also been quite unusual in that she was highly educated?

TED: She was not so highly educated. She was intelligent though. She was born in a hotel in Kings Cross and it was immediately opposite St Canice's church. It was called the Waratah Hotel. As you come up from Rushcutters Bay towards the Cross there is a fork in the road and there is an old hotel there now but of course it's been de-licensed and it's now called Backpackers. But that's where she was born. She was one of seven kids. She was the second last and I think they lived a fairly unusual (life). It was a bit more affluent than most. Her parents were Irish of course from (County) Clare and my grandfather ran this pub but he also had a house at Turramurra - a holiday (house), or rather a country house (as) they called it then. Of course it was before the (Harbour) Bridge and so they would have had to go to Turramurra via a punt.

I think Mum went to school there at Turramurra or Pymble. But then, when my grandfather retired from being a publican, he bought a huge old house at Dulwich Hill. And so the seven kids were still around. My uncle had been through Marist Brothers Darlinghurst and then went to Springwood and Manly and became a priest in 1914.

The next boy was John Terrence who died at the age of 24 in France. I just had a phone call from Steve Darmody who's a friend of mine. He picked up a bit of information and then dug a bit more up about it in the last couple of days. He (John Terrence) was an engineer and unfortunately he was killed. He'd just got a lectureship confirmed at Sydney University in engineering. And so that was a terrible loss.

HELEN: During the war?

TED: During the War yes. Killed.

HELEN: Mine explosion?

TED: He was an engineer I don't know what (type).

HELEN: Bridges?

TED: Probably. Yes. Strangely, when I went back to Ireland the second time I think ... this would have been 1978, I went around the area where relatives of ours were and this old man with a cap, about 80, with one of those old Irish sticks you know (a blackthorn stick) walking along the road. We stopped and he turned out to be a Healy and therefore he was related. No, he was related to my grandfather whose mother was a Healy and he did remember John.

When I came back to Australia I told Mum that I'd met this old man who was the last relative to have seen Uncle Jack before he went back to France. He was on furlough in Ireland. And he said to this old bloke, "I think my number might be up this time". Things were getting much harder in 1917 you know.

Mum never spoke much about it at all. But when I once played 'The Band Played Waltzing Matilda' by Eric Bogle, it put Mum into a state of silence. Then she said "yeah", you know. Irish Catholics were just herded into the war without ever being allowed to question it. I mean, there must have been a terrible clash in their psyche. But they had to somehow prove that they were loyal Australians.

HELEN: So your Mum's name was...?

TED: McMahon. She was the daughter of Patrick McMahon and Mary Jane O'Brien. HELEN: You went to Primary School in Marrickville?

TED: No, I didn't go to Marrickville. We had this extraordinary uncle who was the Parish Priest of Ashbury and we went to his school. That meant that we caught two trams and a bus and then walked for about a mile in order to get to Ashbury school. That started off with John. Mum got her licence to bring John to school and Dad paid for the licence for the next thirty years. But she never drove. Dad also bought her this nice little Morris - a Morris Cowley I think it was. But it sat in the garage for all those years.

HELEN: Your mother was intimidated by driving?

TED: Yes ... she probably just didn't get the experience she needed. She was taught by a bloke called Jarman who must have been a gardener or something.

HELEN: And that's where you went to Primary School - to your uncle's school?

TED: Yes, I went there when I was six. It was supposed to be very late. Other kids went to school when they were five. John started off at the age of seven I think. It didn't seem to be a problem for us. I must have jumped several classes because I finished the Leaving (Certificate) at 15. I was forever being told that I was too young and that I'd have to repeat this year. That started off when I was about 12. But I kept passing and I was being told this even when I went to the Seminary you know, "you can't get ordained at that age, you have to wait until you're twenty-two and six months". But Dad was dying at this stage and I finally got permission from the Pope to get ordained early. I was twenty-two.

HELEN: Where did you go to High School?

TED: I went to Lewisham Christian Brothers

HELEN: Nearby?

TED: Well, there were two trams to get there. John had gone there before me and I think it was because De La Salle at Marrickville hadn't started that he went to the other place. They had started by the time I went to school, but I just kept following on my brother's.

HELEN: How old were you after you finished high school?

TED: I was fifteen ... sorry, I had just turned sixteen. I turned sixteen in January of 1947

HELEN: Were you active in the school - sport, debating etc?

TED: No, I wasn't, because I was too immature really. That's the whole problem with being so young. I think I was still in short pants when I left.

HELEN: What do you remember about your school days?

TED: Not very much really. I don't have any kind of memories. There was a continuing state of immaturity I think. I was not a bad runner because that was graded not by age. In pretty well everything else I found myself to be so small. I mean my classmates were more like 17 and 18 and very mature.

HELEN: What about your early religious education? Were you taught by your grandmother?

TED: Yes all of that.

HELEN: How did that express itself?

TED: Well my uncle was a priest. When he died at the age of 45 of a heart attack he was renowned for his concern for the poor. I think that certainly stuck with me a bit.

HELEN: How did that express itself?

TED: Oh, that expresses itself very naturally in terms of where you found him. Well he'd be in, you know, the poor houses of his parishes. For a number of years he was at Erskineville as a curate. His first parish was up there at Terrigal or Toukley or one of those places. Then he ended up at Ashbury. It's very easy to find out that kind of question because that's where his heart was, you know.

HELEN: You consider him a major influence on you?

TED: Well I think so. I think I do believe that. My mother had three sisters who were nuns - Good Shepherd Nuns. And of course that was an interesting thing. They were all pretty highly educated - in music and that kind of thing. But they each entered the Good Shepherd nuns.

It was an awful system of course. They had these girls sent to them from the courts - prostitutes mainly. But those three nuns certainly would have overheard a language of life that not too many nuns would have. So that was an interesting thing too I think. Just that option to join the convent in those days, to work all the time with prostitutes, was itself a different sort of story from most nuns, you know.

HELEN: So you had the model of these three women and then you had the model of your uncle?

TED: Yes. There was a fourth woman really. There was another girl who was more or less adopted by my grandmother who also followed them into the same order - Aunty Kath. No she wasn't a real aunt. She came from Melbourne but she ended up in the Good Shepherd

convent and spent thirty or forty years in Perth. The three sisters were all separate but they would come together on occasions. They all came together on the occasion of my ordination.

HELEN: So you had the model of these three sisters and then you had your uncle?

TED: I think that I had enough sense of what Catholicism was all about when I went to the Seminary, to feel that these men are talking about stuff that's not relevant. I initially, right from the very start, came to the conclusion that most of these seminary professors who had control over my life were wrong. They had no sense of what it meant to be a priest in Sydney. I felt very sure of myself in that sense you know.

HELEN: Well you had a very good model

TED: Oh yes, yes. I think so.

HELEN: So you entered the seminary at sixteen.

TED: At just sixteen, yes. And I went to Springwood. 1947. Right.

HELEN: What are your memories of that apart from the fact that the theologians had it all wrong?

TED: Not only theologians, there were sort of tutors - moral tutors. They themselves were frightened. They had absolutely no energy for grasping the world as a mission territory you know. I just found them to be exceedingly limited.

HELEN: Why did you stay?

TED: I don't know. I thought that they're not forcing me into this. But Brian Cosgrove my classmate - of course he had already done five years before. He went to the seminary when he was twelve and Pat Kenna did the same. He (Pat) was the year after, but he also had done all that. Pat has this extraordinary love of Springwood. But, you see, his parents had broken up and that whole world was something which he embraced. It must have had a devastating effect on so many of them.

I remember saying to Pat - we were driving around these parts (Southern Highlands). I think he would often like to come back to Mittagong where he was born. We stopped on the roadside and I said, "I've always felt that Brian Cosgrove feels let down by his parents because they more or less sold him to God". And Pat Kenna just burst into tears and sobbed for about half an hour. Well I missed out on that and I arrived after the Leaving (Certificate). I had put my name down five years before but Mum and Dad wouldn't let me go, thank goodness.

HELEN: What motivated you? Did you always feel that you had a vocation?

TED: Sort of. Yeah. I don't know. It's too ... I can't put words on it really, but it was an exciting time.

HELEN: Your grandmother? And Maisie? Did they encourage you at an early age?

TED: I suppose the modeling of Uncle Ed was there all right.

HELEN: Can you recall what you wanted to do when you were about ten or eleven or twelve?

TED: I can't remember much in terms of putting theological form into the whole thing but I

certainly expressed the desire and it didn't change.

HELEN: You never wanted to be a doctor?

TED: No. I never did. No. Well of course there was a bit of that [pressure]. Peter Williams often says that I was the sort of classic second son. He always felt that. He felt, I think, that John was the first born male and had to become a doctor and I was to just become a cleric. I can't remember looking at it from that point of view, but he often has said that to me.

HELEN: You had no desire to do anything else in your life?

TED: No. Never did HELEN: What about girls?

TED: Oh, no. I don't think I had any interest in girls when I was at school. They were all boys. I went to Lewisham when I was eight. The first primary school I went to was Ashbury. That was co-ed.

HELEN: In teenage years were there no girls around who came to visit the house? - cousins?

TED: Marnie would bring all her girlfriends home but, see, they were two years older than me. Marnie entered the year after me. She was doing Sydney University Arts and she was held back because she got a spot on the lung. I don't think I became aware of women much until (I was) in the seminary. So I had already placed myself there.

HELEN: How did you become aware of them in the seminary?

TED: I suppose I got to know them and by the time I started to become very aware of girls I had locked myself in and in those days of course it was a very deep lock. No- one ever heard of anyone who ever left the priesthood and so that was a very severe lock and of course as I progressed through the seminary I became much more aware but nevertheless I was still... Oh we all were... every one of us I think. It's tied by some deep psychological thing that required us to accept the lock. And of course at that time I was still immature, not so much physically but you know I was twenty-six or so when I went to the university as chaplain. And I was infatuated by people like Christine Tilley... driven mad. She was an extraordinary girl.

HELEN: You remember her

TED: Oh yes

1947- 1966: Seminary at Springwood - University Chaplain

Note: From 1947 until the mid 1950's Ted was in the Seminary at Springwood and then became the curate at St. Canice's, Kings Cross.

HELEN: So after you left being the curate at St Canice's, you were appointed as University Chaplain?

TED: It was very hard to find someone who was game to face up to what most priests in general would have thought to be 'tiger country' - all these students who would ask embarrassing questions.

HELEN: Was that difficult for you?

TED: I found it very difficult. But oh no, I mean it was superb - just the sheer exhilaration of that world, you know. I had taken over from Roger Pryke who was a very brilliant man. He comes to see me now and again you know and he's got Alzheimer's and he's seventy-nine. I think he did something like seven or eight years as chaplain. He wanted to go overseas and he forced me to accept it. I hated the thought at the time because I was rather enjoying the curacy at St Canice's. Kings Cross was a great place to be in those days and I rather enjoyed it. I considered it to be something like a specialisation I'd taken on. It was very colourful you know.

HELEN: That must have been in the mid 1950s?

TED: Mid 50s. Yeah. Anyhow I got thrust by Roger Pryke into the chaplaincy. A little bit like Redfern actually. Redfern keeps out most of those Paul Brazier types you know because they happen to be terrified of what might happen if they went into dangerous country. I mean they're just afraid of those sort of people and terribly afraid of the poor. They've never had anything to do with them. They've worked out a system of theology of church which doesn't take into account the poor. So I've enjoyed an immunity by and large. I can say what I like because there's not likely to be a sort of enemy there. I enjoyed that sort of immunity for years.

And it was only when the Vatican Council came and the bishops of Australia went over to Rome that they picked up bits of information that might apply to their own universities. But we had largely enjoyed great immunity.

And then of course Peter Kearney turned up and he was willing to go to Mass there. That seemed to be a different Mass altogether from the one that his father had made him go to in his local parish. And so Peter came and lived with me. And he was only there a few weeks but he wrote most of those early hymns (Fill My House, The Beatitudes etc) which became very popular, in a little telephone room in my house at the university. He was looking for a way of leaving home.

HELEN: Was he a university student?

TED: Yes. So he turned up one night at Araluen when I was down there with a few students. That often used to happen. Peter Manning also turned up suddenly out of the blue one morning after he'd come down the Araluen mountain without lights. But Peter (Kearney) turned up one night. He was in third year university and he must have decided just to pick up his guitar and he made his way down by train and coach. He went into the pub at Braidwood and he found someone who was living at Araluen. And so he turned up at something like ten o'clock at night.

So I got to know him fairly well and he used to come to those Masses and sing things like 'Fill My House', which he sang because he wrote it in the lodge and it seemed to represent this other whole idea of hospitality and students packing in to the house - "Fill my house, eat my bread and drink my wine".

HELEN: You had this apostolate and you had people like Tony Coady?

TED: Yes. Tony Coady, whom I saw a few days ago at Christine and Ian's housewarming. Well he was always brilliant, absolutely brilliant, but a very comical character too. He's still that. He was probably the most influential student that many of us would have ever known. You know he had an enormous influence on about 350 uni kids. He's professor of philosophy and he's just going off to South Africa now. I told him about you actually. I thought you might give him some advice. He's going to Johannesburg - lecturing in philosophy I would think.

HELEN: For how long?

TED: Not very long. I'm a bit mixed up now. He's then going to America but he's only going for six months. They were asking him to stay for twelve months in Washington DC. It's only for a short time, about a month I think, in South Africa. But I would have liked you to meet him. Well he may still be in Canberra. He's on the bloody committee that grants ... I think I told you that. He comes up to Canberra from Melbourne now and again.

HELEN: And [Tony and the others] were intellectuals and they were working within this YCW (Young Christian Workers) framework?

TED: Right.

HELEN: Apart from challenging the church's teachings at that time, were they moving towards something else? Was this progressive movement that you had at university linked into the other universities and to other Catholic structures?

TED: Melbourne and Sydney were. Melbourne and Sydney had chaplains that were favouring that whole apostolate.

HELEN: Who was the chaplain at Melbourne University?

TED: Gerry Golden, who was a great friend of mine - an old Jesuit who had an extraordinary influence. [He had] a number of women, particularly young women, who he was so proud of. He was so proud of anyone who had that sort of courage you know.

HELEN: How did this actually fit into the church structures at the time?

TED: It didn't really. Bill Guinnane had been somewhat in the church structure. He was the full time secretary to the YCW in Melbourne and his whole job was visiting priests in the Melbourne Archdiocese. He worked for Shell and he moved away from there into the university and to Oxford. But he was very active in the university apostolate. By that time there was nothing much that he had to do with bishops. I mean he would have gone to see bishops all the time in Melbourne.

HELEN: Did you feel that was a movement that was going to go somewhere?

TED: Oh yeah. Vin Buckley wrote an account of the University apostolate in UA and he wrote a very interesting article in the Melbourne University Magazine. I think it was a very good account really of how it all came about. I'd like to get hold of a copy of it. It must be available. Because Vin had actually offered a ground plan for the church's future well before

the Vatican Council. So the Vatican Council came and it didn't appear to any of us as being new. We'd already heard the plan, you know.

