Oral history interviews of the Vietnam Era
Oral History Project

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KH: This is an interview for the Minnesota Historical Society’s Minnesota in the Vietnam War Era Oral History Project. It is Friday, February 23, 2018, and I’m here with Frank Kroncke. My name is Kim Heikkila. Today I’ll be talking to Frank about his role and experiences in the antiwar and draft resistance movement in Minnesota, and especially, although not exclusively, his experiences as one of the Minnesota 8. So, thanks so much, Frank, for your willingness to sit down and talk to me about this.

FK: Sure.

KH: So, again I’ll start with some very short questions that you can give short answers to and then we can talk at length about each of them. So can you just start by stating and spelling your name?

FK: K-r-o-n-c-k-e. Kroncke, K-r-o-n-c-k-e, Kroncke.

KH: And when and where were you born?

FK: I was born in Bayonne, New Jersey, August 6, 1944.

KH: And how do you identify yourself racially and/or ethnically?

FK: Well, I’m Caucasian and I’m Irish/German. The last name, Kroncke, is a German name and my mother was all full Irish. Maybe if we did a test, I’d find some other things in it but I’m not sure.

KH: And I know I just said it a little bit in my introduction, but if you could just briefly identify what, to you, were the major antiwar efforts that you were involved in.

FK: Sure. I was involved in several different draft raid scenarios. The biggest one and the largest draft raid in American history was the Beaver 55 action that took out the draft boards in St. Paul and Minneapolis in February of 1970. The Minnesota 8 follows up after that. I was not going to be involved in the Minnesota 8. I was going to travel the country and write a book, being an academic, and my good friend Brad Beneke, who’s out there now, just said, “Frank,
let’s do one more raid; let’s do one more raid.” So I’d done some raids in Iowa, different places like that, small things. But this was a big adventure in Minnesota.

**KH:** And we’re here in Viroqua where you live now. What are you doing now?

**FK:** Well, I came down to Viroqua, V-i-r-o-q-u-a, Viroqua, Wisconsin, to write, to have some space. And so I have written an Earthfolk.net website and Minnesota8.net, website, spelled out, the letter eight. I have PWH-MN.org, which was Peace and War in the Heartland, PWH, and then Outlaw-Visions, Outlaw hyphen Visions.net, which sort of fills in the blanks on everything. And those four will basically carry most of the information that was involved, you know, in the draft raids and the trial.

**KH:** And how long have you been down here?

**FK:** Well, actually a long time, almost ten years now. I came down here in 2008.

**KH:** Okay.

**FK:** Actually there was a woman at the time who’s a neighbor across the street who—we’d become friends due to my efforts but she despises me so—

**KH:** Oh, dear. (Laughter)

**FK:** So there’s all types of stories. Political stories first, personal stories, whatever.

**KH:** All right. Well, let’s start talking about some of them. If you could just start by telling me a little bit about you and your family, where you grew up.

**FK:** Yeah, I grew up in Bayonne, New Jersey, and my family moved to Hastings, Minnesota, in 1960. My father worked for 3M. He was a chemist and my father was a lifelong Republican, as was my mother. And the rumor is that my father did vote for Kennedy because he was Catholic. My father came from money, actually, but he comes from a classic, in the Midwest here, a classic Lutheran/Roman Catholic split. His mother was Roman Catholic and so he and his brother, my Uncle Gene—all of these people are dead right now—were raised Roman Catholic. When my grandmother died, who I never met, my father—of course, my father wasn’t married yet. My father was at Notre Dame. So then Grandpa Kroncke, who I met just a few times, married another German Lutheran woman and the priest told my father that he could never talk to his father. So I basically grew up not knowing my grandfather which is something I deeply regret.

I mean, this issue with the church comes up often in my life but this was one of the biggest splits for our family. So Grandpa Kroncke remarried and then, of course, we had nothing to do with him. But my father was a highly educated fellow; he ended up getting a Master’s degree and working for an east coast chemical company called M.W. Kellogg, which was bought by Minnesota Mining and so my father has nine kids. How’s that, huh? What a woman, my beloved mother. And I’m the fourth of nine so I’m the third son, the fourth one.
Being the little guy so to speak, most of my life, I always brag now that I’m the biggest, you know, that I’m the tallest and everything else, but anyway. Not a big help when you get older.

KH: So you were in New Jersey then until 1960.

FK: Yeah, right, and when I left and I didn’t stay in Minnesota because—I make a joke of it—every time I visit, I sort of revisit these places I went. I mean, it was a town that had about four thousand people in it at the time. I can’t remember the time when it had one hundred thousand people, Bayonne, New Jersey, which is the other side of the Brooklyn Naval Yard. I mean, I could walk to the end of town, to Bayonne, which was a peninsula, and had a park and I could see the Statue of Liberty. Typical of East Coasters, I never went to the Statue of Liberty until I moved to the Midwest and went back to visit one time and said, I better see the Statue of Liberty because, you know, people are going to ask me, Have you been to the Statue of Liberty? Hell, every day I can see it.

So my upbringing was very Catholic, very conservative Catholic. I mean, I went to mass and communion every day of my life until I went into the seminary. I went in—so my family moves to Minnesota; it’s my junior year in high school. So my junior and senior year I got back to Staten Island, New York and join the Franciscan Seminary. I mean, back then, the theory was, Get them young so that they don’t, you know, stray. Stray meant they met women and when things started happening in their body then they said, Hmm, is God calling me or is something else calling me?

And then I actually went into the monastery. I was called Friar Otto. I was a Franciscan, and—but again, I was a young person and I sort of went at that time to figure out if—you know, give it sort of an extra try. There were things about my dad’s life that would have been sort of sweet revenge I didn’t know about until—I’ll tell you I knew about them later.

So anyway, I go into the seminary in Staten Island, New York, and after a year, they had moved me to southern Indiana, to Mount St. Francis Seminary in Clarksville, Indiana. Right across the river from Louisville, as the Louisville boys would say. And I have lots of humorous stories that happened there.

And after a time I sort of figured out that I wasn’t going to become a priest but I was raised—I mean my name is Francis Xavier—that’s a Jesuit saint and, you know, if you come from the East Coast, and you’re named Francis Xavier Aloysius or Ignatius, you’re a Jesuit, right? I mean, that’s—my dad wanted me to become a priest and all my life everybody expected me to do that.

KH: So did you—when you were in your junior and senior year at Staten Island—did you have any volition of your own to be there or was it just—?

FK: No, I was there and, you know, it was where everybody thought Francis would go—when he grew up then he would become a priest. And so, you know, one of the—part of the story is that my little brother, the youngest of the family, the ninth child, Joey, we were on vacation in South Jersey and he was sitting—he’d had a rough night and he was crying and everything. He
was about a year and a half and he—I can see him ambling up the stairs from the basement where they had breakfast and he lies down next to me and I’m reading something, you know—I was a voracious reader—and all of a sudden, he picks up his head. His eyes go one way; his head goes the other way. He starts vomiting. He goes into convulsions. I pick him up yelling, “Mom, Dad, something’s wrong with Joey.” And we’re like in the middle of nowhere so these two people have all these kids, right? Frantic. There’s no hospital nearby. There’s hospitals in New York City. This is South Jersey—it’s the shore. And so my family have this—my father and mother rush around the bars to get alcohol to pour on him to try to prevent—well, anyway, long story short is he had encephalitis. He was bitten by a mosquito so he goes from being a normal sort of two-year-old, you know, you can imagine what happened there.