HELEN: And this had emerged out of Europe?

TED: Mainly French. French and German. The German Cardinals were great.

HELEN: How did this link in to third-world liberation theology, which must have just been rolling along at this stage too? Your apostolate was really looking at the Australian church, but were they starting to reach out into the third-world at that stage?

TED: Yeah. We did have the Asian group.

HELEN: Were they Asian students?

TED: No. These were the students studying Asia, but not just Asia and some of those students actually moved off to South Africa quite quickly. See, there was a young couple that I now and again see in Adelaide who were vitally interested in that. These sort of movements always spread you know. (The) McGaries in Adelaide. McGarie was a famous name in Adelaide, the McGarie Cup - football cup. Well, he and his wife Margaret [whom] he met in South Africa were considered to be apostolates to go to South Africa. He would have been on loan as a lecturer in English at the time. But they've always had this terrifically strong apostolate to the poor.

HELEN: So there were some Asian connections, some South African connections, but really at that time, as I understand it, liberation theology was being driven by the South Americans. Or was that later?

TED: (Dom Helder) Camara was I think ... 1970, around that period. I think it was 1974 that there was a conference in Geneva which brought together black theologians and Latin American theologians. And that was very interesting. When they got to meet each other they found that they had nothing in common except their opposition to the traditional Christian theologies you know. But James Cain is still around. He's a black theologian - Protestant theologian. He was one. There was a black World Council of Churches theologian - (a) Christian from South Africa or Africa, I'm not sure. Then there was Hugo Asmann, who was a Brazilian Jesuit and the other one was the famous Paulo Friere.

And that was very exciting I think, 1974.

HELEN: Going back to the university, you had the apostolate and these groups and they met and they were basically challenging the church?

TED: Oh yes, they were.

HELEN: Your interpretation of the gospels at that stage was based on...?

TED: I think they were based on gospel stuff. But it was very YCW in its direction. I mean the students would meet, but they all came from their own homes or they were in their own digs and then once a week they would meet for an insight into the gospel, into themselves and the world. I found that enormously energising and when I got to Redfern that phase apparently had died because John Butcher and Fergus were much more into evangelical communes - people living together. I never have been won over to that at all.

HELEN: Evangelical communes?

TED: They were living together and I never found any value in that because (someone) like

Tony Coady was very much a member of his own family and he would meet up once a week. But he didn't seem to feel any need to share living space, you know.

HELEN: Their vision was of change, but within the structures of the society.

Whereas, were Fergus and Butch coming out of the celibate priesthood?

TED: I think they probably were.

HELEN: You seem to have rejected that all along?

TED: I have, all along. Right. Yes. It was very interesting that all those communes that did start flourishing around Redfern and around Surry Hills [collapsed].

HELEN: Were they religious communes?

TED: They were all religious. Yes.

HELEN: Nuns and priests?

TED: Oh no. No, not nuns and priests, they were lay people. Christian. They all seemed to collapse. They had just a limited term.

HELEN: Any idea why?

TED: I always had the feeling that Butch was trying on things and that he probably wouldn't end up doing what he was doing then. He certainly has done that. He's moved on into married life and also out of the church and into gardening.

HELEN: You spent seven years working with these students. Before you said though that somebody like Tony Coady had a major influence on you and yet you've spoken a lot about your early childhood formation. So what was it that Tony did that really influenced you during those years at university? He must have been a lecturer at that stage was he?

TED: No. This was earlier than that. He had taken out his straight BA and I remember the first meeting I ever went to - a senior group. He was doing the second reality (of the YCW methodology) - that's himself. And so he was talking about his big problem. He was going to ask his father could he live at home without giving any payment. He'd actually done very well as a cadet journalist and he was working at Pix magazine. Ultimately, when he became a philosopher, he was such a sharp populariser. He could popularise the most difficult sort of philosophical concepts and that's what he's remained. I think he introduced me to this YCW methodology which I think was a great thing really.

And that was certainly what Bob Scribner learnt. The more I think about it, the more I think that Bob actually picked up those basic principles and brought them into the Reformation History in such a way that he became world famous because he was able to get at the grass roots of the reformation.

HELEN: Did you have a special relationship with Tony? Did you spend a lot of time with him?

TED: Fair bit of time, yes. But Rod Coady was the next one and I got to know him. That's his brother. He was at the University and I spent a lot of time with him. He ultimately married Pauline who is Christine (Tilley's) sister.

HELEN: What was he studying?

TED: He was studying Arts, English. Jeremy Nelson was the Senior English master at (Sydney) Grammar (School) and Rod was his offsider.

HELEN: When you think back on those seven years at the university, were you having fun then?

TED: Oh God yes. Yes. It was a very enjoyable time.

HELEN: Were you into cars at that stage too?

TED: Oh no. Oh well, I was in one sense in that I had a couple of Peugeots. I was able to prove to the Taxation Department that I was chaplain to all Catholic students. That was part of the constitution of the Newman Society and therefore I used to get sales tax exemption on cars.

HELEN: You had a white sports car?

TED: A white Citroen. Yes.

HELEN: And you obviously weren't dressed as a priest in those days?

TED: No. That car was so cheap. I sold it for 300 pounds, more than I paid for it.

HELEN: Were there times during that time when you thought of leaving the priesthood?

TED: Not really. It was too exciting.

HELEN: Having discovered how beautiful women were, there were no temptations at that time?

TED: Not really I don't think. Oh, sort of, but not [really]. I think there was too much excitement. There were some very intelligent and beautiful women alright.

HELEN: Any you remember?

TED: Well Christine I mentioned. Marlene Campbell - who is now in Canberra. She's very brilliant but I don't know whether she's ever made a name. She's been a teacher.

HELEN: Other women there?

TED: Oh a hell of a lot of women really. They all married of course.

HELEN: You married most of them?

TED: Pretty well, yes.

HELEN: You've got this early childhood formation where women played a dominant role, then you went to university and what you've been saying was that men were very influential. Were there women at the university who strongly influenced you at that point?

TED: Yeah, I think, well, Christine particularly I think. She had an enormous influence around her. But there were four women who came to see me a few weeks ago. They're still very active I think. Sadie Sharkie is in London. It's only because she was out (in Australia) that they came to see me. Louise Marsden and Mary Gai Macnamara - a whole group of women I quite often see. They were all in the apostolate, yeah.

HELEN: Was gayness an issue in those days or was it all under cover?

TED: It was all under cover

HELEN: So nobody knew if anybody was gay. No one talked about it? They didn't come out? Was it an issue you had to deal with in those days?

TED: No. I think we probably did accept it in embryo. Peter Caldwell now is a philosopher

who fills in for Jenny Lloyd. Jenny's the professor of philosophy at NSW University. Now she was a very important figure in the apostolate and she married John Small. Peter Caldwell came back from overseas with his boyfriend who's gone back overseas now. But Peter's become very sort of explicitly gay. He's part time working for Eva Cox. He's Eva Cox's scriptwriter.

HELEN: Sounds like there was a lot of good intellectual discussion and lots of fun? You must have had a tremendous sense of freedom really.

TED: Oh yeah. Right.

HELEN: To whom were you responsible? Gilroy?

TED: Yes but he wasn't interested you see. All I would have to do was to say "would you some time come to the university to say one of the Masses?" [and] he would start panicking. Too challenging. He thought someone might ask him to prove the existence of God.

I had enormous freedom. [Fr. John] Burnheim offered me the gatehouse of St John's College. But it was going to take six months to do up and I actually thought it would be earlier. So I left my room at Camperdown presbytery where I initially started and where Roger Pryke had been. And then I would wait every night and at about 10 o'clock some student would say, "what are you doing tonight? ... where are you staying?" And every night I'd often accept any invitation to go to a student's house. That's what I really enjoyed I think.

HELEN: Lonely, unnatural life?

TED: Oh, yes. And I wanted to be [with] families. First of all the ecclesiastical tableware was brought out from the ecclesiastical drawer and 'Father' was 'Father'. But after a few days all that wears off and you're still around. So that's what I did.

HELEN: So you had all these families around?

TED: Yes. Rod Cody was particularly hospitable, but I would stay with others also.

Phil Tilley rang me yesterday about remembering something. He was a member of a committee which was set up of Catholic graduates and academics to decide what to do with St. Michaels Hostel. St. Michaels was in City Road and it was run by the Josephite nuns and it was anything but academic. Most of the girls who were there were at Teachers College. None of them were at the university and the university precinct had started to grow over City Road and into Darlington and obviously this piece of real estate still owned by the church was an ideal spot to have a chaplaincy.

I was hoping to gather together sort of intellectual academics who would live in a type of academic community. Mark Lyons was one such person. Peter Wertheim was another. He was really keen. I was thinking that Peter might be willing to be the rector of this new college. The result of our meeting was that we put in this submission to Gilroy who didn't read it but appointed (Fr.) Frank Meecham, who was a hardline bastard. So he was put in to be the senior chaplain. I had lost all confidence of Gilroy ... and he (Meecham) was put in over me.

1966-1972 Parish Years - Punchbowl 1966, Neutral Bay 1969

HELEN: So you left the University around 1966?

TED: Yes 1966 was when I left I think. Then I went to Punchbowl. I was working at Punchbowl as a Curate. Well, it was because Frank Meecham was appointed [as University Chaplain]. Frank Meecham was an older man. He is still alive and he is 80 odd. He was appointed to take precedence over myself. But he was just absolutely rigorous with his way of dealing with me. I mean, I just remember him walking into my office where I was still talking to a young fellow who had a lot of scruples really. He used to come quite late at night. I think it was half past 10 at night when Frank just knocked on the door, walked in and said, "Alan you have to go". Because he had imposed a curfew of 10 o'clock. He was that sort of rigorous fellow.

HELEN: Who appointed him?

TED: He was appointed by Cardinal Gilroy

HELEN: As an extra person.

TED: As an extra person, yeah.

HELEN: Was that a way to control you?

TED: Well, apparently it was. That in itself was enough for me to decide - I am not going to stay around to have that kind of intrusion into my life. So I accepted a parish appointment in Punchbowl. But just prior to that of course, a number of weeks before, there was the famous Mother Gorman meeting.

I spoke at it and there's a certain theory which you would find in 'Rockchoppers' - that's Ed Champion's book. He suggested that I was kicked out [of the university chaplaincy] because of that. Anyhow, I was at Punchbowl for two and half years.

HELEN: You were a parish priest there?

TED: No, I was a curate. There was an old Irishman who was the parish priest.

HELEN: So you were under him. How did you react to that?

TED: Well it was incredible stuff because I hadn't seen these sorts of people for many years. Punchbowl probably still is somewhat a place where no young teenager ever thinks of going to university. It was unheard of almost, and so you know I had never met a person from Punchbowl. There were no students from Punchbowl as far as I remember, except one. So it was just un-intellectual and unexciting for me.

HELEN: What did you do for those two years?

TED: Well I spent most of my time outside Punchbowl. I was forever driving out of Punchbowl.

HELEN: What for?

TED: Well, to make appointments with university students mainly, and so I would go into the university still. Well, they would come to me, but I didn't feel very comfortable in the presbytery.

HELEN: Did you have other work to do there in the Parish?

TED: I found things had changed so much. I had found before I went to the university that it was fairly practical pastoral thing to do, to knock on doors and meet up with the Catholics or anyone who wanted to talk to you. I was enjoying that kind of pastoral work. But when I got to Punchbowl in 1966, which was seven years after I had been in a parish, I found was that you could knock on doors all day without finding anyone at home. So that was the big change - the working mothers. Also, I found that by that time they had come to terms with their own problems. We were very much 'jack-of-all-trades' before when there were these 'not-working mothers' at home. They would pour out all sorts of problems that they were having with kids. Now, I noticed that they had all found some kind of expert in terms of human sciences, you know, and they all had had certain problems which they took to psychologists or counsellors.

HELEN: It happened very quickly.

TED: Very, yeah!

HELEN: So the pastoral work that you would have done before, you suddenly found had fundamentally changed?

TED: It had, yes.

HELEN: So, how was the old priest feeling? How was he coping?

TED: Well he was just sitting upstairs. He didn't do any pastoral work at all, I don't think. That was only a memory for him.

HELEN: And so you just said Mass on Sundays and held various services of different sorts.

TED: He did a novena, thank goodness. I think Tony Newman was still in the active priesthood at Glebe. I don't know if I have told you about that story yet?

HELEN: No.

TED: He had come back from Paris where he had done a course in liturgy and he was appointed as chaplain to the tuck-shop at Rosehill and (chuckle) ... and then he was moved to Glebe-Forest Lodge.

I remember saying to him when he was made to give a novena every Wednesday night, "what do you preach about?"

He said, "I just preach the one sermon, I don't ever change it. I just preach about the danger of exaggerating Mary in devotions."

I said, "that must put all those people, the whole twelve of them that come every Wednesday night, into a terrible state of conscience. They would have to roll up to you to confession. And what do you tell them when they confess they exaggerate Mary in devotions?"

"I always say was it with yourself or someone else"? And then I say, "for your penance say half a Hail Mary. And they always say, "which half father?"

And he says, "that's the ultimate question, because this is the age of personal decision. You've got to decide yourself which half" (chuckle). He left the priesthood after that.

HELEN: But I can understand why!

TED: Yeah! But then I think in 1968 I was at Punchbowl and *Humanae Vitae* came out and

that was the biggest problem, even in pastoral life. And I did mention to you the other night about that letter I wrote, you know.

HELEN: You found it?

TED: No, I haven't yet. I can look up the Sydney Morning Herald of that date. It was *Humanae Vitae* 1968. I could find it quite easily I would say.

HELEN: Beginning of the year?

TED: I can't remember. It was probably half-way through the year. I told a very small number of people that I had written it. In those days of course, the Herald accepted letters like that without checking. So I had to somehow express my dissent from that through my ears rather than through my mouth. I mean there are ways of insinuating I suppose. I spent a long time talking about Cardinal Newman's attitude to conscience and how he believed in his latter days, after becoming a Cardinal, that he was bound in conscience to inform people's consciences about their right to dissent from papal teaching. So it was my indirect way of talking.

But the thing is that if you said out loud you don't believe in that particular doctrine, you had to leave the priesthood or you were just expelled. Kevin Bowden was one of them - I think he might have been. There were four MSC priests who were in Canberra at the time in Daramalan (College). There was Michael Fallon, Kevin (Bowden) and two others. And immediately, Tommy Cahill, Archbishop of Canberra, evicted them. They were sent down here to Chevalier (College, Bowral). Two of them then left. That would be Michael and Kevin and another bloke called Barry something I think. But that was the choice you had to make. Either speak out or go underground.

HELEN: So you went underground?

TED: Yeah. I've therefore felt that I have only been able to use a sort of power to stay in to the extent that I get older and older. They will hardly kick you out, but I have just measured myself in terms of that, you know. So that was 1968.

HELEN: Was that a difficult decision?

TED: Well, I think that it was too complicated to work out. I mean, I think I felt reasonably happy with myself for being able to communicate a sort of alternate theology. It was life-giving to a lot of people I think and therefore that was enough for me to stay in. I don't think I ever became so cheesed or browned off as to feel paralysed. I never felt paralysed, you know.

HELEN: But you also didn't want to leave, did you?

TED: Well I didn't, no. That's right.

HELEN: You've never wanted to leave, have you?

TED: Never, no.

HELEN: Have you always seen it as your vocation?

TED: Probably, yeah. I just quoted something from Wilhelm Beckett. Wilhelm Becket died of cancer in 1966. He was a Dutch bishop to Pope John of the Netherlands. He was a marvellous man apparently. He was the bishop of a very big diocese in Holland. Henry Maas was a member of that diocese - you know the Dutchman I stayed within Glebe. He talks

about him, about what a wonderful figure he was. I am writing something right at the moment. I am talking about the way bishops exercise authority and I thought he was really beautiful the way he talked about his own exercise of authority. He says authority has always got to do with saying something. But he said, "I don't mean having the last word on something, but rather saying something meaningful". That convinces [people] by its very words. Because you know you are something and you are spot-on and therefore people can be convinced just by that, you know. Well, that's something to do with relevance. I think I have been able to say things relevantly and saving, somewhat, the church from its own irrelevance.

HELEN: Have you felt you did that around that time.

TED: Well, I think so. Yeah. And, very shortly after that we - fifteen priests in the Sydney archdiocese - started working towards a new form of ministry. We kept meeting and we kept badgering the Cardinal who could not quite understand, ever, what we were trying to say.

HELEN: So the turning point was this doctrine, the Vatican doctrine [Humanae Vitae], and then you started to meet together. You all shared a common position.

TED: We did, yes. And most of them dribbled away. Most of them left the priesthood and I still see most of them. They come to see me. Johnny Murray,

(Terry) McBride came the other day. So there were fifteen of us in all. The only ones that were left in the priesthood were another older man Les Cashen - he is the parish priest at Glebe now - and about three or four others. The young ones just left and married.

HELEN: But you were only young then. You must have been only in your early thirties.

TED: Well no, I think I was 39 when I got to Redfern.

HELEN: So you were about 36 or so when this was all taking place

TED: Right, yes.

HELEN: Still young.

TED: But they were only 24.

HELEN: So you all started to meet together?

TED: We met at St John's College University of Sydney, once a week as far as I remember, because Les (Cashen) was the Vice-Rector at the time.

HELEN: And you discussed all the issues including a new form of ministry that came out of the Vatican II.

TED: A new form of ministry - that was the thing we all agreed on. We all agreed I think that if ever we got into a parish like Redfern... We didn't nominate Redfern, we just asked for an inner city parish. But were all agreed I think that what we would then do was open up the doors to allow all sorts of odd-bods to come in, and share our living. That's as far as we got. I don't think I felt confident enough to believe that we could ask aborigines in.

HELEN: How long did these discussions take place between the fifteen of you? TED: Something like two or three years.

HELEN: Of awareness raising among you and consolidating your position.

TED: Somewhat, but not all that much, because what was so slow was the communicating with the Cardinal Archbishop, who then would answer us back after weeks and weeks .

HELEN: So you were all parish curates or priests discussing putting up a new form of ministry? You were doing that formally to the Cardinal?

TED: Yes

HELEN: And you were using the structures, you were actually trying to manipulate and change the structure.

TED: Right, yes we were, yes.

HELEN: Who initiated that?

TED: Well I think we all would have seen ourselves as initiating it.

HELEN: Right, well it just sort of grew basically?

TED: It did yes. But there was a sort of hope I think in many people's minds that we were going to crack it. And when it didn't happen it was a big disappointment to a whole lot of young ones particularly. There was a final 'no' from Gilroy.

HELEN: Whatever happened to letters? Are the letters on the archives, the church archives?

TED: Yes, they are I think. Les Cashen, I think, [he was the secretary]. He would have copies. He has got pretty well everything.

HELEN: Did anyone sort of dominate from a theological point of view or from an intellectual point of view? Could you say that there was a leader in that group?

TED: I wouldn't think so, no. I think we were rather intent on putting down that thought that we would need elect our own leader rather than have a leader appointed by the Archbishop, you know. When we did go to Redfern therefore, there were only three of us. But we claimed the right to choose the leader of the three. They in fact did choose me. But, I don't think that there was anyone that was deemed to be leader at the time. That egalitarianism which Rome seems to be afraid of was built-in I think.

HELEN: And how did the Coogee Bay Hotel meeting fit into all of that? Was that some form of catalyst was it?

TED: That is thirty years ago next December I believe, so it must have been 1969. What happened was that sometimes I was at Neutral Bay parish. I had this old man who had retired, who had been a parish priest for thirty years and Gilroy was trying to get him out of the role. So he appointed me as administrator and he expected from old Mick O'Dea his resignation. Well Mick, didn't see it that way. He wanted to continue as the parish priest and so it was an awfully boring role that he lived in, in the presbytery. He was 83 and he loved a huge dinner every day. The housekeeper would provide this meal and he would also have a glass of whiskey.

Whenever the train passed by Camden Parish, where he was the parish priest before the thirty years at Neutral Bay - thirty years prior to that again - when the train went through Camden, he saw that whistle as the sign that he had his first drink. So he drank every day after that. For sixty years he had his whiskey at twenty to twelve, and then he would have a glass of wine. And I was on this particular day, pretty bored I think. I rang up Val Noone in Melbourne. He wasn't then married. He hadn't left the priesthood. And I then suggested

that we have a meeting of priests. And Val ran a tiny little magazine for priests called 'Priests Forum', so he put it in the Priests Forum thing that went all over Australia to something like three or four hundred priests and said next Friday we are inviting you to a get-together in Coogee. So I think about one hundred and fifty suddenly turned up.

HELEN: As many as that.

TED: Yes I think it was that. It was a very good meeting. But I think I made the suggestion out of absolute boredom and having had a glass of wine I think. I thought it was a good thing, I think. Then various sub-committees were formed.

HELEN: Who chaired that meeting?

TED: I can't remember who would have chaired. I think somebody was probably nominated.

HELEN: And, were there minutes kept of that meeting?

TED: Yes, I think there must have been. Val Noone would have all that. He just reminded me of that when I was down in Melbourne about last year and asked me what I thought about having a thirtieth year anniversary.

[The Coogee Bay meeting] was held every year from then on. And then the National Council of Priests was formed. But of course it was absolutely taken over by the right wingers. I never went to it again after that.

HELEN: But, what did you discuss on that first meeting? What was the purpose of getting together?

TED: Well it was rather similar I think to what we ourselves were working on. It is interesting that this option for the poor was pretty dominant I think in our small group discussions. But then we tried to lift the thing onto a national level and that was really what we were spelling out. And after that, I was approached by Jimmy Freeman. Jimmy Freeman had become the new Cardinal Archbishop and he rang me up one day. He was embarrassed because he had an empty parish at Redfern and he didn't quite know what to do.

There was this mad fellow there and he was a chronic schizophrenic. He also was an interesting combination of that and drink and he had chased the housekeeper down the street with a knife. She went down there in her nightgown. So I think she must have reported him to the Cardinal. Around the same time, Freeman had been requested by the Jesuits for a place to work in Redfern. So I think he decided that he knew me a little bit better than Brian Stoney and another Jesuit (George Belfrage) who were the ones that asked for a place in Redfern. It is interesting that Brian Stoney, after all these years, has had to leave the Jesuits to work in Redfern which he is now doing. He is living in number 1 Redfern Street, Redfern.

HELEN: Is he working with the parish.

TED: Well no, he is working with the poor, which he has always wanted to do and it is interesting. And so that is how we got our foot in.

HELEN: So how did you meet up with Butch and Ferg?

TED: Well Butch (John Butcher) and Ferg (Fergus Breslan) were two of the fifteen [priests]. They were in different parishes. But when Freeman rang me, he offered Redfern to me - but (there were) five of us still wanting to get to a place like Redfern ... So, the five of us applied.

That included, Butch, Ferg, Terry Quinn (who's now in Perth) and one other, Tony Newman.

HELEN: From your original fifteen, you persisted with Freeman?

TED: Yes.

HELEN: After or before Coogee Bay Hotel meeting?

TED: It was after. But in that period from Gilroy going and saying 'no' until then, the number had been somewhat reduced. Some of them had peeled off. They had left the priesthood. But there were five of us still wanting to, including Tony. So Tony would have been at Glebe. Well, Freeman accepted three of us out of the five. So Terry Quinn then left and Tony Newman left [the priesthood] as a result of being turned back.

HELEN: So you really didn't choose Butch and Ferg. They were just part of that group and they came along?

TED: I think that of the fifteen we were linked but only by reason of our commitment to the poor. I was linked much more to Ferg through someone like Tony Newman.

He would have been closer to me. You know if you take fifteen links out of a chain ... it is a much weaker you see. My link with Ferg and with Butch was not as strong as with others who left.

HELEN: All of the other fifteen left?

TED: Pretty well yeah.

HELEN: Of that original fifteen group are you the only one still left.

TED: No, Les Cashen, Bill Aliprandi, that's all I think. And the fact that Tony Newman and Terry Quinn were not allowed in - that was enough to send them off you see. And, I think I said in that talk of twenty-five years (25th Anniversary Mass 1996) that was the end of the story not the beginning. It was as if we had arrived and were struggling in a war zone. I think we were all a bit battle-shot. I think that sense was very strong in me when I was attacked on that first night when that bloke threw the beer bottle. Fergus's appreciation was quite different from mine.

HELEN: So then the three of you ended up in Redfern together.

TED: Yeah. You were talking about women. There were women I think, in those early days at Redfern. Well Butch had this Julie who probably wanted to move in with us. Don't know exactly, but he finally decided to move down the street with her.

HELEN: She was a nun?

TED: No, she was youngish, only about nineteen. She had studied at the Catholic Teachers College. There have always been a few women, who were expecting me to leave I think. I have never been tempted into a marriage that would require me to turn my back on what I was doing. That's the whole problem that I think I have always had. Either that or I had this feeling that some of these women were really pretending that they were interested in all this. There were a couple of them, now both quite eminent professors in universities, that in those days were really very hopeful that I would be kicked out or walk out. I don't think I have felt in unison there.

HELEN: Did you feel that a relationship would take you away from what you wanted to do?

TED: Often it did. One of the blokes at that period was Michael Mahoney. Do you know him? Michael was an absolutely brilliant young priest but he fell in love with Bernadette. Now, he did have to leave the priesthood, but strangely enough Bernadette would have been a great sort of support for him had she been able to marry him and he remain a priest. That kind of union I think, I do respect.

HELEN: And, you didn't meet anybody who you felt would meet that criterion for you?

TED: No I don't think so.

HELEN: Did Shirley, in her own way, meet that criterion?

TED: Oh yes. I think so.

HELEN: At the emotional level.

TED: Yes. She seemed to be able to cut through a lot of stuff, you know.

HELEN: Is there a sadness for you, that you actually never did meet somebody.

TED: I'm not sure. I don't think so, because I have a feeling you can only get sad if there was a realistic hope of that happening. I don't think I felt sad in that realistic sense.

HELEN: What about children? Did you ever want children?

TED: I don't think that I have ever wanted anything exactly. But I think it must be pretty true of everybody of course, in that there is a sort of loss at times you could express.

HELEN: You didn't ever feel a really strong desire to have children?

TED: No. Brian Cosgrove used to say that there was a grieving, a sense of loss. I heartily agree, but I haven't. He would express it much more in terms of regret. Regret is different I think.

HELEN: And you don't have that regret?

TED: I don't think so, no. Well I don't know, it moves so quickly into the impossible.

HELEN: Do you think you were (so) deeply conditioned right back that it was impossible, so that it was never going to be part of your plan?

TED: Probably, yes, probably. (Name) was my good friend. When he left to marry and he is still with her, it seems to me that he had some sort of physiological need that she obviously doesn't tune in. She does, but in a sort of strange sort of way. She adulates him and therefore she makes his interests hers but in that sort of secondary way, you know. She is quite neurotic. I mean that is the model of a relationship that I couldn't bear. I've never felt that I could live with anyone, I suppose, for too long. It's mainly the breakfast I think I would find very hard, every day of my life.

HELEN: I don't know whether you want to pursue this, but could I ask you ... someone like Pat (Durnan) has been around for a long time?

TED: She drove me mad all that time too (laugh).

HELEN: She has often been there for breakfast.

TED: Yeah, but never. And I have preached about that, which often makes people laugh - about the heavy breathing at breakfast time.

HELEN: Tell me about that.

TED: Well every relationship I have had with a parish priest has brought about that state of affairs. His breathing is heavy because he is still angry that I came in last night after midnight. And I think that anyone who was interested in turning a community of nuns and brothers into an outgoing community that takes in the poor, for instance - they know what it means. Because they have been trained to be community people, so it is their turn on Friday night to cook and so, no matter what they are doing, any kind of social action outside, they have got to prefer their brothers and sisters before all these people. There has been an extraordinary dichotomy between living community life and living community life out in the field. And what they always have to face up to is the heavy breathing at breakfast of the other brothers. Because if you are not living out your commitment to cook tonight, it is most horribly embarrassing.

HELEN: And do you feel that those feelings are mirrored in a marriage?

TED: Often are

HELEN: And you were saying that you are not prepared to put up with the heavy breathing in the morning.

TED: That's right

HELEN: I can understand that, absolutely.

TED: (chuckle). Well (name) I feel has actually lived with that. I would personally term that as suffering. He obviously accepts it. He doesn't seem to me to be willing to even face up to the possibility of her being a shackle around him.

HELEN: But Dick Buckhorn had a different sort of relationship. Didn't he leave the priesthood first and then live in community and then get married?

TED: He left the priesthood by reacting against a very reactionary parish. He was the parish priest at Bogabilla. Now I think he decided at some stage to buy a house down the road and he moved out of the presbytery and effectively told them all to 'get stuffed'. He found that they were so racist particularly and he did not want to be a parish priest of racists, and then he invited Lilla (Watson) to live with him, and he later married her. I don't know if he ever married her but he has been living with her ever since.

HELEN: Has he been able to continue his work do you think?

TED: Well, he doesn't see himself as a pastoral priest anymore. He moved up to Brisbane with Lilla and he is very involved with black issues. But they both are slowing down a bit.

HELEN: Well they are very complex issues, you know, why people stay and why they choose marriage.

TED: I think Dick is one of that fairly important group of clergy who only stopped doing what they were doing as priests when there was a certain sort of impossibility to imagine any other way of doing it. I mean, just that image of the whole parish being unable to throw up any(thing) non-racist. I think Dick then found that the Church was stuffed. He had tried all sorts of ways of opening it up.

HELEN: Was he part of your group in Sydney?

TED: No.

HELEN: But he wasn't in Sydney though was he?

TED: Well he was in Sydney the early part of our being at Redfern, but no he wasn't in the group.

HELEN: What do you think would happen if Freeman hadn't got you to go to Redfern?

TED: Well that's it.

HELEN: Very interesting. A very critical turning point of your life. What do you think you would have done if you had to stay at Punchbowl?