And so—at the same time my family is going through this move to Minnesota. And the reason we ended up going to Minnesota is that the stress of the move—now in my generation, working for multiple companies is sort of expected. I mean, when I tell people that my brother-in-law, you know, worked for Honeywell his whole career, one company, people are like, That’s really odd. Well, back then it was just the reverse. I mean, the fact is that my father was almost fifty years old and he had to go out and look for a job. Well, that just isn’t the way things were back then. So anyway, he ends up having a heart attack. He’s in the hospital; Joey’s sick; we’re moving from New Jersey to Minnesota, right? On a train, so it’s all crazy. So Joey is living at home with us and at some point the doctor says to my mother, “You have to put him in a home because”—I had four younger sisters and then Joey—“it’s impacting your ability to raise your daughters properly.”

And so—and things that, you know, if we had a family discussion, you would get a lot of different perspectives on this but my father and mother, from the world they came in, they put Joey in a home with nuns down in southwestern Minnesota and the girls they put into an all-girls school down by—I’m blanking on the town—Red Wing, by Red Wing called Villa Maria Academy the time and they thought this was a good thing to do because the nuns would take care of them. My sisters have other feelings about this experience. So Joey has to be removed from the home so that the parents will focus on the other kids and raise them. And so, all of a sudden—because he required twenty-four/seven care. He had no recognition. His brain was totally blown out. He had no recognition of anybody. He was just a vegetable. And he’s going to live to eleven years old, when he dies.

KH: Wow.

FK: All right. This is again, part of the things that influenced my life. So a part of—why I mention this, besides the fact that it is true, is I always tell people—I told the jury this story and I said, You know, if you can’t give life, don’t take it. Now here’s—I mean this is like someone dying right in front of you, a little kid having convulsions. And so I know I won’t probably get into it, but I have a later experience with my own son, Nick, because we were [in] a similar experience, [him] having fallen out of a car and banging his head. And I thought it was a rerun of the Joey thing. It was just—my son, Nicholas, you meet him now and he’s like thirty-four. He’s a weight lifter, a monster, he’s over six—slightly shorter than I am but he can pick me up with one hand, I mean, so, you know. Anyway, so this was a life-altering event for me because I realize that life is very fragile.
KH: How old were you at this—well, we can—

FK: I was thirteen.

KH: Thirteen when it happened. Okay.

FK: So anyway, part of the deal, the reason this all needs to be told is that my family expected me to become a priest and back then, if you had a priest in the family, you went to heaven automatically and this was part of the—some of the belief system of the times. So when I left the monastery, called up my father and said, “You know, I’m coming home.” I mean, I might as well just have ripped his heart out with a knife. And there is not going to be anything ever, ever that I’m going to be able to do that is going to change—that’s going to satisfy my father. I mean—I’ve turned—you know, “He who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God,” is a well-known saying in the Catholic Church. And I did that. I put my hand to the plow and I looked back and I said, “I don’t want to go do this.”

So I go up to St. John’s in Minnesota where I start college. Now my father had gone to Notre Dame so he could have gotten me into Notre Dame but we couldn’t afford it. I mean, [with a] large family, just too much money. My dad had a decent job as a chemist for 3M in Minnesota but there certainly wasn’t enough money to send a kid off to a school like Notre Dame.

So anyway, my father gets in a car accident and breaks his back. Someone else was driving him to work in Hastings, Minnesota. This plant, called Chemolite, is the 3M plant just outside of Minnesota. They may call it something else today, I don’t know. Back then they called it Chemolite. So dad was driving to work one day and he gets in a car accident and breaks his back so he’s having his own sort of travails. So long story, short, is that Dad dies. He’s forty-eight years old and he dies. My mother’s left, you know, with all these kids, these girls especially. That’s why I said The Villa was for her. It made a lot of sense, you know, the nuns would—the nuns were good; they would take care of them. But like I said, my sisters have a very different view of all that.

And so I graduated from college, my dad is dead but right before I graduate [before my dad died.] I was studying medicine and getting Cs in physics and biology. So I start studying philosophy which is really—I took to it like a fish to water. And my father writes me a letter and says, As far as your mother and I are concerned, you going into philosophy is for the birds. I mean, I have this letter somewhere. So there was nothing I could do. I was the son who put his hand to the plow and looked, so I was not fit for the kingdom of God.

So I have this deal going on with my dad who I dearly loved but I’m more Irish than German. He’s the German side; my mother’s the Irish side and my mother loved to dance. She went over to Ireland as a young woman and she was always beautiful and so part of the curse is that I’m more Irish than German. So anyway, if you met my brothers, some of my brothers are more German than Irish, so they still scratch their heads that their young brother went to prison.
So I go off to the University of San Francisco. There’s a priest, if you’re in the Catholic world, called Godfrey Diekmann, who was well-known at the time at St. John’s. He was part of the Vatican Council II, and he talked to me and this other young fellow who wanted to go out to San Francisco—to go out to study theology. He talked to us and he said, “Well, I can send you to the Catholic University in Washington, DC or I can send you to University of San Francisco. And in talking to you guys, I think I’ll send you to San Francisco.” I was a little too free-spirited I guess. I don’t know what to say.

So I go out to San Francisco and ironically—but again, consistent with the times—I’d never been to a protest in college. Here I am in graduate school and just about everybody in the goddamn master’s program, men and women, are going to antiwar rallies; they’re doing this stuff and I’m there studying—it’s called Patristic Theology. I’m staying back. I mean, I went to one of the rallies—I can still see myself standing at the periphery of this huge rally and these kids—they’re up there burning their draft cards and they’re doing all this stuff and I think they’re crazy. And then I graduate. I still hadn’t done anything.

KH: What year is this?

FK: Nineteen sixty-eight.

KH: Sixty-eight.

FK: You know, you see what’s going on in the world. I mean, the world’s falling apart, ’67, ’68, ’69—

KH: So you were in San Francisco in ’67—summer of love.

FK: Yeah, January ’67. Yeah, I’m walking—I lived by Golden Gate Park—I’m walking through Golden Gate Park and there’s these young girls dancing; the guy’s playing music; there’s clouds of smoke, which was dope, right? And I’m like, you know, studying Patristic Theology and teaching college—I was teaching at a local girls’ college, woman’s college which doesn’t exist anymore, just in order to make a living.

So anyway, and I thought—I had friends and they were like resisting the draft to do this stuff—because I signed up with the draft. They delayed making a decision—the draft board was in South St. Paul. They delayed making a decision because I was in graduate school picking up needed deferments. So by the time I actually—Nixon in 1969—those were all the deferments, and so I go to my draft board and by that time I have my master’s degree in theology and so they say, Okay, pick a job. And usually they give CO’s jobs carrying, you know, bedpans and stuff; really try to humiliate you, make you feel bad—so I came back to them and I took a job at the Newman Center and a couple other jobs—

KH: You were a CO by this time?