TED: I probably would have left.

HELEN: Did you consider that at the time as a possibility? You were facing a horrible opposition

TED: I don't think I ever did, strangely.

HELEN: Well that wasn't what happened anyway. You ended up there. It is interesting to think, what might have happened. Do you think you might have gone somewhere else?

TED: Well I think I was aware that Gilly Young (Guildford Young), who is a good friend of mine, mainly because Denis Quinn was my good friend and he was Gilly's secretary and so we would often go down to Hobart and talk to Gilly almost all through the night, every night. He was a great talker.

HELEN: Was he the Bishop there?

TED: He was the Archbishop of Hobart. Well I knew that he would give me cover and when Freeman came to me in Punchbowl I did say that I was considering leaving for another diocese and that I wanted to go to Gilly Young or Frank Carroll in Canberra or to Frank Rush the Archbishop of Brisbane.

HELEN: And they were much more sympathetic to your position at that stage and they would have given you something to work more closely with the poor.

TED: Oh yes. Right.

HELEN: Freeman did not want to lose you?

TED: Yes. Freeman must have been auxiliary bishop to Gilroy when he came to Punchbowl. He was then made bishop of Armidale, went off there and was transferred back to Sydney. In the meantime I had gone to Neutral Bay and spent two and a half years there. That's how it happened, yes. He would have been aware of that fact.

HELEN: Were you happy in Neutral Bay?

TED: I wasn't all that unhappy. It was a bit of a different sort of story.

HELEN: What were you doing at Neutral Bay?

TED: I was a curate and there were a lot of like minded people. That's where I met Brian Johns for instance, and that was somewhat enjoyable. But it was at Neutral Bay that I did ring up Val Noone. So that's where the Coogee Bay meeting fitted in.

HELEN: So what happened after the Coogee Bay and then we can talk about what happened to the community of other priests and nuns who came to join you at Redfern.

TED: We arrived in Redfern on New Year's Eve 1971.

1972 Early Days in Redfern

HELEN: So it was at the beginning of 1972 (that you arrived in Redfern?). What was the situation when you first arrived and put your foot into the presbytery at Redfern? Who was there? What was there?

TED: Right. Well, it's an old three-storey building, a rather interesting piece of architecture. I think initially it was just a fairly standard terrace house, and would have been bought by the Church together with a bit of land in order to build a church and a convent somewhere about 1890, but the house had actually been renovated more than once. There were some rather enterprising priests in the old days. Tom Wallace was a famous monsignor in Darlinghurst who had once been in Redfern, and it was he I think who had done it up in the 1930s. But then, it was a very unpopular parish over the years, because in those days there was no provision for any kind of egalitarian salary. So the priest who was there was forever complaining that he didn't have enough to eat. And the interesting thing is that the Church didn't have any apparatus for suggestions - which parishes it should subsidise you know. Extraordinary, yeah.

HELEN: That changed though.

TED: That had changed, just before we arrived actually. But he (the former Parish Priest, Fr John Gaffney) had sold those houses for \$24,000 - there were four houses - using as the agent this head of the St Vincent de Paul Society who ripped - well, I think he ripped off the Church. But John Gaffney actually got a sort of a very posh decorator, interior decorator, to do it all up. So there were three floors with the very best of carpet right through the building. And there were three of everything, three Hoovers. Everything was arranged beautifully and the kitchen had been done up beautifully. Well, we inherited his housekeeper, Mrs Ryan. Mrs Ryan came from Bellingen, and she was thoroughly sort of caught up in a co-dependency relationship with this alcoholic schizophrenic.

HELEN: Priest?

TED: Priest, yeah. John Gaffney. And apparently he'd often been in psychiatric units, but somehow he must have got worse than he ever had been. So I knew a week or two before we arrived he had actually got very drunk. Well the other thing is, what he had done twice was burn the presbytery down while being drunk.

HELEN: Completely down?

TED: Not quite, but fairly well. And I always kept that up my sleeve because if anyone were to attack me for ... like any bishop ... for letting the presbytery go to rack and ruin, I'd say, 'well, the parish priest has already done it, got drunk himself and burnt it down twice'. And we were expecting that was going to happen too, that some drunk would do the same in my time, but it didn't actually.

So, Mrs Ryan we inherited, and she was very active. You know Gaff had a bell under the table in his dining room and he would press the bell with his foot and she would come flurrying in with a plate, or whatever. It was extraordinary.

HELEN: Did you ever use the bell?

TED: No, I didn't, no, and she realized after about a week, I think, that she was redundant, because Ferg and Butch and I would just thank her very much for the meal, but we'd also go out and wash up. I think she realized that she wasn't going to last. It was while she was

there that our first Aboriginal guest turned up while we were eating a meal, and she was pretty drunk, and she asked for a sandwich and we brought her in and we gave her a meal [and] sat her down.

HELEN: Auntie Helen? (Aunty Helen Waters)

TED: Auntie Helen, yes. So Auntie Helen stayed for many years. She became a very powerful figure really in everyone's life.

HELEN: In what way was she powerful?

TED: When she used to get drunk she was very powerful. She'd break all the windows and all that sort of thing. She was also very headstrong, but there was something grand about her really. I don't know what it was. We always had enormous respect for her. She stayed for many years. So, years after, she went to Wilcannia for a while, at least for a year or two. Yeah

HELEN: Did she help you in any way? Was she a figure that you can say assisted you in your work there? Who helped you in any way?

TED: Oh no. I think she was so typical an Aboriginal person that she could read us and she would always tell us, you know, what she thought of our behaviour. But it was a good way of understanding Aboriginality I think. She had been one of the stolen generation. She'd been in Cootamundra Girls' Home, so she was very typical of all those things, you know.

HELEN: And she gave you insights that you had not had before?

TED: Oh, I'd reckon - all the time, yeah.

HELEN: Do you see her as a teacher?

TED: Yes, sort of, yes. I think when Mum Shirl started working with us, she had this enormous respect for Auntie Helen, you know. I think I tried to mention that in the talk I gave at Mum Shirl's funeral, that there'd be times when Mum Shirl would herself ... sort of stand in awe, knowing the sort of life that Auntie Helen had been through, and, yes, she had this enormous respect for her. It's moments like that I think that I know I've had the privilege of being present at ... you know? Very few words were spent on Mum Shirl standing in awe of this woman. She was so small and she would get so very drunk, so she was a victim of police, sexual abuse and all that kind of thing you know. That must happen all the time, and Mum Shirl always knew. I suppose these women would tell her. But there were funny sides to it. I mean, I remember when she (Aunty Helen) would get pulled into jail in Central cells and they'd ring me up as she required them to, to let me know that she was there, and then I was going to go down and bail her out. You'd get down there, to Central cells, and there were these huge clanking doors which were required to get this fierce criminal, allegedly, out. And out would come this little petite Auntie Helen. I mean, it's an overkill, isn't it, this whole idea of putting such a person behind bars? But she was good enough for them when she was drunk anyhow. She'd tell them off. Yeah. Well she was there. That must have been the first week when she arrived.

HELEN: You had a special love for her, didn't you?

TED: I did indeed, yeah. I think it had something to do with the fact that she was the first Aboriginal ever to come into my life at that level.

HELEN: Did she open doors for you, do you think? You know, I mean not only did she, you

know, touch your heart and soul.

TED: Yes.

HELEN: Did you see her as someone also who facilitated your work, who really was a help to you in that way? Indirectly I mean. I don't mean directly.

TED: No, it was indirect, I suppose. We had this three-storey house and I went down to the Aboriginal Medical Service which had only weeks before opened, and there was (Mum) Shirl behind a red telephone. It was a very powerful image. I think I've always retained it. Shirley was voluntary. All the doctors were voluntary. And so I went in and I said to Shirl, whom I had never met until that moment, that I was Ted Kennedy and I had just taken over the parish at Redfern, and could she suggest where I could find a place to put Helen up. And she did say that she had a full house that night. Otherwise she would put her up herself, but no, she couldn't help. So I went back and I had to get permission of course from John Butcher and Fergus, so we put her up in a spare bedroom.

HELEN: And she stayed?

TED: She stayed forever then. Yeah.

HELEN: So that was a critical turning point then, wasn't it?

TED: It was, yeah.

TED: My memory of the first week was not just Auntie Helen but hundreds of people seemed to pile in, mainly whites, deadbeat whites, so that over those first few weeks a lot of white people got a foothold. And only in a few weeks I think we noticed certain sort of things happening, namely the person who was in charge of the kitchen, there was always a volunteer of course, but often was, out of a sheer desire for power. That was an extraordinary phenomena right through those early weeks.

There was a bloke called Jim Malone. I was going off to Burrawang on a Sunday and Jim Malone, very spotless sort of character, he was very well groomed and there was a storm brewing and he said "do you mind if I take shelter out of this storm?" I said 'no (I don't mind)' and I didn't even tell Butch or Ferg that he was doing that because he was, as far as I knew, only staying until the end of the storm. I think I was away for two or three days and when I got back he was in full charge. He had taken over the kitchen and he was extraordinary really. He slaved in providing the food, [and] there would have been a dozen, mainly men and mainly whites who were staying around, sleeping in the presbytery. Anyhow, he had this idea that we'd iron everyone's clean shirts and Ferg particularly thought it was not desirable that he take this power role. So I had to ask him (Jim Malone) to leave and he couldn't quite understand it. He wanted it to be a retreat. He was supposed to be at Joeys.

Anyhow, a few months later Ferg came to me with this newspaper and there was this photograph. "Who's that"? I said. "Jim Malone" he said. "Well look he is written up as John Malone, but he is known as the 'toe cutter'. The bloke to cut toes off in the underworld you know". And he was missing. I think he was probably killed. He must have chosen that spot (Redfern) I think to hide. Extraordinary, yeah!

Well that was an interesting world alright, but it was all more the world of white deadbeats, alcoholics and gradually after a few months, only when Christine Kelly came for lunch after mass on Sunday and I said, look there are a few blacks that are coming to lunch. Well

Christine has never looked as if she is very rich, she wears very simple clothes. She did then too, but because she was waiting for lunch to be served she walked in and I said I will just go and get these other aboriginal people. They were all standing like sticks in the back bathroom and I said to Jukebox, "Jukebox come in and I will introduce you to this friend of mine". He said, patting his stomach, "we can't eat with white people". They had never ever sat down with a white person. And Christine, of all people, seemed to me to be the least frightening. But, that struck me as being the transition that we moved from the point where there had been a real transition. The social identity - or just the fact that blacks led a very anonymous life to whites. I just felt that that was a sort of symbol for where they had always been regarding whites, and what we were doing was to turn the thing around. It took a long while though.

HELEN: With you?

TED: Yeah, we were not deemed to be whites. But it took quite a while. They had their way of actually moving from A to B in Redfern without appearing terribly obvious. You know though - not to be seen in Redfern Street initially. But then they would start pouring in for lunch every day. So it took that big transition.

HELEN: They were hanging about in parks?

TED: And squats, yeah.

HELEN: They weren't public?

TED: No it was extraordinary really. I remember talking to some young blackfeller and he would be terribly relaxed, but then, when he went to go, to walk out onto Redfern Street - (that) was tiger country. Because he knew that at any moment he could be picked up and he was likely to be picked up.

HELEN: They all know that?

TED: They all know it yeah. That was a very feeling period of my life I think. Learning how they had to suffer. And on Friday nights my friends would hide out in these black empty houses, just watching what police were doing. Police would turn up and pull out these blacks out of the houses. Well I would organise these friends of mine, strangely very intellectual types like professors, Max Kelly - still the Professor of Maths. But there was an interesting sort of link between university days and those Friday nights. So we did win through in many respects, but it was a long time after that the easing showed itself.

HELEN: So people would come, whites would come and monitor what the police were doing. Would they show themselves?

TED: No, they took photographs.

HELEN: What did you do then?

TED: Oh we would have to front these police and they were usually very resistant and very annoyed with us. And I thought perhaps that it would never end, that it would never change. In fact, I think that things have improved enormously now.

HELEN: Did you take it to the local police?

TED: Well, initially contacted Hanson who was the Commissioner. He refused to see me. He said that he would only receive someone at his level. So the Cardinal would have to make

remonstrations personally to Hanson. Freeman was too shy, you know, too scared to get his hands dirty. Of course, only now I recently heard that Hanson was the one who was so heavily involved with corruption. He finally suicided.

HELEN: But did Freeman back you in this activity?

TED: Freeman never did, no. Not in those sort of activities. He never stopped me. In fact he went as far as putting a blind eye to the fact that I had a hundred people living in the hall and the South Sydney Council were sending letters of eviction. So he stayed with me at that level too.

HELEN: So how soon after you moved in did you start feeding people TED: Months, I would think.

HELEN: So the place was open and you were offering meals, you were providing protection as much as you could, given the situation, and you only had the three of you there at this stage.

TED: Yes, right and that lasted for two and a half years.

HELEN: Julie came.

TED: Julie came right at the end. There were quite a few volunteers, a lot, whites, yes.

HELEN: What I haven't quite clarified is that when you first opened the doors you had a lot of whites, alcoholics. When did it change and how did it change?

TED: It changed gradually, yeah! What sort of happened was that when the blacks started to move in numbers, no new whites turned up. And yet all the old whites that had been established there before the blacks came - they all stayed until they died. Extraordinary.

HELEN: So the old Redfern whites of the street stayed.

TED: They stayed.

HELEN: But all the others who saw your place presumably as a kitchen, and the word must have got round on the street and they would come. They stopped coming when blacks started coming.

TED: Yes that's right and strangely the old hands that came right at the very beginning, Billy O'Brien, Maxie Woods, three or four others, they stayed until they died, which was sometimes after ten years.

HELEN: They lived there all the time, except when they were wandering around on the street?

TED: Pretty well I think. Yes.

HELEN: Was Redfern seen at that time as a place where blacks congregated?

TED: Yeah, I think so.

HELEN: How come, how did that happen?

TED: Oh well blacks actually were known to be around for about seventy years at that time, so there was something that attracted them. Like Shirley's grandfather would have come down from Cowra, settled around Redfern.

HELEN: Were there obviously a few houses that people owned?

TED: I think they were always derelict houses.

HELEN: They were squatters?

TED: Well, no I think that they were paying rent. Someone like Shirley's grandfather would have, but they were nothing to write home about, they were awful. See, the Irish would have been in their heyday at the turn of the century, about 1900. It was about 1920 that Irish were in Redfern.

HELEN: And with them came the blacks?

TED: No, the Irish were packed into small hovels really and were paying quite a big rent I think.

HELEN: Lismore and Everleigh Streets? All that area there?

TED: Yes, all that area there.

HELEN: They were domestic workers and factory workers.