FK: Yeah, I was a conscientious objector, yes.
KH: You had gotten all these deferments. You were a student, in college—

FK: Well, I got—so now I’m a teacher and a master’s in theology so they believe I’m not just trying to dodge the draft.

KH: Okay. So they did grant you a conscientious objector?

FK: They granted it to me and they said, pick a job. Rather than giving me a job, they said, Pick a job. Well, shit, I thought that was great. I mean, it’s going to turn out to bite me in the butt but I thought it was great. I took a job at the Newman Center at the University of Minnesota as a director of something, whatever we taught, the curriculum.

And so when I was in the meetings weekly with the priest at the Newman Center, the Newman Center was sort of like the last place a lot of priests went before they left. So I’d have all these priests, they’d look at me and say, Frank, you’re better educated than we are. We just have seminary training, so you should preach. So I start preaching and they’d have masses and [I was] counseling kids and teaching theology courses and stuff like that.

And so I’ll tell you how strange the times were. This was before the women’s movement and everything else, right? So I’d been going around to these after mass meetings at different churches and talking about stuff, right? So I had one down somewhere in Minneapolis and I’m on this dais with these priests and everybody else and I’m sort of the renegade theologian who’s going to talk about being a conscientious objector, which is a legal deferment, right? And this guy stands up and he yells out in front of about forty-five people, he says, “Are you a fag?” He had no way of dealing with—here’s this big guy, six foot, three, and I didn’t have the belly back then. It was like, you know, I was in really good shape. And I remember at the time it didn’t make sense—what do you mean, am I a fag? What’s that got to do with anything? And everybody on the panel was old except this guy who was saying something. All of a sudden they started protecting me, don’t do this. That always stuck with me because back then we didn’t have, for men, you know, the ability that if you didn’t want to go out and kill people something must be wrong with you.

KH: Because military service was this rite of passage. It’s how you became a man.

FK: Precisely. It’s like I was saying, I mean, if I said, “Yeah, I’m a fag. I love to suck dick,” he would have said, “Okay, great, I understand you.” But I said, “What are you talking about? I have no idea what do you—? —no, no.” I mean I’m from Bayonne, New Jersey, and I saw my [older] brother [George] get his mouth opened, six stitches put in, blood flying in a fight, you know, so I mean violence was all around me. It wasn’t like I was born up in a— I’m not a Quaker or somebody who was born up in a nonviolent family. I was born when my dad was in the South Pacific.

KH: Okay, so that was one of my questions. Was there a tradition of military service in your family?
FK: Oh, sure. My brother George went, the one right above me. He went into the navy and I visited him when he was working on pulling off missiles in Port Hueneme, California. My brother Charles, the oldest one now, he got his doctorate and he was a professor of finance at the [University of] Wisconsin here for most of the time. So I mean, we used to take a break from Minneapolis and go to Madison. Take a break right? And people walk around—I looked a lot like—Charlie and I look a lot alike and they’d look at me and they’d go, Did you shave your beard—when did you grow a beard? And so Charlie would always say, “Make sure they know you’re not me,” you know, “You’re my crazy brother who’s talking about the war and all this other stuff.”

So anyway, I get my master’s degree and I start my doctoral studies at the University of Chicago in their divinity program and I’m teaching at a local college, Rosary College in River Forest Illinois, at the time. And so one day my college roommate, Jim Hunt, comes down. And he said, “I’m bringing Fred Ojile, O-j-i-l-e, with me. Ojile—he’s one of the Milwaukee 14. They raided draft boards.” What!? “He’s been in jail.” What!? I couldn’t believe it.

So I meet this guy, Fred Ojile. Fred Ojile says to me, “What do you do?” I remember this phrase—he says, “What do you do with nubile young women?” I mean, all the students I was teaching were like four or five years younger than me at the most, right? And it was true. I was paying attention to the nubile young women.

So one time I sneak up to the Milwaukee 14 trial and I’m just like, you know, I don’t get it. There’s these priests up there. They’re talking; they’re quoting scripture; they’re doing all this other stuff and they’re going to prison. Good lord, that sounds insane.

So I had to move back to Minnesota because of the draft. The Milwaukee 14 ended up getting sentenced and so I sort of know what they’re doing and so I’m at the Newman Center, teaching—I’m there about a year and all of a sudden, there’s a shift. Instead of talking to guys who were being drafted and going to war, I’d talk with all these guys who were coming back from the war and they’re trying to fit into society. And they look at me and they say, Frank, you know, I fucking-A killed guys. I mean, I killed men, women—it didn’t make any difference because you threw in grenades because the Viet Cong and the Vietnamese—they all look the same. But you try and understand. And I realized if I’d been in their situation, I would have done the same thing. I would have killed all these motherfuckers, right? I mean, I would have—I didn’t see myself as superior. I mean, I identified with these guys, you know.

So this one time—I think I told you about that after mass, Gordy Nielsen, N-i-e-l-s-e-n, Gordy Nielsen, who was a witness at my trial, he comes in and he says, “You know, I was in Vietnam. I was in the fighting eye. This is what I did. I killed people; I destroyed homes. I did stuff, all this other stuff. What are you going to do?! I heard you preach. We’ve got to stop this war. We’ve got to shut this system down.” And then, as I say—the little motherfucker left and I’m sitting there like, what am I going to do? I’m doing it; I’m a conscientious objector, I’m doing two years alternative service. [Gordy says,] I heard you preach. You know, you’re a teacher. It’s like people come to you, you teach them something and they say, Oh, I learned about this in your class and they want to make you feel—to make you feel some responsibility, some kinship, right?
So here I am and this guy is really like—throws it right back at me. So what are you going to do Frank? So like I told you before, he left and this was 1970—well probably it was right at the end of ’69 because that’s the same year that my brother—my brother had died the year before, my younger brother Joey, 1968. It’s the type of thing that happens when they get to puberty, they can’t—their system doesn’t make it. So he’s dead; my father dies in a year. So he went right before Christmas 1969, and so—and then I get this job at the Newman Center and I don’t have a father anymore. I always ask myself, would I have done draft raids if Dad was alive?

So here’s what happens through with that story. When I go into—we do the draft raids. First of all, I chose the Beaver 55, the largest draft raid in American history—no one ever gets caught. And we do this dumb ass thing in retrospect, kept saying, we accept political [and] moral responsibility. We’re not going to say we did it. So the feds knew, oh, those were the guys. So we’re all talking and all this other stuff. And later on—it’s strange how these things happen. I’d get manuals in the mail with the covers ripped off; manuals on how to make bombs. I take it right away and burn it; throw it away. All kinds of strange things happened. We didn’t know. People were trying to set us up with what was going on.

So we were talking to colleges about all types of stuff and it’s still—it’s still a little abstract for me, you know, because we did something but you do A; you don’t see B. You do A, you see Y, and the war’s going on and it’s real depressing and then all of a sudden Kent State happens. It’s between the Beaver 55 and the Minnesota 8—you have the Kent State happening and the black student campus—

KH: Jackson State.

FK: Jackson State happened and then you have Nixon saying things about Vietnam; all kinds of crazy crap. They had bombed Cambodia, right? So I’m saying, Okay, I’m going to go write a book for young people about war and stuff and my friend, Brad Beneke, you know, who’s really—he sort of went straight for a long time. He became a salesman, too, just like I did, which is an interesting personality profile thing. And so he says, “Frank, Let’s do one more last raid; one more last raid.” I mean, “I don’t know, Brad.”

I had packed up all my stuff and put it in the basement of Karen Clark, who’s a [Minnesota state] representative. She and I had lived together for three years—she’s now been the longest serving lesbian politician in America—so that’s not the whole story—but she and I are still very close. I mean, she’s a wonderful person.

And so I said, “Okay, I’ll go with you.” So we go up and, of course, we raid the draft board in Little Falls and the FBI is waiting for us. So we find out at the trial, through questioning, that they were at a whole bunch of places where nobody was so they had sort of mixed information. And one of the groups actually got away. Another group went there, saw that there were alarms; then canceled. So about six people—we would have been, you know, there was like fifteen of us—and women were involved.
And then I come down here [to Viroqua, Wisconsin]. Joan—I won’t mention her last name, who lives in this area, she’s a nurse—and we’d meet and laugh about things in the past, you know. Well, it’s happened to both of us and here we are in this middle-of-nowhere place. Like I said, I came down here to write about all this stuff after the play up in Minnesota. I couldn’t find a job, which is interesting, and one night after I’d had a little too much wine, I was on one of the dating services and so I came down here.

See part of the deal is that after prison I go to California and I worked for the Quakers for a while, American Friends Service Committee, for four years in prison work which got me real interested in that. But when I finished my doctoral studies [in a joint Graduate Theological Union/University of California, Berkeley, program], Proposition 13 occurred in California which basically closed down job opportunities so I went into the business world. For twenty-five years I was a sales manager. I was very successful and I made fairly decent money at the time. I’m as poor as can be right now but I mean, back then.

I’m divorced. I was married for twenty-seven years and I have two sons and my former wife was an activist. She—we both met while working for the American Friends Service Committee but once I started making money, her whole world changed, her whole insecurity problems --so she’d didn’t want me to tell anybody about my past. It was like she wouldn’t talk about it at all and I had started drinking a little bit, not—I mean, I was drinking a lot after I got out of prison, 1970, and then I went and sobered up and I’ve been—I haven’t had a drink since 1970.

KH: Okay, so that’s a—you just narrated a long period of your life so I’m going to go back—

FK: Oh, sure.

KH: And ask you questions about some of what you just said. The first of which is, so, as you have just told it, you kind of talk about your—how you kind of evolved away from this path that was steering you towards the priesthood to doing some preaching on campus, but not as a priest, and then your awareness of the antiwar movement and this feeling that you had to actually do something.

FK: Right.

KH: But I want to even go back further and ask you, when do you first remember learning about the war in Vietnam at all? How aware are you?

FK: I became aware when I was in college basically and I was like, I mentioned to you before, I was at a school, a Catholic school where ROTC was mandatory for two years so we sort of knew that one of our options upon graduation was like to go into the service, kind of get that over with. So I have classmates who were killed in Vietnam and I have a lot of classmates who served in Vietnam so when I go back to reunions, say, after ten years—I’ve attended a few—it’s always kind of a sad thing, you know, because nowadays, most guys who fought in Vietnam feel bad about it; most of them feel that it was a mistake because it doesn’t make any sense. What were we fighting for? Well, they lied to us. Well, we know that now. But this is what you’re fighting for, but what were we really fighting for?
And I want to feel solidarity with those guys. I mean, I did what I did as much for them as I did for guys that were resisting the war.

KH: So when you—at that time when you’re in college at St. John’s, this ROTC school and you’re hearing about the war, at that time, based on what you knew or what you were hearing at that time, what were you thinking about it?

FK: Well, the classic Catholic response is like, you know, life on earth is a veil of tears and there’s original sin and nothing we do on earth is going to impact what happens in heaven. Better to die young and go to heaven, right? It’s kind of weird, but it’s kind of—it sounds kind of strange when you say it now. But, I mean, it’s indicative in my writings. In order to explain, to paraphrase, I wrote a piece called—that came out as “Resistance as Sacrament” in *CrossCurrents*, okay, where I’m getting another article published this year called “Presidential Evangelist for War.” They decided to keep a copy to look at. The letter came this morning.

Anyway, so that’s very Catholic and it’s very—because we didn’t have any other language. I kept talking about “socio/political sacramental acts.” Catholics said, what are you talking about? And I said, what are you talking about? So I mean, I was struggling with how to oppose the war and be true to what I believed. I believed there was evil in the world and stuff but certainly the Vietnam War was not solving anything for us. And just the whole attitude that war is the first response instead of the last resort is something that I rejected in the culture.

So when I first go out talking, the reason I ended up being my attorney pro se, is the other attorney was Ken Tilsen, wonderful man who was Jewish. So Ken sat me down just like we’re talking and he said, “Frank, I don’t understand a word you’re saying. You’re going to have to defend yourself.” “Okay, Ken,” luckily, I was a teacher so I said, “Sure, I’ll do it.” And I even argued my appellate brief down in St. Louis so—which was a real unusual event for a lot of people. So he and I both went down and we split the time and we made our appeal. So I’ll get to that in a bit but—

So anyway, growing up, I’m an altar boy; I’m a seminarian; then I leave the seminary. So my life is like I’m wandering in the desert. I hook onto getting a bachelor’s degree in philosophy that my father thought was like used bread, big deal. So Dad dies and, of course, we never had this reconciliation. So when I’m on trial, my mother comes to me and she says, “Francis, I think you should read these,” and she gives me this box of letters from my father to her during the war. This is how I find out about my dad. So my dad and Uncle Gene, who was his younger brother, when the war starts—and this happens in like 1942—well, has to be even ’43, somewhere around there—they go and they go down to the recruiter’s, you know, Charles Otto Kroncke’s real German and we’re fighting them in World War II, right? Are you an American or are you a Nazi, right?

So Uncle Gene has flat feet and he gets rejected but Dad becomes a lieutenant, junior grade, and he’s writing to my mom from Philadelphia where he’s in the navy. And these letters are filled with, “How’s the kids? How’s Martha? How’s Charles? How’s George?” You know, my mom’s pregnant so I’m not on the scene yet. I eventually get born but what happens while my mother’s
pregnant is Dad says, “Hey, we’re being sent to Oak Ridge, Tennessee. I’m going to be stateside during the war!” Well, she’s ecstatic. She’s a woman that’s got three kids already; she’s pregnant with her fourth. So she says, “Well, I hear they allow spouses to live outside the camp.” I mean, they’re in New Jersey. Tennessee is like sending you down to some weird place where weird people live.