TED: Right. You see signs of them in the large extension of the church and the choir gallery, which was really more than a choir gallery, it was to accommodate overflow. So that's what happened about the turn of the century. Now, what seemed to happen is that the real estate agents turned up and went (for example) to the 'McNamaras' who were living in Wells Street, one of those little side streets, and offered to buy their house and they moved off to Drummoyne. Their first cousins who were living next door were also approached and they accepted some money. They started looking for a house in Drummoyne but they found it in Sutherland. So all the babysitting arrangements were put into grave problems. So that is what happened with the 'rape of Redfern' and this was all done by small industry - little factories were built. But the coherence of the Irish community was just being dissipated. And so by 1920 odd, into the Depression years, the Irish had largely gone and some of these houses became absolutely derelict. So the blacks started to build up there and they centred their drinking on one pub called the Empress Hotel. Now that was a very well established place for blacks to meet. Any black who came down from Wee Waw, or whatever, knew that they could meet up at the 'Big E' in Redfern.

HELEN: This was in the twenties and thirties.

TED: No this would be in the forties and fifties.

HELEN: And they started to squat in the derelict houses?

TED: Yes they did. They were also renting.

HELEN: These were mainly country people who came down?

TED: Yes. But by the time that we arrived there had been this massive reaction against Bjelke-Peterson's government and the number of blacks that came down from Cherbourg Mission for example and Rockhampton up near Woorabinda... So they were squatting. These people who I am talking about started to build up in the presbytery precincts.

HELEN: How did the other two feel about all of this?

TED: Oh I think they were very happy, you know, very happy I think. I think they were less inclined at some stage to go heavily for Aborigines. I remember - I must have come back from Camperdown Church for some reason or other, and Fergus saw this Tom Hobson, a white alcoholic drunk in the gutter, and he asked me to stop and we'd pick up this bloke. He

brought him home. I think Fergus was just feeling his way. He did end up, after about a few months anyhow. He certainly put up an enormous number of those Aboriginal boys, these ones that had been through the Berry Home you know, and also through Renwick (Mittagong).

HELEN: And how did Fergus get to know them?

TED: I think they were all escapees from the various Homes. Well, by that time we would have had big numbers of people eating at nights, about fifty or sixty. That's about three months after we'd started. He got to know the young fellows pretty quickly that way.

HELEN: These were kids on the street?

TED: Yeah. So they all piled into his bedroom which was on the third floor. But Ferg would also get very uptight about the uncleanliness of the room or something. So he'd shout at them and they'd snap into absolute order you know. And not having made their beds ever, then they'd just snap back into institutional life. And you'd go in and you'd see all their beds made up perfectly. But Ferg's biggest problem I think was that he couldn't sustain things. He'd run out of steam and they'd all be kicked out suddenly.

HELEN: Out of the bedroom, or out of the place altogether?

TED: Out of the place I think, for a while. I think I realized right from the start. The first day we were there, the first night, it was New Year's Eve. I was in the big bedroom which had an en suite, and it was hanging over the footpath. There was absolutely no cushioning of the sound from Redfern Street. It was New Year's Eve and there was a lot of activity outside, and I was looking out the window and I saw this car conking and conking and coming down past Redfern Street. And they stopped. It was a group of young hoodlums and one of them got out of the car and threw a half-empty beer bottle through the front door of our house. Well I didn't ever think anything of that, but Fergus read an enormous amount into it. He just said to us the next morning ... we were being targeted.

HELEN: By whites or by blacks?

TED: By whites.

HELEN: Oh these were white fellas?

TED: They were whites, yeah. But I just realized then that he came from Belfast. He came from a very, very frightened place, a frightening place. And even the last time I saw him it was still pretty serious - that sort of thing over there in Newry. And of course he's lived with that all his life.

HELEN: Yes.

TED: And he just can't get on top of it. He was absolutely terrified.

HELEN: Of the violence?

TED: Of the violence, yeah. We stayed together for two and a half years. And when Butch decided to get married and move out of the house down the road with Julie, Ferg used it, I think, as a sort of necessary way of collapsing the group. You know, he said, "well we came as three and if John's gonna pull out I may as well pull out". But I'm sure it all had to do with fear of violence. But see, those things have advantages I think. I would never have understood that the police might be in collusion with [attacking the blacks]. I realized much

more later, just how much they were.

HELEN: In collusion with? The white hoodlums?

TED: Well no. The police were in collusion in attacking blacks you know. Yeah.

HELEN: And so Ferg actually sensed that earlier do you think?

TED: I think he did, yes. I think he did. I think he over-read it.

HELEN: He sort of knew it from his own experience of the exercise of authority and power in Belfast?

TED: He did, exactly, exactly. That's right. It made all the difference in the world to him. And I do believe he over-read all the way, but nevertheless it was necessary I think.

HELEN: And when did you come to recognize that that was really what was going on? Was it after some time?

TED: I don't know. I can't even remember when it was. Of course when Butch moved out and Ferg moved out the same day I think, because Ferg believed that the experiment had failed or it wasn't the same thing that we had set out to do and we should close our community down. Whereas I did feel that I couldn't (move out). I had too many commitments, personal commitments to all these people and so that is how I was so grateful to Shirley. You know, Shirley moved in and it was if nothing had changed. I mean she could do much more than those two priests could ever do and they of course were not so good with blacks.

I think if we are going to get this story together at some stage, we really should get Ferg to come out as he does every few years. He's got a brother here - a parish priest, and he does remember things that I can't. And perhaps Butch also.

HELEN: Where is Butch now?

TED: He's in Sydney. He's a gardener at the University.

HELEN: Sydney?

TED: Sydney University yeh. His mother died a few months ago and I didn't make it. But I have spoken to him a few times since.

HELEN: Are you in touch with both of them?

TED: With Ferg only when I go to Ireland or when he comes to Sydney yeah. He's as mad as a snake now. He has had some sort of breakdown, which has forced him into a terribly serious theological position. He is a papalist through and through.

HELEN: Is he still a priest?

TED: Yes, very much so and he wears the collar and black suit. Whereas (before) I was being called in by Freeman to tell me to do something about Fergus who was just wearing jeans and tee-shirt. That's his poverty you know. He wants to live poorly and not going to wear anything other than that. Freeman could never understand that. Freeman appreciated poverty but did not seem to understand that was where Ferg was at ... And now Ferg is back in that same world you know.

HELEN: How long did they (Butch and Ferg) stay there?

TED: Two and half years

HELEN: And did Mum Shirl put them through the test as well?

TED: I think they didn't get as involved with her as I did.

HELEN: Did they have other blacks that they were involved with?

TED: Well there was a cousin of Mum Shirl's had a lot to do with Ferg. But he eventually kept drinking and he kept finding fault with Ferg. So I think there was something wrong with Ferg.

HELEN: What about Butch?

TED: Well I think they felt that he left them you know. He did move down the street with Julie. But he also moved out of the area after another short while. And therefore, yes, I always felt that Butch was trying all his theories on them rather than enduring to the last you know.

HELEN So Ted when did you start working with Mum Shirl?

TED: Well I met her with Auntie Helen. That would have been in the first week. The housekeeper was still there. Shirley came to live with us and she was in the back room of the convent. She would get up each morning and at 8.00 she would allocate jobs. We had three cars and we were just kept hopping - for years.

HELEN: Hopping?

TED: Hopping. I mean even if Shirley was the one being driven you had no idea how far she was going. You might be the driver and find yourself up in Maitland because she wanted to go up and see some prisoner in Maitland.

Now it's pretty true if the driver of Shirley's car set off at 8.00 they'd probably come home at midnight absolutely exhausted. Shirley would keep us all [busy]. She would allocate jobs to three drivers, three cars. She would be in one herself

HELEN: Who were the drivers?

TED: Oh well ... Pat Durnan, me, Christine Smith, Karin Donaldson (that's Chris's sister) had been living in Wilcannia. I mean that's incredible really - how much Shirl was capable (of) and her head was all together. And when she started going Alzheimer it was just incredible. You couldn't believe it she was losing it because she lost nothing.

But you see there would be big numbers of students from the Jesuits. Frank Brennan as a young ordained came with a group of something like eight people. They took a flat in Redfern and they would dribble in. I didn't want have too many whites around. So they would turn up and Shirley would give them jobs to do.

HELEN: Such as?

TED: Well, probably go to Long Bay or she would probably go with them if it was a question of going to Long Bay. Or she might introduce them to Nancy Duncan or someone like that if someone needed to get on the dole. Or so they would be detailed to go into the office. It's extraordinary when you come to think of it. Of course there were so many levels of people needing something. I mean, we did have this all-black woman from Maningrida near Darwin who had a little child. I vaguely remember that was one thing. That would mean that they would pick her up to take her to some office or something. But Shirley kept us moving all the

time.

HELEN: So Shirley was a great organiser.

TED: Oh very ... Not sure that she was terribly well organised. I think it was just that she would look out and she would see what needed to be done

HELEN: And she got people to do it

TED: Well yes ... yeah. She was superb and she was able to accommodate anyone, any whites that wanted to come to help out. Whole teams of Marist Brothers would come. I just noticed on television the other day that there is a bloke in Alice Springs representing Care Australia. His name is Brian Doolan. He was a Marist Brother that used to come to Redfern. Anyhow, there was never any problem about occupying the six Jesuits (including) Frank Brennan who was a young novice.

Shirley had an immense stature you know and that was how she would keep them going. They would be fascinated by her of course, but she would also keep them occupied.

HELEN: Doing what?

TED: Driving her mainly. I mean that in itself was so tiring. I was just talking to Allan Mithen. Allan Mithen was the Chaplain to aborigines for a number of years with Shirley. Throughout my years I never considered myself to be specially Chaplain to aborigines. I got my title to be there, being the Administrator of the Parish of Redfern.

HELEN: What was his name?

TED: Allan Mithen, Palatine (Priest). He bought a house in Buckland Street, Waterloo and he kept pretty occupied. He finally became the provincial (of the) Palatines and after that left the Palatines for ten years. And finally (he) has asked George Pell to take him in as a secular priest in Melbourne and he has only finally got the approval from Rome. But he came to see me before he made that application. I think I may have told you that he came and stayed the night. But he was talking about just how exhausted he would be at midnight after he got up at 6.00am and he would be driving Shirley to Maitland Jail. He would go anywhere, everywhere, because he would see all sorts of people. He would roll in at midnight and he would be absolutely exhausted. But she was able to do that. An enormous number of people were drained, physically, whereas she would be still going strong.

HELEN: But apart from driving her, did they do other sorts of things? Would she get them to go off and do other things?

TED: Yes, she would. Well she had a list of... in those early days. She had a list of about fifty or sixty poor women mainly, who need(ed) vegetables. So the vegetable run [involved] going to markets bringing them back, sorting out the potatoes into various numbers, and then bringing them to fifty houses in and around south Sydney. That would occupy a fair number of people.

HELEN: Where did you get the money from for that?

TED: It came. We were also given vegetables as such you know - bags of potatoes and that kind of thing. I never felt that there was ever any shortage of money. Shortages were in personnel to stay longer than the short period that most of them did.

HELEN: And the nuns and some of the religious who were working with you there were

feeding them?

TED: We didn't have any women then.

HELEN: Oh, you didn't?

TED: We just had the three priests.

HELEN: So you were just running the soup kitchen, the three of you?

TED: Yeah, but we did get a lot of help from various people who would offer from all over Sydney. And we also got a lot of help in terms of bags of potatoes and things. We had I think a hundred people for three meals a day, and we had a very small income, but we were given a lot of food. But at that same time Manly College and Springwood College combined had a hundred students, and their costing for a year was something like a million dollars. And to maintain institutions of a hundred people costs that sort of money you know, but we just lived on the smell of an oil rag really. It was amazing how these people just turned up. I think it was also that period that Jo Bjelke-Petersen's system was so harsh that people just came over the border. Vast numbers of blacks came down, particularly from Cherbourg Mission but also from up near Rockhampton, and they just settled in. But they also had scabies and a lot of disease. And they had no income - they had not applied for any dole. Kay Belear did a lot of work there, in just sorting out their situations. And I did a lot of work too in just going in each day, having made an appointment applying for the dole, or rather a permanent pension, and that would require going to a certain office in the morning and having to go back to another office in the afternoon. Gradually we got people on to the pension that many of them had never been on. Auntie Helen being one.

I was just thinking about that last night... Tom Hammerton was sitting next to me and he made the remark that he bumped into someone who had been with Chris Riley. Chris Riley is a priest that has these places for street kids. The boy apparently said you know he (Fr. Riley) hasn't got time to talk to anyone because he is out and about collecting money - fundraising you know, and that's how he seems to spend his life.

HELEN: But he has other people there?

TED: Well, apparently, yes. But I am not sure that there's any emphasis that swings away from that whole idea of institutional fundraising you know. I reckon that we avoided that by and large, right from the start. I think I picked up a few ideas from Dorothy Day, so we actually have always got by without sales tax exemption.

At that level, the number of people who want to push money on you far exceeds the capacity to cope personally in the one to one relationships. It's much better to avoid that otherwise you so easily turn into a Chris Riley. By and large the things that are done by the people at Redfern don't need any funds at all.

HELEN: Getting back to the food, who organised that again?

TED: People who offered were not very well organised. They did offer to cook at times. We had a bit of experience in the way of volunteers. But I think we all agreed basically that we should try and do it ourselves from the community, from the drunks, so whenever that happened we all seemed to find relief. We could not cope with the terrible insensitivity and the racism of the St. Vincent de Paul women that would come from Randwick and the sort of jokes that they would tell about the contact with the blacks. It was horrible! So I used to remind them when they went off, if they had failed in that regard. And they failed to come

after a few months.

But we did gradually build up a marvellous group of people. Normie West was a superb bloke who had a very big drinking problem but he also had a history of running the show. He had run big cattle stations as a man of twenty-five or so. We could depend on him all the time, not necessarily to do anything at any given time because he might not be sober enough to do it. But he would always come to do it later in the day or sometime. Black time is a different thing all together

HELEN: Absolutely.

TED: I think we respected that

HELEN: So the Jesuits would also come?

TED: Frank Brennan would have come to stay for something like six weeks, a short time really. I used to try and ask people to come and stay. You know, it is much better to come for twenty-four hours than to come for every afternoon for a month. Because it is really by staying in Redfern off peak [that you are able to] experience difference.

HELEN: I understand. In Beirut in the camps I lived and worked in the hospital. All the other health workers used to be bussed up to the main street. They were never there in the night. Things happened in the night.

So you still had whites coming in as well and that lasted for how many years? Was everyone was living in the presbytery?

TED: Yes, pretty well. The whites that came and lived were the most sensitized, like Karin Donaldson.

HELEN: And Christine.

TED: Christine (Smith) was a nun. But there were other lay people too, like Brian Hancock who was studying law and pulled out for a time. Also Paul Wonnocott, another young lawyer. Now Shirley kept all of them going. I suppose if they had jobs to do in court she would send them off to the court. There is a big difference though between someone coming in and putting their toe in the stream and then going away, (compared to) anyone who stays.

HELEN: So there was Butch and Ferg and they stayed for two and a half years and then Shirley moved in almost immediately. Where did people like Karen and Tom start - do you know? When did they all start to come?

TED: From that time on.

HELEN: So initially there were just the three of you and you had all these visitors

TED: The three of us. But after the other two left Shirley took over, then Tom (Hammerton) started. Tom wrote to me from New York. Shirley wasn't too sure about him at all. She put him through the hoops?