So my father goes down to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and all of a sudden my mother gets a letter, “Dear Sweetheart, I’m being shipped out to the South Pacific.” She has no freaking—she doesn’t find out until the war is over what’s going on. So we get all these letters that are written—actually it’s true—[somewhere in the South Pacific] and I read three of them to the jury and one of them was, “I’m walking in front of rows and rows of white crosses on this island and the only reason this is justified is that in twenty, twenty-five years, our sons won’t have to go to war.” And I say, “My father’s generation—they really believed that. These men out there, they dropped the bomb.”

Okay, so this is what I find out. My father said that he’s a chemist from Notre Dame, which was at that time one of the leading chemistry departments in the country. The guy who was the head of the department invented synthetic rubber which freed our dependency on getting rubber from other countries so the war could be fought. So my father goes down to Oak Ridge, Tennessee and finds out he’s working on the atom bomb. But he goes, like I say, you can imagine, Charles Otto Kroncke, short, crew cut, little mustache, Notre Dame Graduate, the chemist says, “I can’t do this.” The guy he was talking to could be Catholic, right? “What do you mean you can’t do this? We’re killing fucking Nazis and Japs. What’s wrong with killing yellow people?” Right? “I can’t work on mass destruction. It’s against the just war theory,” you know, which is, proportionality. So my father could have been sent to prison but they buried him on a supply ship in the South Pacific.

Well, the story gets worse. He had—one day they were fueling an aircraft carrier and a typhoon comes up and my father’s the officer on duty and his job is to cut the rope keeping the supply ship tethered to the aircraft carrier. So all the people get off and they’re going to sink the ship, cut the rope and the boat is going to go down. And he gets the signal; everybody’s off; cuts the rope; the thing goes down. Oh, Lieutenant Kroncke, there were three of your officers, there were three men on board the ship. So on his own nickel when he comes back he flies around to each family. “I have to tell them I’m the one who cut the rope which is why your son died in the war.”

So my father’s war story is he killed three Americans. So he’s got all this stuff he’s carrying and here’s this crazy ass son who left the monastery, who is opposing the war, is going to go to prison, this type of deal is what he feels somewhere down the line, though I didn’t actually do anything that got me into prison until he died.

KH: Did he talk—and you didn’t—?

FK: No, never. He’s dead now. I find this out, he’s dead. And I keep saying, I hope in the afterlife we can have a conversation. I’m going to say, “Why didn’t you tell me this? I’m a splinter off the old beam, you know. I’m your son, Charles.” So I said to the jury, “One generation, the warrior, the next generation, the war resister. There’s continuity.” But there was
no place for my father, you know, my father, an American in the Catholic Church. What he did at the time was as radical as what I did. In other words, people would think he was a coward but he didn’t—

So this is part of my heritage. So then I go, “Oh, okay, I understand why my dad did that. I saw my brother turn into a vegetable in front of my eyes, you know, my younger brother, so life is precious.” So I’m becoming feminized—I’m beginning to see my masculinity in a whole different way, right? And I’m talking about—I started talking about it because I started developing a whole different language. So if you read the articles, the first one in *CrossCurrents* is “Resistance as Sacrament” for a Catholic. I’m slowly moving down the road. The next one, about the war and then the one that I’ve written now which is, again, another, “Why is America So in Love with War?” type of thing. So anyway.

So part of coming down here, part of this was sort of to, you know, write about the experience, do the websites.

**KH:** Okay, so your story is partly this evolution into a conscientious objector turned draft resister because it’s not enough to—

**FK:** I was safe.

**KH:** To participate in the system and get your out that way; you have to expand on that, do something.

**FK:** You have to do something. Those other guys took risks. I mean, these young guys were fighting; these were—people died; they could have died. They killed people and risked their lives. And they were really fucked up, excuse my French, but, you know, they can’t make a play. It’s like, they asked me to do that and I did it really well. You know, I was a killing machine and for what?

**KH:** Now, you’ve talked about—and you just said it a few minutes ago—about being feminized and about how military service was viewed as a rite of passage for men and [being asked] the question, Are you a fag? [and answering that] you’re not and [the guy couldn’t] put that together. Like how can you not be gay and also be a resister, a draft resister? So, do you think that any of the motivation to do these kinds of risky—I mean, like these draft board raids knowing that, even if you didn’t intend to, knowing that you could be arrested and go to prison—

**FK:** Oh sure.

**KH:** Was that an expression of, Hey, you know, I’m not doing what most men do to be a man, but I’m going to take these other [risks]—was that a part of masculine expression of opposition to the war? I’m doing something.

**FK:** Well, I don’t know if it was that conscious. You see the hard part about talking, when you think back about the times, [it] was like every day there was this high-level tension. You turned on the TV and every channel had reporting about Vietnam. You know, Clinton said we’re not
showing pictures of the war anymore, but we saw it all the time. We saw the people shoot people. We saw all types of terrible stuff and the people knew that the war was terrible. It wasn’t like World War II was nice. It was a pretty horrible experience, too.

The hard part about talking about then is that like now is a different time and it’s hard to talk about so that people don’t think I’m some type of—well, I mean some think I’m a weirdo. But, you know, this whole progression, see the feminist movement is coming up, too, so that gave me some leeway to look into what it meant to be a man. So I was involved in a lot of the very first men’s consciousness raising groups, too. People talk about this stuff and I tell people, “Listen, you know, I wasn’t raised in a pacifistic household.” I wasn’t raised in a—because Bayonne, New Jersey, was a tough place. I saw my brother, like I said, get his mouth opened up. He had stitches and people shot people and all types of crazy shit happened. It was the city.

And the Catholic Church didn’t support what I was saying at the time. I mean, we had all these people, or not all these people—we had a certain number of bishops that were coming out against the war but when I asked them to testify at my trial, they all turned me down. I don’t know if I still have them somewhere. Before I went to prison, I put stuff in the Minnesota Historical Society, hoping that it wouldn’t be destroyed. I don’t know if they’ve destroyed any of it or not. I have no way of knowing. You know, I gave them all types of stuff and part of it was some writings that I did about the times just trying to—so I wouldn’t forget what happened. And so part of what I want to convey to you is that, you know, Nixon and the politicians, they had the papers. They had the media. And guys like us were not considered heroic or heroes or men, like you said, you know, we’re fags or whatever else and—which was far from true.

Even in the joint, which is another whole other experience, living with—we lived in dorms. I don’t know if you know but there was a series of cells up in Sandstone but you had to already have done ten years to even get on the list. So we lived in these dorms of thirty to sixty people. Some were double bunked. It was a zoo. So, you know, there were gay activities that went on, people could—when men get locked up, people have sex all of a sudden. It’s no big deal in one sense.

So anyway, here I am, I guess we didn’t really think it through. I mean to be real honest—so for instance when we get arrested and they give us this crazy [charge] of sabotage of the national defense, keeps us in jail for a week—we have all these protests that are outside the jail, that Charlie Sullivan and his wife Pauline would get together. For a whole week. And we’re watching the news and the cops are going through beating people, and arresting them and sending them out and like, wow, that was kind of funny. So they finally—I think they thought it best to get us out of the jail, you know, so we didn’t become an object.

So part of the reason we’re the Minnesota 8, and we had three trials, was because of the Chicago 8 where they consolidated. I mean, normally, they should consolidate which would have meant we would have been under Ed Devitt. I would never have had Philip Neville. So the two [Devitt] trials were very brief. The guys were not allowed to bring a defense; they were allowed to give personal testimony and then they were sentenced. And they went off to jail in January of 1971.
So we had this guy Philip Neville who was a Humphrey appointee and Neville, his style, his personal style, wasn’t just for this event; he had it for other events that he let people say what they had to say and then he made his decision. So I came up with this defense of necessity that was in the model penal code and the lawyer, Ken Tilsen, helped me to understand that a little bit and—

KH: And say what the defense of necessity is.

FK: One act avoids another act. So let’s say I steal a car and take a pregnant woman to the hospital. I don’t get arrested. I blow up a dam and I kill a thousand people but I saved ten thousand people. Sometimes need has been argued in that model. So here I’m saying it was necessary to destroy these files because of the greater—the violation of the war. And I was using my Catholic tradition to sort of condemn warfare. But, good luck, Frank.

KH: So, yeah, well I have about twenty questions on the tip of my tongue but let’s tail off that one. You’re saying you were using your Catholic tradition to oppose the war. People who opposed the war in Vietnam did so on many grounds, right? Some were pacifists; they opposed all war. Some opposed that war. Some say, well, we’re just doing it badly; if we did it better, I’d be, you know, on board.

FK: True.

KH: So explain what—on what grounds you came to oppose the war.

FK: Well, basically guys like me saw Jesus as a peacemaker and he always brought that out in many people what the contradictions were. So the Good Samaritan story is typical. I mean, the Samaritans were pieces of shit to the Jews at the time. So this guy tells a story where a Jew stops to help a Samaritan after the priest and all these people walk by him and then this guy takes care of him and gives him money and it’s like, I mean, that’s really, sort of a—excuse me again—a super fucked up way of looking at things. I mean, so, you know, a Jew hearing that is like, “A Samaritan?” I mean that’s like a white guy taking care of a black guy, you know. He’s a slave; he’s three fifths of a person; he’s not a total human being type of thing.

So for me it really was sort of a religious thing, that I have a choice. Do I kill people or don’t I kill people? It’s sort of like the choice, do you beat your wife or you don’t beat your wife. And when I was growing up if a man beat his wife that was his own concern; nobody else was to be concerned about that. The early women’s movement said, No, we can’t do that. A lot of men went, what are you talking about? Of course, we can do that. My brother was injured. My mother couldn’t take him out for the public to see him, you know, we couldn’t take him in the carriage. I mean, back then, people who were—had mental issues or were whatever, you just hid them and pretended that they didn’t exist.

So anyway, I just saw my own role—I mean, one of the reasons I left the seminary is that it just was like, what’s this all about? This is just a bunch of men living together, you know, afraid of the feminine as I came to understand it. I mean, here’s Jesus, who was really a very feminine male. He loves everybody; he’s willing to suffer. You know, the thing about being a certain type
of Christian is that you don’t have any easy answers. None of the answers are easy and when you say some of the answers, you still know that it’s not an answer. It’s like, you know, you live with that your whole life.

So when I’m—you’ll see in one of the interviews for the play, at the end of it I sort of say, Well, you know, I mean, we did what we did. Some people will say we were the worst people that ever lived. You know they’ll still say that. One guy wrote, when the play was going on, years later. He said, “I went to Vietnam. My son is in the military. I hate you guys. You should never have been let out of prison.” Well, I understand that, you know. I mean, the guy never met me or anything; he just wrote the letter. So, you know, we never had any certainty that this is the best thing to do.

So today when I talk to young people, the war is not the issue right now. I mean, the real core issue to all this was masculinity and femininity. Or are we going to take care of the earth? Are we going to love people? That’s why I have this website called Earthfolk. Are you an Earthfolk or are you an Earth People? Well, there’s people and all the people, well, we should get along because we live on the earth but Earthfolks, it’s like family. So you meet a little yellow person, I mean, they’re part of your family. There’s no reason to kill them. It’s the Cain and Abel story, we don’t want to begin that crap.

KH: So it sounds like you’re thinking about the war and your coming to see it as wrong isn’t specific to this particular war. It was about—there’s a bigger philosophy, this bigger moral, religious view of how to behave while on the planet.

FK: Planet Earth. But back to the Cain and Abel story, you know. You look at another human being and do you turn them into an object? Do you give them a “He’s a gook; he’s a bitch; he’s a, you know, she’s a bitch and whatever.” You know, for the total masculinity that we were raised with, the answers were simple. Yeah, kill the little motherfucker, that’s what we do. In fact, we created a bomb where we actually vaporized people. I mean on the Earthfolk site, I cite a little quote from the report, people were burned into the rock as images, totally annihilated cellurally.

KH: So—how—were you thinking about any of these things with regards to—because there was a lot of stuff going on in the sixties. I mean, the civil rights movement had been going on before this.

FK: The civil rights movement had been going on and it was Martin Luther King who brought them together. How many people—many of us feel that he got killed for his views on the war, not for his views on race.

KH: Because it was very controversial when he came out and said he was against the war.

FK: Oh yeah.

KH: So were you aware of and participating in any civil rights kinds of issues or activities?
FK: I mean, I generally supported them but part of my story I like to tell people is that for a long time I distanced myself—it was like, Well, that’s what goes on on earth. I mean, I had this spiritual view that just sort of said whatever we do here we’re just passing through, you know. So I read this guy Teilhard de Chardin. His first name was Pierre. His last name was Teilhard de Chardin. So I’m in college and I was—I was with this—I was assigned a roommate, a guy named Frank Kestner. He was a bad boy and I was, of course, the good boy who had been in seminary and they wanted me to live with Frank. I remember walking in one day, he was lying down on his bed reading this study, he says, “Hey Kronk, you probably understand this stuff,” and he throws this book at me called *The Phenomenon of Man* and it changed my life.

I mean, Teilhard de Chardin was this Jesuit priest and he not only believed in what they call the alpha point, which is what pushes evolution. But there was an omega point that pulls. So he started thinking, what make a human human? You have kids right?

KH: Um-hmm.

FK: How old are they?

KH: One son who’s twelve.

FK: Yeah, and so he’s going through that identity formation right now, finding out who he is, right?

KH: Yeah.

FK: It’s really tough. This is the hardest part for parents. You can—go away for a while. My youngest son, Nicholas, who’s like twenty-three, he said, “You know, Dad, I really do appreciate the way you raised me.”

KH: Whew! That’s hopeful!

FK: Yeah, it took him until he was twenty-three. So what was I saying? I sort of lost myself there.

KH: Well, I had asked on what grounds you opposed the war and you were talking about Teilhard de Chardin.