She did that to me too. I think I felt that she would not accept me unless I had been through a 'novitiate' and I think certainly Tom felt the same way. Everyone felt that she was very suspicious and so she put us all through [that novitiate].

HELEN: So what was your novitiate?

TED: I think it happens just by driving her around for months and she sees me in varying lights you know. I went to see Jasper, who was an aboriginal bloke from Queensland. I got to know him fairly well but someone bashed him up. I think Shirley and I went to see him in Prince Alfred hospital and I was very moved. I think I burst into tears. We were in cas(ualty) ... not cas(ualty) but intensive care I think. I burst into tears and I heard her saying not long after that she had never seen a priest cry over a black man before. Yeah. So those were the sort of tests I think.

But the test was mainly just endurance. My God, there was not one of us who can't recall that long endurance that she put us under. Because a lot of it was done when she actually rather relaxed 'cause she never drove anywhere. So she would be driven to Moree and she would come out as bright as a button ... but the driver! (laughter).

HELEN: You must have talked with her at length through those long journeys. TED: Oh yes - exactly.

HELEN: It was more than a test of endurance. She must have been really sussing you out, you know, about where you were really coming from.

TED: Yes, right. And the end result was total loyalty to me from her. But I think she had tested me to see if I was totally loyal to blacks

HELEN: What was it, do you think, that enabled you to pass the test? Not just the fact that you managed to stay awake for long journeys? Why do you think she accepted you finally?

TED: I think she probably did rather enjoy my capacity to sum up things. And if I took a stand against the police she would be very proud of me I think. And sometimes it might be that I have helped her to decide something herself, when she was unsure at times.

HELEN: Can you give me an example?

TED: I can't remember quite much in those early days but there would have been any number of examples I think. Not only against institutions like police but also against the church. You know we'd have meetings and meetings of bishops of NSW. Some of them would come and they spoke so tentatively. These bishops - they were uncommitted themselves and Shirley gradually learned to speak her mind to those bishops.

HELEN: Did you speak your mind to them?

TED: I think so, yes. So Shirley would then agree to sign documents that I would write. Documents like a letter to the Pope after the bishops had failed to respond and other letters to bishops. She was always very ready to admit that someone like (Bishop) Davey Cremin was a good man. But she had a sort of natural theology in her. She knew where the church should be and she'd say that. Yes.

HELEN: Did you feel that she thought that you represented where the church should be?

TED: And also I think Tom would have taken up a position that was not ambiguous. She gradually grew to love Tom. But you know, oh dear, she put him through big questions.

Influences - Abbe Pierre and Dorothy Day

HELEN: There were as number of theological influences in your time there weren't there?

TED: I suppose we were there (in Redfern) about six or eight months when this French priest (Abbe Pierre) came to Australia. We had already tried out this methodology that he had adopted himself. Do you know much about him?

HELEN: No, but you might like to talk about his methodology.

TED: Yeah, well he's a priest of Paris, and it was only when I went to Paris to meet him that I realized he was actually well-known in Paris. He was almost 'Mister Paris', you know. I went to a high-rise building where his organization had built flats, and he was living in one of them, in a tiny little sort of flatette. And he had this extraordinary love for Paris you know. He seemed to speak as if it were him. When he was something like seventy-nine, and it was 1979 I think when I went with Dennis Quinn to see him, he was driving a tiny little VW with the steering wheel on the wrong side of the car you know, so he must have got it from somewhere else, 'cause it should have been on the right hand side like England. But he drove at such enormous speed, through Paris. He had this extraordinary name. I think he was related to De Gaulle and he carried De Gaulle's brother across the lines in the war. And that had led him to join Parliament and to become the Minister for Housing. And it was then that he actually started [this work for the poor]. Oh there's a famous story about some young would-be suicide coming to him and saying that he was about to commit suicide. And Abbe Pierre asked him not to do that but to come and help him build houses for the poor, which he did. And that fellow I think was still around. He built temporary houses under bridges and everywhere. That was illegal, you know.

HELEN: Squats?

TED: Squats, yeah. And so he was kicked out of Parliament. But then he devised this method, which is a really very shrewd move, of getting people on the streets to live in community. I went with him to several of these communities. But it's very, very flexible. I mean there were some communes of Emmaus - that's their name - in South America that have something like a thousand people, but they're living on rubbish tips. The idea would be they would live in a concerted sort of way and there were various rules to the way in which they lived. They had to make their own living by begging ... from knocking on doors, begging, and they would take anything at all, even one old sock. They would recycle everything that they got, and they would sell recycled material. They each had the rule that they would keep something like a third of the income and they would give one third away to underdeveloped countries, and one third was put into the kitty.

HELEN: A communal kitty?

TED: A communal kitty, yeah.

HELEN: For what?

TED: Well this would be for improvements to the equipment and that kind of thing. Because (for) each place they opened up, they needed quite a lot of equipment in their factories to recycle - all this sort of thing.

HELEN: I just need to make that a bit clearer actually. So this person helped these people to form a community?

TED: Yeah. And to live independently.

HELEN: And to live independently. In squats? They were living in squats?

TED: Well no, they would I think probably pay rent. They weren't living in squats, I don't think, but they had been living in squats. I think about a thousand Parisians were living in these communities.

HELEN: And these were poor people?

TED: Well they were all poor people.

HELEN: Street people before?

TED: They were, yes. All alcoholics!

HELEN: On the street?

TED: On the street, yeah.

HELEN: And this group of people formed them into some kind of community? TED: Right. Well that's what Abbe Pierre did, yeah.

HELEN: And provided them with housing?

TED: Right. I think one of the best things about it, on reflection, is that he saw the need for institutionalism. I mean, the very fact it's all very tightly organized. But there's a hell of a lot of flexibility as well. So the Emmaus communities vary from country to country very much, but also from town to town. For instance, there was a group of men who got together and supported each other [and] most of them would be supporting each other in their attempt to get off alcohol.

They moved from town to town, this particular group. They'd turn up in town, they'd rent a flat, and then they would go out knocking on doors you know. And in this particular town there'd been a political football about whether there should be a hospital. And it had gone on for years and years. Anyhow they started up their operations, and they knock on each door, accept anything that's offered them, and they recycle that and sell the result. So after six months in the town the people haven't come to any final decision about a hospital. They didn't have the funds, and they couldn't get it from the local council, etc. So the hospital was going to cost \$300,000, something like that, I don't know how many francs, but X number of francs, say \$300,000. But they (the Emmaus people) bought a piece of land, which was the piece of land that the townspeople wanted to put the hospital on, so they bought the land themselves, and then threw in another \$100,000, and then said, 'Thanks, we'll leave you now'. So they presented the whole township with that and cleared out.

HELEN: And what happened? Did they get their hospital?

TED: Oh they would have, I think. The story was that they apparently felt that they shouldn't give the whole hospital because people should have done their bit too. And it only took something like nine months or something.

HELEN: Are the people that do this nuns and priests?

TED: Oh no. No nuns and priests anywhere. All lay people.

HELEN: And these are people with drug and alcohol problems?

TED: Yes. All people who have been on the streets in one way or another. Yeah.

HELEN: Right. So what was the underlying philosophy?

TED: The underlying philosophy is something about doing it yourself. I think they keep a certain amount of the proceeds for the individuals for cigarettes and that kind of thing. They must put something into the kitty, and then they have to give something, I think to the overseas aid component.

HELEN: So, when did you hear about this? Which year did you hear about this?

TED: Oh very early in the piece.

HELEN: Before the Coogee Bay Hotel meeting?

TED: Coogee Bay Hotel was years before.

HELEN: Right. So you heard about this while you were already at Redfern?

TED: I think about that time, yes.

HELEN: And he came to Australia, did he?

TED: He came to Australia. There was an Ingrid somebody. She was Scandinavian, a very beautiful woman, and Mark Raper the Jesuit had introduced her to us. Now she belonged to a group called Swallows, I think because they keep flying around the world, and she had been a sort of an aide. She herself is Danish I think, but I think she would have flown to Australia to participate in the effort to get things going here.

HELEN: This French idea? ... and did it take off in Australia?

TED: Yes it was French and it did take off for a little while.

HELEN: Ted, going back to this Emmaus community.

TED: Emmaus, yes. You know the road to Emmaus?

HELEN: No.

TED: That's where the Risen Christ appeared. You know when the disciples were walking along the road to Emmaus and this stranger came up and said, 'what's happening?' And they said, "haven't you heard?"

HELEN: Right.

TED: So that's why it's called that.

HELEN: So this must have been in 1971 or 2 or 3? There was a sort of an attempt at an Emmaus program?

TED: Yeah. It was '72.

HELEN: So what happened to Ingrid?

TED: Ingrid finally married Hilario, Christian Hilario, who had gone to see Abbe Pierre and offered his services. And he came out to Australia but he was very work-prone to the point of being a little Hitler in a way. And he kicked a couple of fellows at times. He'd just lose his temper, you know, he'd lose his cool completely. And I just said to him, "look I just can't cope with that, you know". They went off to France and they took up with (Jolyon?) and I think it was probably better because he was just so French and I think a lot of his frustration was in attempting to set up a place in an alien culture. Abbe Pierre came out and married them in the church at Redfern. They're in Lisle now, or they were.

HELEN: So this philosophy obviously had an influence on you, but you figured that it didn't work.

TED: No it didn't work.

HELEN: Because of this combination of things which actually happened at that time?

TED: Yes, there were all sorts of hopes, but it never worked. We could never find an Australian who had a sense of Australian life to take up the role. All those people were from overseas. I mean Christian Hilalio was just an example of someone who needed French culture to allow it to work. There's also a famous French spiritual writer that this bloke had been to see, who put him on to Abbe Pierre.

Anyhow I think I started off by telling you about Abbe Pierre. It would have been about August of 1972, and by that time I had got to know a fair number of blacks. And of course one of the big breakthroughs is when those who were living in squats are prepared to tell me where they live. It was a real secret. And I must have had enough confidence to believe that I was trusted enough for me to introduce a friend from France. And he (Abbe Pierre) came down with me, oh about midnight, to one of these squats. He had to jump over bits of tin and that sort of thing to get in there. And so he met them, I suppose about a dozen of them, in the squat. And he made some pretty good suggestions. He thought at that stage that the government might be willing to sort of put an embargo on certain industries, like boomerangs, which they would be entitled to be the only people to make, you know. Or even just fixing up old cars, if there was a sort of industry that they could claim a kind of, what's the word?

HELEN: Autonomy?

TED: Autonomy ... or there's another word. I never progressed in that but that's one of those thoughts that he very practically suggested. But we did have a few signs that when they started doing something for themselves they had a bit of pride.

HELEN: But basically they were not able to sustain this? Do you think that had they all stayed in the church hall that might have been sustained?

TED: Oh, yes it might have been. It was a small venture. I've always found I haven't got the capacity to organize people, and I don't think I should have that role. But usually there are so many factors that are involved that create hiccups. Everything that I've been involved with ... it has happened that way you know. You get glimpses of what could happen given the right conditions.

HELEN: So what did you envisage? What vision did you have when you went there to Redfern?

TED: I think we all felt that it would be a great privilege if we got to know blacks, but we knew there were going to be difficulties, and it turned out that I personally got to know blacks very quickly. They seemed to trust me, whereas Butch and Ferg fell back on that level.

HELEN: Do you have any reflections on why that might be so?

TED: I don't know why. Butch had a much deeper sort of involvement in the working class and I think one of his mistakes was to imagine that they (the Aboriginal people) belonged to a class. You know the words for it - Karl Marx really - the lumpen proletariat, which you can't use in the class struggle. I think it was things like that. I think Butch did come with a sort of

theory that he thought he would apply and he got a bit cheesed I think when he found that the blacks didn't sort of accept him for that.

HELEN: Did he accept that he was from a class of oppressors? Just by the fact of being white?

TED: Yes, I'm not sure of whether he did at the time.

HELEN: Did you accept that?

TED: Well I think so, yeah. I think that I must have learnt something in that funny situation.

HELEN: So you all had different visions, obviously?

TED: Oh, yes, yes. I think we were united by believing that the Church was outdated. You know, we had a common need to change things, and I suppose that was epitomized by the fact that we decided to open up the presbytery to all comers. And of course that was a big shock to all the other priests because they had no theory against us. But they found that their presumption that the parish presbytery was sacrosanct - we were violating that. Even to this day, I mean last night I just couldn't believe that Meg Miller would say the sort of thing she said. I mean she's a dyed-in-the-wool Anglican, and she talked in terms of the need for change in the churches. She talked about Anglicare you know, what a wonderful job it's doing. And it's like the St Vincent de Paul society you know. Whereas everything I've ever learned, from the level that I've been at, has been the very opposite. It's just been a very heartless institution. Hmmm. But see, Julian and she fit together very well, because he's never thought. He comes from a very high class. His father was a QC and he lived at Vacluse. He just keeps betraying the fact that he doesn't know. He doesn't even seem to think you know. He doesn't seem to have any serious doubts about himself.

HELEN: But Ted, you come from that class as well. So what changed you?

TED: Probably the university.

HELEN: Yes.

TED: I think the university did a lot to change my presumptions about, or presuppositions, yeah.

HELEN: In what way? I mean how did it do that?

TED: Tony Coady's the man that I keep thinking about. Tony's the professor of philosophy now. He really got under me. And of course I think I was stranded. I didn't have any answers. I probably must have come out with all sorts of presuppositions that he rejected or questioned. Just like a standard good Catholic family you know. He questioned that very much in terms of the kids that would come up from homes. I think that there was something very alive, largely led by Tony. And there was always a generation under him too, like (Bob) Scribner, this bloke from Harvard who died.

HELEN: But did he challenge your class presuppositions, you know, where you had come from? Did he really challenge you in that regard?

TED: Well he must have in some ways. I did seven years there and it involved cutting myself off really, from other priests, mainly because I would have, as a young curate, taken Mondays off with all the other priests. But when I got to the university, I found I couldn't because that was a very important day and so I would not take that day off. I think I learnt in

that world separation from the clerical world, what it meant to be free of that. Your mind is tied, but also your hands are tied you know.

HELEN: So could you suggest that you actually had two formations? The first one was the clerical one in the seminary, and the second one was at the university?

TED: Yes.

HELEN: And they contradicted each other and challenged each other?

TED: They did. Yes. And Roger Pryke had a lot to do with the challenging.

HELEN: In what way?

TED: Well I mean I just took over his job but he had adopted certain principles. One was that he never wanted to be officially accredited by the Senate of Sydney (University). He never wanted to have a room with a telephone and stationery and to be on the staff, just in case the students wanted to have a strike and he wanted to be on their side. Yeah, and I maintained that always.

HELEN: Was that your first break with the institutional Church?

TED: Somewhat, yes.

HELEN: Up until then you'd been fairly conforming?

TED: Fairly, yes.

HELEN: You were following this and you were enabling this disempowered community to be empowered? How did Dorothy Day's work influence you?