FK: Oh yeah, so Teilhard had a big influence on my life. So now I’m at St. John’s and I’m, you know, starting college, and I get involved in an honors reading program. So I don’t know, the minute I read that book, and then I asked if I could do my research paper on him. And at the time you had to get a letter from the bishop, who was very conservative. He was called Black Bart. I had this story—it’s just like—I don’t know if you saw the movie *The Name of the Rose*? It’s—a famous actor plays the—

KH: [Sean Connery]
FK: Plays the—anyway. I’m following this monk up these creaking stairs in this turret—this is a true story. And he’s sitting in front of this nondescript door and he puts the key in and he steps back. I realized that he can’t go into this room. He’s just a brother. He doesn’t have permission. So I open this door. I go inside and like I said, there’s blood pouring down off the shelves. These are all the condemned books of Christianity, I’m in the library of forbidden books at St. John’s. And here’s Teilhard in the back, typed in red ink, *Index Librorum Prohibitorum.* And I always tell people, two years later you could buy them in the bookstore. That’s the sixties for you.

So I got this letter from the local bishops that I could read this elective, because they apparently didn’t want people to read Teilhard, right? Well, it changes my whole view of things because Teilhard says that everything we do counts. I mean, there’s nothing that you do—whether you’re out of sight of other people it doesn’t make any difference because there’s you and God. There’s, this is the omega point.

So how do our kids become human? Well, you gave birth to a child. That child could just lay there and nobody relate to it. You know, it’ll grow; you feed it; it could, in a sense become, you know, grown. It can grow up. But what do you do off the bat? You tickle it; you play with it; you talk to the child; the child doesn’t understand a goddamn thing you say, right? But, of course, with my boys, you know, I remember my little Jed; grabbing my pinky and looking at me like, who are you? You know, like they come out of the womb and all of a sudden they’re in this strange place, right?

So Teilhard used that understanding of life to say that, you know, there’s the physical evolution and there’s the spiritual evolution. If you want to become a person, or even the dog, I mean “woof,” Nash here [my dog], you know, wants me to relate to him, pet him, talk to him. I mean, I don’t just let him walk around the house alone, just being like—some people keep their dogs outside. So anyway, that’s the view Teilhard had; everything counts whether people know about it or not and so that was what eventually philosophically and theologically led me to the type of activity that I did.

So it wasn’t—I could be a conscientious objector, sort of be put aside from the mainstream and people would say, Oh, Frank, you’re so different. You’re a conscientious objector, you do your two years alternative service and come back and support us. Don’t create any problems. I don’t think so, you know. I mean, I didn’t want to be a conscientious objector the way they talked about.

So anyway, I found out that if you raid draft boards, they get really upset.

KH: (Laughter) Yeah, I imagine. So, being a conscientious objector, I assume that—and I am not Catholic. I am not a Catholic scholar at all but I assume that, and from what little I do know about Vatican II, and some things that were happening in the Catholic Church that there were some things coming out from powerful Catholic people that would have given credibility and standing to a Catholic conscientious objector—

FK: Right.
KH: That was falling within some of the things that were coming-- Is that?--

FK: Yeah, so here’s the reality. In order to do draft raids, I had to put down all the Catholic stuff. I got arrested. Well, shit, I’ve got to talk to people about this stuff. I need a frame of reference so I went back and I said that I understand that this stuff that I thought I was leaving behind personally—in other words, raiding draft boards—I mean, you just really couldn’t explain it to people. They either got it or they didn’t. So I went to trial—the documents of Vatican II were evidence. I still have my copy here that says, Defendant Exhibit No. 2. And the encyclical called *Pacem in Terris* that Pope John did at the time. Peace on Earth, *Pacem in Terris*.

And it was my effort to try to explain why I did what I did but, you know, basically, most—even though Vatican II had happened—the documents were out there itself. It was like it happened in the early sixties. It was still fresh. Most of—a lot of people—they didn’t teach it in college. When I went back to teaching here at Viterbo which the nuns who are—it’s a Franciscan school, the nuns who were my age, were all retiring. They were enthused like I was by the same stuff and they knew me; they knew what I had done; they honored it. Younger theologians coming out of Catholic universities and other places—it’s like the sixties never happened and Vatican II never happened. Because if it did happen, you’d become someone like me who says, you tell people the primary meaning of life is what you do with your life; it’s spiritual. It’s not something you can quantify. It’s not like Americans are better than other people. God loves everybody. It creates problems, you know.

So I mean, even for me, like the abortion issue, which means people—I mean, women have choice! Well, I grew up—I have five sisters, right? They were supposed to find the right man to marry and get married. So part of what happened, big picture, is listening to the feminine side of Christianity. Why do we have to kill any of these little yellow people? Oh, we’re protecting ourselves from the Chinese and the Russians. Well why are we killing them? Whatever reason they come up with, they always have some reason that doesn’t hold much water.

KH: Now there were also other well-known Catholic—the Berrigan brothers--

FK: The Berrigans, yes.

KH: Who were very active in draft board raids specifically? Did you see yourself as kind of part of that—part of the Catholic left, the Catholic radicals?

FK: The Catholic radicals, that’s right, yeah. I went back east a couple times. What’s hard to convey to people today. There was no Internet, cell phones were—a small percentage of people were using them. They were expensive. Long distance was a real call. I mean with a cell phone now you call anyplace in the country. So technologically it was a different time. Like I said, there was a morning paper and an evening paper in Minneapolis at the time. So we knew the people back east and actually part of what we did was because we thought they failed. I mean, they did the Catonsville Nine and all of these other things and they liked to destroy something
and stay around and get arrested. And what happened? Well, they go to trial and they’re allowed
to have a defense and then they get sent off to jail. That’s pretty stupid.

So what happens if we raid draft boards and we don’t get arrested? Well, okay, so we did that
like I said with the Beaver 55 action, pull off this massive draft raid.

KH: Yeah, let’s talk about the Beaver 55. So at this point, that’s early 1970, you have been
teaching at St. Kate’s. Were you at St. Kate’s at that time?

FK: I taught in the summers at St. Kate’s.

KH: And you were at the Newman Center.

FK: At the Newman Center; my father was dead.

KH: Okay.

FK: My brother was dead.

KH: You’re a CO, working at the Newman Center, and somebody says to you, what are you
going to do?

FK: Right, Gordy Nielsen.

KH: Gordy Nielsen. So how does this all lead to—? And then tell us about the Beaver 55 raids.

FK: So the Beaver 55—I mean, I don’t know, this is why it’s hard looking back if you think
you’re trying to explain it literally like you’re talking to some guys and they said, Frank, you
really against the war? Yeah. Well, you should come to this meeting. People are talking about,
you know, doing draft raids. Stupid right? But we go and we meet people and some people are,
you guys are crazy. I’m not going to do that. You’re all just going to end up in jail and then what
happens, right? You’re going to disappear. And they proved to be partly true. But some of us,
either—we’re all unmarried at the time so we don’t have any—we didn’t want any married guys;
we didn’t want to bring families and kids into this.

KH: Is this on campus? Is this—who are these people?

FK: Yeah, it’s basically on campus. It’s people that we know—there are some SDS people;
there’s some Quakers. There’s all kinds of people. They get together in a series of meetings and
talk about the war; what should we do? What’s effective? What’s not effective? Sometimes
you’d have the meeting and then someone would say, well, we’ve got to meet again. We’re not
going anywhere tonight. Some say, Okay, if you want to know more about this, next Thursday
we’re meeting over at Bill’s place, whoever shows up. And some people show up. And then
eventually it gets to the point where people say, Listen, we’ve got to do something. Jack, over
here has a plan. Jack tell them what you’re thinking about doing and then that’s—some guy
stands up and somebody will say, Jack, you’re crazy; you’re a crazy motherfucker; you know, you’re going to end up in jail. I’m getting out of here, or I’m married or I have a kid or I don’t want to spend my time in jail. I don’t mind opposing the war but breaking the law is wrong. You know, so a lot of people felt breaking the law [was wrong].