TED: Butch had been staying there (at the Catholic Worker, New York) and Fergus too I think. I had never been to New York at that time. But she (Dorothy Day) had come in 1980 and she gave lectures in the (Sydney) Town Hall. Oh she certainly turned me on. Oh well, there were all sorts of funny little things. One was that Dorothy would be called on ... to give some example.

When Auntie Helen would go mad and break all the windows, we would be tempted to put up bars and someone would say, "Dorothy doesn't believe in bars ... she believes they are a sign of violence in themselves". I think that we educated each other in that way. We had these regular meetings to try and decide on the next move.

HELEN: What else about Dorothy Day's work influenced you?

TED: I am trying to think of a basic philosophy. I tried to put that down in that panegyric I preached down in Melbourne when she died.

HELEN: In general terms?

TED: Well capitalism was the bug bear for her. That was the target. She seemed to think things through to a deep level and she just thought that a capitalistic world was against the poor. She started with the poor and she decided against capitalism.

HELEN: How did you translate that into your work with Aboriginal people? Because you said before that Butch had come from that ideological belief and that sort of didn't work with black people.

TED: Yes. Well it's one thing to be convinced of an ideological position as I said. As I heard

Brendan Lovett say the other day, it is one thing to be opposed to institutions; it's another thing to rely on institutions as if they answer all the questions. Because innovate(ion &) improvisation must be part of the whole faith reaction. So, all that you pick in institutions has to be able to be improvised. Do you know what I mean? I think it is something to do with the way that people like Butch failed to see that the blacks' way of doing things entails a hell of a lot of improvisation. You've just got to think things through at another level, keeping the basic ideological position alright ... (but) it mustn't be rigid.

HELEN: And Dorothy Day did that, do you believe?

TED: Yes I think she did. She accepted most of the theory of Peter Maurin but she did not in fact succeed in getting those farming communes onto their feet. She never seemed to lose contact with the streets of New York.

(At the Catholic Worker) the weekly meetings were for thinking, clearing the head and straightening the thoughts that occurred. There was a printing press on the ground floor and upstairs there was a thought room, you know, [a] discussion room We did try to keep up that a little bit

We had the advantage of Dick Buchhorn who was a Dorothy Day fan and he'd keep those thoughts mulling around. He had then moved down to Redfern and was living in a house up the road. He was a chaplain to the YCW (Young Christian Workers) in NSW. He came quite early and yes, he was around all that time, all those early years.

HELEN: Dorothy Day's work is also about immersion then isn't it?

TED: Yes it is.

HELEN: Do you want to talk about that a little bit because clearly that must have been an aspect of your vision?

TED: Yes, immersion in the community, yes.

HELEN: Do you use that word?

TED: No, I have never used that word. In some ways I hate it because the FMM nuns (Franciscan Missionaries of Mary) came out with a sort of policy or a mission statement. Part of it was that they would be involved with mobile immersions. The mobile thing was interesting. You immerse yourself - but only for a time you see. I always found that that was absolutely ridiculous. I have always believed that if I said to the blacks in Redfern, "I am moving off to Palm Island for the next five years", they would say, good we'll see you there, because every black hopes to be on Palm Island in the next five years or go through it.

But if I were to say that I am moving to some white institution like Riverview to teach, they would not understand. So that's what I mean by total commitment, you know, immersion.

HELEN: Dorothy Day talks about immersion doesn't she?

TED: I think she probably does

HELEN: But you saw it as a total commitment.

TED: Yes, yes - that's very important I think.

HELEN: Did you see that when you first went there?

TED: I think it is one of those things that you have to learn very quickly

HELEN: But not everybody did.

TED: No, no. That's pretty true. Yeah

HELEN: What do you think enabled you to make that commitment - to be accepted by Shirl, to be accepted by the blacks?

TED: I don't know because initially it was very much a trying out, if you know what I mean.

HELEN: Can you give some examples? Have you reflected on why that was so? Why you were able to do that?

TED: There were little things I found myself capable of doing very easily. For instance, after a time I'd be struggling for a long while to remember exactly where this family came from, that kind of thing. I don't know why it was, but suddenly it all came clear ... just the sheer geography.

You know when I meet someone, for instance, there is a woman who apparently is in charge of the Aboriginal section of the Art Gallery in Sydney. She just rang, left a message last night saying who she was. Her name was Cheryl Connors. Would I ring back? I did ring back and left a message (so I have to try and ring her this afternoon) ... And when I speak to her, I will say, "you're from Tingha" and she'll say, "how do you know that"? I am sure she'll do that. I have known that for years - the Connors are a very important family from Tingha. Well that is the very thing that Ferg and Butch never got on to. They never tacked onto it.

HELEN: They could not grasp the tribal nature of black society?

TED: No, something like that.

HELEN: I am surprised an Irishman didn't grasp that?

TED: Yeah, I always thought that it was an Irish thing about me

HELEN: When the blacks walked through the door, or you saw them down the street, you knew immediately where they belonged? You knew who their mob was?

TED: Right - and they loved it. Oh yes they love it

HELEN: Why do you think they loved it?

TED: They loved me because I'd do it.

HELEN: I know. But why do you think they loved it?

TED: Oh yes - its just they have never been identified in that way before, I think.

HELEN: By whites.

TED: I have that reputation. They have all been surprised in one way or another that I have bumped into someone who is a cousin of theirs. "Oh yeah you must come from..." I do that naturally. Whereas Pat Durnan always finds it hard to ask them questions. She seems to think that it would be prying.

HELEN: So you understood that that sense of belonging [was linked to] whose mob they were.

TED: Oh yeah

HELEN: And of family

TED: Right. See there are little things ... very little in some ways, but in fact they are very important. I just heard Roy Tribe died. Roy Tribe is 45 year old - a most loveable bloke and was forever standing outside the Church on Sundays. He came from Moree. (When I was well enough) I would have normally gone to Moree for Tuesday's funeral. From the early days I think I did that. This goes back to a bloke called Johnnie Wyman (from) Wilcannia. When I went back years later, so many of the women that I met said, "oh you're the Father that brought Johnnie Wyman's body back". Now that whole idea - that I respected that they should be buried in their own home country, you know, there is an enormous appreciation of that. Whereas so many whites wouldn't even have bothered to think about that, let alone go to trouble of [making that happen]. So I think I always did appreciate some of those things and Shirley had a phobia about that

HELEN: About that?

TED: Yeah ... and such an appreciation. She always said she wouldn't rest until she found out where her grandfather was buried in Sydney. But he did die and was buried in a pauper's grave and so normally speaking she would not be able to find it.

HELEN: Did she find it?

TED: I don't think she did. But she went out of her way to insist that every black would be buried not in a pauper's grave but with dignity.

HELEN: In their home country.

TED: Yes, if possible. So Roy Tribe is going back to Moree. It's a long way when you come to think of it

HELEN: Shirley taught you a lot.

TED: All that unspoken stuff.

The Convent & Medical Centre

HELEN: You were talking about St Vincent de Paul before, so can you tell me what you were saying about that before.

TED: Well it's so clerical an organization. Any parish, any group of St Vincent de Paul people are required by the actual rules of the Society to have a chaplain. And if the chaplain refuses to act as chaplain well they just collapse into air. You know, they have no structure of identity or autonomy.

HELEN: Right.

TED: When I actually when I got to Redfern, [there was] this old man who was out of Redfern. He had sold, on behalf of the parish, four houses for \$20,000 - for the whole four! And I looked at the books and it was only a matter of months before and I said to him, 'How come you were the person who sold it? He did a deal with some friend of his. And so that's fairly typical I think of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

HELEN: He was from the St Vincent de Paul Society?

TED: He was the St Vincent de Paul Society president in Redfern. Yeah. And there were about eight men who kept turning up every Thursday night. I would go across to the meeting and that would have been several weeks after I got to Redfern. And what we had done was let the hall. We opened the doors of the hall and it filled up with very sick, mainly Aboriginal, people. And the numbers reached a hundred. They were homeless. And so they were downstairs. There were a number of very sick people who were more or less confined to bed, so we had a couple of beds down there. Anyhow, there would have been up to a hundred people. The St Vincent de Paul were meeting upstairs in this old building and they claimed that they couldn't stand the stench. And that's when I cancelled out. I thought, well I'm not going to go anywhere near you ever again. And then they looked up the book. They found that because they didn't have a chaplain they had to cease to exist.

HELEN: Oh this is the church hall?

TED: It was the church hall - the church hall or the school hall I suppose initially, yeah, the school hall. [When we arrived] we had this convent of two old nuns teaching in the school at the back. When I closed that school down [in 1974] the nuns were required to move out of course and the old provincial of the Monte Mercies said that she was going to make it into a hostel for university nuns.

The archbishop auxiliary to Gilroy rang me up and said he wanted to make the school into a welfare centre. He wanted to use the school rooms for offices. So I told him where to go. The problem was there were some (Monte Mercy) nuns wanting to come and work but I thought ... well, if they come into the convent that'll stop it being used for purposes other than Redfern. I asked old Philomena, the Superior General of Monte Mercy, for the convent to have a multi-order group. So I collected nuns then from 1974 on.

HELEN: Who were they?

TED: Well Pat Durnan came, she is an MSC from Melbourne and she lived in the convent. She was a nurse and had already done the Turramurra course. (Pacific Mission Institute, Turramurra). And old Ignatius, a 75 year old St Vincent's Charity nun came and she was sort of the head of the convent. Ellen Reid came almost on the condition of setting up this house. (The) Monte Mercies insisted that one of the Monte Mercies be there. She was

pretty hopeless. So there were the three of them, soon to be joined by Christine Smith. Christine was at Monte Mercy. The Monte Mercies are the ones that were in the convent and who placed Ellen Reid. But gradually various others came as well. Then Tom (Hammerton) came and joined me.

HELEN: In the presbytery there were you and Tom and Shirley ... and all these other people.

TED: All these other people were in the convent.

HELEN: There were no blacks in the convent.

TED: Well yes there were - women to start with.

HELEN: Was there much space in the convent?

TED: Not much, no. But then the convent also turned into a multi-order thing but also mixed male and female. John Hart, he was a Jesuit - he came for a year. So Karen Donaldson would have come pretty early in the piece too. She lived in the convent.

HELEN: How long did she stay?

TED: Well she never left until recently. She went to Wilcannia. We saw Wilcannia as an opening. Another priest joined us. He had walked out of the Toowoomba Diocese. His name was Graham Carter and so we had this extra priest and we heard that Wilcannia was closing as a parish and so we offered to send a priest and a few nuns to Wilcannia to serve the blacks.

HELEN: Who went?

TED: We were going to take it in turn. Pat would have been the first I think to go - with Tom, and Graham as the priest. Graham stayed there for ten years I think.

HELEN: Did Pat stay and Tom?

TED: Pat stayed only for a few months and Tom stayed for about six months, I think.

Aboriginal Medical Centre

HELEN: You met Shirley in your first week in Redfern and by then medical service had already been established. What happened then?

TED: There had been a medical practice that had been established a few weeks before. Shirley took some black person to Rachel Forster Hospital and they sat with that person for several hours in casualty and a whole set of things occurred which showed them that they needed a black place ... You know, a medical service separately.

So they came back and they told Fred (Hollows) and Fred said let's take out a lease on a shop in Redfern, which they did the next day. And these doctors provided [services to] them. There's a bloke called (sounds like Fairy Grimsite?) and oh, various numbers of fairly prominent doctors. But Fred had that energy you know. So they set up this place. That would have been, I think, somewhere about November 1971.

Then, when Gary Foley was trying to get funds out of the state government to provide a bigger premise for the medical services I offered to him the whole big school. So they moved in in 1974. Freeman was a bit hurt that I didn't ask him. I knew that if I applied to the archdiocese they'd say no. So Naomi (Mayers) moved in then and she has been there all those years since 1974.

HELEN: The medical service got set up in the school?

TED: Yes and even before they got any entitlement. You see the archdiocese owns most of it and refuses to hand over. Nevertheless they did get funds from the federal government to the tune of \$1,000,000 or something to set it all up. And then the Monte Mercies handed over the whole of their half of the property to the medical service which included the old convent. So we moved out of the convent and they took it over. But then they pulled it down. I think they do need that (open) space

HELEN: The medical service pulled the school down?

TED: They also need space and time to work out what they want to do. So I have not been concerned about the fact that they're not using a large amount of that land. They tend to use just the space. I can tell you something... I used to go to the medical service meetings at Fred Hollow's home out there at Sans Souci. Actually I felt after I handed over the property to them that it had come to my not having anything more ... [involvement]. I just wanted to give them the property and stand back you know. So I never went to another meeting. That wasn't till 1974

HELEN: Between 1972 and 1974, what happened in the school?

TED: The school was being used as a school. And of course the nuns that were teaching were worried about the drunks in the hall underneath. They were trying to maintain a traditional type school

HELEN: For local Redfern kids.

TED: Yeah.

HELEN: White kids.

TED: White kids, all white.

HELEN: No black kids.

TED: Nope.

HELEN: They didn't offer services to black kids?

TED: Nope. It was almost policy I think. I don't know why because when Gladys Haines and all her kids came to live in the presbytery, Sally did go to the local school. But that was only because she lived in the Presbytery.

Aboriginal Housing Company

HELEN: Can we talk a little about Eveleigh Street and the Aboriginal Housing Company in Redfern?

TED: It was only [about] twelve months after we arrived, and I remember seeing a piece of property, a piece of land, what would have been an old house burnt down I would think. But there was this vacant piece of land. It was Eveleigh Street. The piece of land had its back to the railway. And I had this thought that it would be good to buy that piece of land, not to do anything with it, but to put a great big bloody spear about sixty yards high in it, just to tell the people in the trains going by, and there are thousands of them every day, that this is the only piece of land that the Aboriginal people, in the whole of Sydney, own. I thought I could collect \$10,000 from my friends, each giving \$100 ... a hundred people. And when I got down there I did find the same piece of land all right, but it had a notice up that it had just been bought by the NSW Bridge Association.

HELEN: Cards right?

TED: And then I realized they were going to build a place [there]. They also would have heard that Redfern was about to be renovated. It was going to be turned into a Paddington, quite quickly. And Ingrid did us a favour. She went to the council to find out who owned all these houses. And it turned out that the twenty-seven of them, I think, had already been bought by IBK. IBK being Ian something. His name is well- known now because he's the bloke involved with Clean Up Australia - Ian Kiernan. And, yeah, he was behind it.

HELEN: He had bought these houses in Eveleigh Street?

TED: Well, it was his company. IBK. It was his initials. Yeah. Do you know of him?

HELEN: Yes.

TED: Do you?

HELEN: Oh, of course.

TED: Right. Well. At that stage

HELEN: He was planning to clean up Redfern?

TED: Yes, he was. But he was going to clear all the blacks out in order to do it. Yeah. I believe he's very embarrassed about that now. But that was his idea. And at that same time we tried to see Nugget Coombs who was the Chairman of the [North Sydney] Council at the time. So when was the election? When did Billy McMahon go out and Gough come in?

HELEN: 1973.

TED: I think we got to see Nugget before the elections.

TED: Yes. What happened was that when I rang up his old wife, who's still alive you know. I went to dinner last week, did I tell you?

HELEN: Yes.

TED: She told me where to contact him at his work. We were waiting three weeks, and it was before the election anyhow. He was fairly friendly with Billy McMahon apparently, but also with Gough, you see. So he said, "well look, we don't know who's going to get in, but the moment they do get in we will form a committee first, and the committee should then

act" So Bob Belear collected a few goommies who were very hard drinkers and formed a committee and then made an appointment with [Dick Hall].

[It was] the first hundred days [of the Federal Labor government] and Barnard was temporarily in charge of Aboriginal Affairs. And so Dick Hall had been working for Gough and switched across to Barnard. And then Dick Hall did all the negotiating with Ian Kiernan.

HELEN: Over the land?

TED: Over the land, yeah.

HELEN: And the Government bought the land.

TED: The Government bought the twenty-seven houses of Kiernan's. Kiernan caved in and sold them all immediately.

HELEN: So what happened then?

TED: What happened was we were fighting at two levels. We were maintaining a food kitchen, but then, on Nugget's advice we formed a committee. There were around a hundred people living, squatting down in the hall. We were feeding them every day. We had started up this program to help them get some money for themselves. So they would go out, and some of those who were younger and more physically able collected bottles. They were making a reasonable amount of money. I mean, had we persevered with it, it might have turned out to be very successful.

HELEN: And what happened?

TED Bob (Belair) and the rest decided that it was necessary (for the people in the hall) to squat down in Eveleigh Street. So we lost all our potential then (to make the bottle collecting into a small business). They all cleared out down to Eveleigh Street. They went down with brooms, and it was really an emergency thing I think. It was a political decision that we made, and Bob led them into that. I think Bob would have negotiated with Dick Hall, and Dick Hall went to see Kiernan and he caved in. It was exciting times.

HELEN: And so all of Eveleigh Street was bought?

TED: No, twenty-seven houses were.

HELEN: And that became the basis of the Aboriginal Housing?

TED: Housing Company, yeah.

HELEN: And all the people who'd been on the streets, who you had actually looked after in the presbytery or in the school hall [moved to Eveleigh Street]?

TED: A lot of them

HELEN: So the purchase of the houses in Eveleigh Street really changed your situation didn't it?

TED: It did, yes. That's right. I wonder what would have happened if we had the sort of government we have now. (Liberal Party, John Howard - Prime Minister from March 1996)

HELEN: Well you would have gone on having all those people staying there TED: Yes. I suppose.

HELEN: And you would have had to act in another way.

TED: Yes. That's right, that's right.

HELEN: So when the houses were bought and people started to move out of the presbytery - which is what they did, didn't they?

TED: Right.

HELEN: How did that change what you were doing there? Did you stop feeding people and they moved out?

TED: I don't think we ever stopped in those days. I mean I stopped ten years later. That was only a fairly temporary thing anyhow on their part to squat and get that thing going. It dissipated the community in some ways but very quickly quite a lot of the young male blacks got jobs, in the building company you know.

HELEN: So in a way their socio- economic situation changed?

TED: It did, it did, a bit, yes.

The Redfern-Wilcannia Connection

HELEN: So let's talk about the Wilcannia-Redfern connection. Tom went up there for about 6 months didn't he?

TED: Yes

HELEN: Pat also went up for a couple of months. And then they rotated. You wanted to have a kind of rotation, did you?

TED: We did. Yes. But I suppose it ended up with Christine (Smith) and Karin (Donaldson) choosing to stay permanently. I was tied anyhow to Redfern just by reason of the office. But Graham Carter stayed there a good ten years, I think. Christine and Karin have spent most of the last fifteen or twenty years in Wilcannia. Karen bought a house. Peter Williams also has joined them there since Carter's time I think.

HELEN: Is he a parish priest?

TED: I don't think he's officially that. I think it (Wilcannia) is still a declared a closed parish. He's living there. Initially he went there as a retired priest and initially he didn't even say Mass. But now he is saying Mass for a very small number of whites. And I don't think the blacks turn up at Mass. Anyhow that was a worthwhile project I think, that we took on from Redfern.

HELEN: Why Wilcannia?

TED: Well I think it's given a few whites the opportunity of living alongside of blacks who themselves tied down you know. I mean the blacks that I've always known are very mobile. I know that they come from places like Moree but I don't experience a community in Redfern in the same sense as the Moree mob up there see themselves. I think it's been good for the whites to take on something that's like an existing community, you know. I'm not sure how good it is for the blacks...

HELEN: But what did they do there? What did Christine do? What did Karen do?

TED: Christine ekes out an existence. She gets jobs that are available only to whites like running the weather thing. I think the whites occupy the blacks a little bit just by sharing the boredom. The blacks in Wilcannia are all bored, terribly bored. Nothing ever happens.

HELEN: But what was the connection between Redfern and Wilcannia?

TED: Only the fact that we found that Wilcannia was closing as a parish. I had been to Wilcannia a few times just 'bringing bodies back'. That's how the blacks themselves would describe it. "You brought Johnny Warren's body back." And I knew that the priest there was not terribly friendly and yet the blacks were Catholics. The blacks there are all Catholics, of course. They mainly came from Menindee and it's very interesting just going through the baptismal registers or marriage registers. There's very strong Catholic links. And when I heard that Wilcannia was to going to be closed down as a parish and when I also knew that Graham Carter was more or less looking for a spot to live. He had lived with me in my room for twelve months. He had a job as a taxi driver. So we decided to ask the people, should we take this on? ... You know, Wilcannia, which we decided to do.

HELEN: Did you see yourself in the community? You had Tom and you had the priest there and then you had these two nuns? Did you get together and discuss where you were going or what you were doing or did it all just happen?

TED: It all just happened really.

HELEN: Was it was basically certain nuns, with the exception of Tom, and with the exception of people who came for a short time_?

TED: Yeah. They came because they felt they had a mission to be there? Something like that. Yeah.

HELEN: You did never sit down and there was no intellectual challenge. There was no discussion?

TED: Well I think it was all a bit informal but there was a fair bit of [discussion] I think. There were certain things which I would try to hand over, hand on. I would do this much more consciously I think when these individuals would come from Adelaide, you know, these young nuns from Adelaide. I often would listen in or just overhear their way of talking about blacks and sometimes I would really get very angry (with) their very condescending way of talking about blacks. I would try to give them a lesson about the way they joked or something like that you know.

HELEN: Can you give me an example?

TED: I was just thinking about a young girl that had something to do with Maryanne Lockrie. I think she learnt a few lessons because she did spend a bit of time with the blacks of Adelaide in the pubs at night. But at the same time she took it too slightly. But I think she asked me to go over to be the main figure in professing her. Well I think she may have felt that I'd given her something to think about but she certainly didn't want to come and join us

HELEN: Can you be a bit more specific?

TED: I can't easily, I've forgotten. I've a vague memory of what I did with her. There are all sorts of little things that we learnt together. There was another nun who was with us for a couple of years. Her name was Rhonda Bourke and she was in Marnie's Order. She's dying of cancer now. But she, more than most, had problems understanding the politics ... or what would you call learning about the way blacks live and being faithful to the blacks. I used to say that there's no difference in the way which anyone talks about blacks in their presence or in their absence, you know. You've just got to learn to speak the truth. That any kind of curbing of your language when they're around is a great sign that you haven't learnt the real lesson. You know what I mean?

HELEN: I know. I do.

TED: Yeah. I think therefore, that each of us rubbed off some stuff onto others, you know. It was a learning process ... a school, I think.

HELEN: Can you talk about that a little bit more about what you mean by being 'faithful to the blacks?

TED: I probably need to think about it. I notice Morris West being asked questions and they seem to be so rolled out of him, you know. But I think he's also thought about it. And I probably haven't thought enough about these sorts of issues. I suppose I'm really just trying to remember why it did happen that we did get bonded and not just (as) people who've faced things together but I think that we got bonded intellectually in a way that most nuns in Australia have never experienced. What we offered was something beyond their experience.

HELEN: Were you not bonded spiritually at all?

TED: Well, I think so. I think that did help. I think I did explain to one of those bishops that while we'd never had any formal meetings, somehow in meeting or passing on a stairway we were able to convey something to each other. Living with the poor does that I think. The end result is that we all got prudent and we became fairly unified, I think. Certainly it was in Tom's case. It was something quite new for him, even though he'd knocked around a fair while. But no other (De La Salle) brothers ever rubbed off anything on him and he didn't rub off on any of them either. They lived a separate existence.

Well sometimes I think we think of ourselves as being the recipient of Shirley's largesse, you know, a largesse of human spirit. I don't know what it was. But there was something else operating at the same time that we were able actually to convey to each other.

HELEN: Some sort of common spiritual purpose?

TED: Yeah. I must write something one day just about that. I think when I do write I need to allow it to mull over in my mind.

HELEN: You must have thought about it and perhaps you haven't given yourself time to reflect on what it was?

TED: There's a bloke called Peter Marin. I don't think he's a Catholic but he has been fascinated [by this issue]. I think he might now have died. But Beth Goodwin gave me a copy of his stuff. He was a journalist, a lay journalist in America and he's quite insightful. To be distinguished from Peter Maurin who is the bloke who had such influence on Dorothy Day. But Peter Marin looks into that and he's fascinated by that idea of: "what happens when people are living with the poor".

HELEN: What happens to the individual and then what happens to the group?

TED: There's almost no group that actually has any lasting identity. Even Dorothy Day's thing, you know, has changed utterly from the days when she was alive. Anyway there are a few things that retain the masthead of Dorothy (Day) such as the Catholic Worker, but the profile of persons can so change within almost days. But I suppose just the fact that there are people still going into a particular house in a particular neighbourhood of New York, even though they don't end up staying there ... After a few years they might have moved out. But the Dorothy Day thing, that was permanent, wasn't it? It's been a presence there all those years.

And we never thought of ourselves as getting old, I suppose. Christine in Wilcannia can't quite work out what to do next. She seems to be so tied to that community and yet she's getting to that point in her life that age or health is requiring that she move into a cooler climate. She doesn't think she can spend another summer there.

HELEN: She belongs to one of the Orders still I presume?

TED: She does. And, of course, she's a bit grateful to them for standing by her when she had this last operation, that kind of thing.

The Redfern-Araluen Connection

HELEN: Can we talk a little about the significance of Araluen for the people of Redfern.

TED: The other thing is that Jolie Jerome was a philosopher really. He had a big number of brothers and sisters. They came from the Cherbourg Mission. Now he was a hard drinker and he came into me one morning when I was sitting at my telephone and he said he had an idea that it'd be good if we all got away to the country. Within a matter of days we had another death. I was burying one a week at that time. Anyhow, by that time I had a loan of a Kombi van from Jenny Connolly. After we buried someone out at Botany, instead of going back to the presbytery, we went on to Araluen. That was a marvellous experience we all had. The number built up to about thirty or forty down at Araluen. They stayed there for a year.

HELEN: Blacks? Out of Redfern?

TED: Blacks yes. Out of the presbytery, yeah.

HELEN: How did they live at Araluen?

TED: Well Alan Mithen drove Shirley down every Saturday I think and stayed till Monday. And then I would go down on Wednesday and stay till Friday I think. [It was] a very extraordinary experience. We found a big difference between blacks and the white community. That was another way of distinguishing. I mean the whites faded out, because the moment that they all sobered up, the whites didn't want to have anything to do with these blacks. Whereas blacks just maintained the same level of hungering for each other. That was a great experiment.

HELEN: These were street drunks, street whites?

TED: Yes

HELEN: They actually went back to town, and the blacks stayed down there?

TED: Yeah. The blacks stayed down there. And ... the drunk blacks would not be threatened by the thought that they would be taken down to Araluen where they would dry out. They knew they would be with their fellow blacks.

HELEN: So you used to take people down there?

TED: Yes. We often drove down all through the night. Tom was great at that.

HELEN: And who stayed down there with them?

TED: No one did.

HELEN: How did they eat? Where would they stay?

TED: Shirley would always bring food down. It's a [great] memory. It's always a memory for all of them.

HELEN: Was there a house down there?

TED: [It was the] family's house, but of course it is now falling down. The family's rebuilding down there. But it lasted twelve months. But it was only because we were tired (that it stopped). Shirley, Alan Mithen and myself decided that there were enough signs of success that we put it to the government to buy a piece of land at a similar idyllic spot on the Macdonald River which is only about an hour's journey from Redfern. Shirley's brother

(Laurie) took control of it and he ran it very successfully.

HELEN: And they went out there to dry out?

TED: We moved them from Araluen to there. But, of course, what we had learned from experience was that we gave them half a glass of table wine at every meal and that seemed enough. Further funding that might have been required was not going to come because the scheme did not meet the [funding requirements]. But the (main) problem was that Laurie got pulled in for murder.

HELEN: Laurie, the brother?

TED: Yeah. So that really bugged that.

HELEN: That community then broke down?

TED: It did really. One of those things you learn about black communities is that it's important that there be an elder, a senior person, whose word goes. That role was fulfilled at Araluen by Uncle George. Uncle George Perry was Shirley's uncle, an old leader from way back. He had a stick and he had enormous authority, just enormous authority. [It] seems to me that each time we've set up something successful it's got to do with the inner workings of the community. And Laurie was all important. It takes such a long time to put all these pieces together and find them working. And then suddenly the demoralisation that occurred when we found that he'd gone to gaol. Then to go through all the pain for him ... and for him to go through that pain. He had a stroke and a heart attack and finally he was acquitted. But I have no doubt that it was all to do with police up in Raymond Terrace.

Those are the things, I think, I found the most disappointing. Just those things that you know are so intricate, so subtle and you know things can work. [But] to put all those things together again ... I found that devastating and I think Shirley's grief over that sort of thing was awful.

HELEN: But situations change you know. Often times you might have a particular situation that works at a particular historic moment and then a whole range of things change.

TED: Right

HELEN: You know, like the ideas of that came from France [Abbe Pierre's Movement] They worked in France and could have worked here. But at that historic moment the Labour Party came in and brought a complete change which in practice was actually empowering for Aboriginal people.

TED: I keep thinking that each success, minor success, is an indication that something else is going to happen and will be taken up by younger blacks with new strengths.

HELEN: Did you find that that happened?

TED: Well in certain ways it has happened.

HELEN: When you look back thirty years ago and reflect on where black people were then and where they are today, could you foretell today?

TED: Right. Exactly.

HELEN: You have to say there have been some extraordinary benefits.

TED: Oh yes. Well Danny (Gilbert) was saying only the other day ... Danny's saying that the

dance group Bangarra is very exhilarating. Danny's on the board and I think he's willing to put a fair bit on money into it. It's all young, intelligent, artistic blacks from all over Australia. They dance with some famous international dance company, he told me. Just a very good example, the latest example, I suppose, of youth showing exhilarating talent. Nugget Coombs wrote this marvellous letter in the Sydney Morning Herald about ten years ago when he looked back over thirty years, reflecting on the new breed of young ...

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