So when we do what we do do, we have as many people love us as hate us. And so, I’m always of the type that says, Okay, we’re not as bad as you think we are; we’re not as good as you think we are, which is important. People didn’t understand. We didn’t have any answers; we didn’t know if it was going to be effective; we didn’t know if Nixon was paying any attention. I mean, we didn’t know anything about J. Edgar Hoover, until we did the Beaver 55 action and then it was all in the paper that he had sent one hundred agents here to find out what happened, right?

So we had decided that what we were not going to do is like all these other people did—was they would take files and they would stand around and wait for the cops to come. It was like screw that shit, you know, we’re just going to go keep raiding until whatever—who knows what’s going to happen? Who cares? Who cares about tomorrow, right?

So I mean, one example was, it was before I went into jail which is another whole story, I met this woman and she had sex with me because she felt that I wasn’t going to have sex for five years. When I got out of prison, she wasn’t at all interested in a relationship. So I mean, the times were like that. It was, people were doing stuff and I was still a pretty straight, normal guy, you know. I mean, stupid as I am, I thought all I could do was go back to teaching which I ended up doing, right? So I went back to graduate school at Berkeley after prison. Now I’m an ABD. I passed all the tests, the orals, everything, right?

And so I get involved in the sales world and I become very successful as a sales manager. I ran large sales organizations. Made a shit load of money at the time. You know, making over one hundred thousand dollars a year back in seventies and eighties. Lots of money.

KH: So the Beaver 55—is it February 1970?

FK: Yes.

KH: And that’s the raids on the—

FK: Minneapolis and St. Paul draft boards—

KH: Okay.

FK: Where they had, like in St. Paul, we had over fifty draft boards in one place.

KH: Yeah, and how many people were involved? It wasn’t fifty-five people?

FK: No, no—so let me show you how clever we were, right? There was about a dozen but we said, well, how can we spook them? Well, let’s say we’re fifty-five people; we’re beavers gnawing at the foundation, right? So we get arrested. We actually, the things we were going to
leave behind said, Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives. We said the press was so stupid they did one, two, three, four, eight and they called us the Minnesota 8. It wasn’t our name. I mean, our name was Minnesota Conspiracy to Save Lives. And so as we go into the county jail, we don’t know who else got arrested. I’m with this one other guy, Mike—he and I were, you know—

KH: And this is after the raids in July of 1970, the Minnesota 8.

FK: Right, we really get arrested; we’re in the process I guess of going to jail, and we said, did they get anybody else? There was fourteen of us, right? So they ended up getting eight then. We could hear those guys coming in. Brad Beneke screaming and yelling, saying things to the guys, whatever, so it was like, okay. So in the morning we find out that there’s eight of us.

KH: So the Beaver 55 raids were successful in that none of—nobody got caught.

FK: Nobody has ever been caught, never been prosecuted.

KH: And, as you were saying earlier, I think it might have been before we had the recorder on, that Colonel Knight, who was the head of the—

FK: Selective Service in Minnesota.

KH: Selective Service in Minnesota said that that probably affected their operations for at least—

FK: He said a half a year, but we know we had done more damage than that. So here’s a little part of that story. They don’t normally put the Selective Service Director’s office in the same building with draft offices, but this one—had it—he was two floors up. So three of us go up there. Brad was with me, I think, Charlie Turchick and they’re spray painting Nixon and Agnew and doing all this crazy shit and I sit down at his desk and open up his desk drawer and oh, my god! Here’s all the official stamps, you know, 1A’s, IO, whatever, and blank draft cards. I mean he’s the last resort, right?

So we take all of these blank draft cards and all of these stamps and everything like that and I take them up to Toronto, Canada, and the guys up there made me sit down outside in this hallway and they didn’t know whether I was a plant, whether I was an FBI stoolie or whatever, but eventually I left them up there. Now how do I know that that was effective and kept guys back? Years later, when I’m out in California after the Minnesota 8 and I get married. I’m living in Oakland, California, by Mills College and the FBI comes to visit. It’s been years, knock on the door. What do you guys want? Well, we’re looking for this guy, Karl Armstrong, who blew up the—Madison, right? We think he has one of your cards so we think you know where he is. So it was an example that people actually used the cards to get back into the United States. But we weren’t particularly, I mean, I went down to his trial and I basically tried to make a difference between what he did and what we did, you know, because he—

KH: He did the Army Math Research Center bombing.
FK: Right, he blew up something and killed somebody. That’s pretty heavy duty stuff to carry but anyway—and I’d never met him. Of course, they thought we were buddies because I came down to the trial and he ends up having one of these draft cards. It’s official and it says 1F, 1Y, whatever you want to be.

KH: And that brings me to another question and I know you have written about it in various places. What was your view of the role of violence or nonviolence in the movement?

FK: Well, for the draft raids, we kept trying to talk about symbolic violence and that’s why we disagreed with the Weathermen, you know. I had long screaming matches with those guys. They wanted to go and yelled, you’re just a middle class stooge, Frank, you know, we should burn down the draft offices, not just destroy the 1-A files. And we said No, no, we’re doing symbolic, you know, we’re trying to get—make them raise their consciousness; you start destroying property you become an arsonist and the average person doesn’t want their home burned down, so it doesn’t have the impact. Oh, we’d have these big fights; verbal fights over this stuff. So for me it was symbolic.

KH: So symbolic and there’s a long tradition of civil disobedience to achieve a higher good—

FK: Right, right.

KH: I mean, the civil rights movement is based on that—

FK: Yeah, that’s part of that.

KH: To a huge degree. So is that how you saw what you were doing?

FK: Yes, we were back to Thoreau. The whole idea was in the American tradition of where people say, the government isn’t perfect. Citizens have to act and we need to make people aware of this and what the war is really doing. So eventually we came to find out what’s really happening and that it’s not out to save democracy or to do anything for the American people—it’s much crasser than that as most wars are, you know, they save oil or they save whatever.

KH: Okay. So let’s talk about the Minnesota 8 specifically here for a little bit.

FK: Okay.

KH: I read most of your—I guess it’s a memoir, Patriotism—

FK: Means Resistance, right.

KH: In which you, at one point, give a real character profile of the eight of you. I think it was all eight of you, not the people who didn’t get caught.

FK: Right.
KH: How did—tell me a little bit about how you all came together, the eight of you.

FK: Well, if you put us in a room, we all laugh and say the only thing we ever agreed on was raiding draft boards. We just argued about everything. Like Bill Tilton was at one end of the spectrum and I’m at the other one. Bill’s experience of prison was different, too, so he talks about it differently. I always like to have Bill around because it gives people a spectrum of how we responded to things. And given my Catholic background, I mean, in the beginning, I call it “socio/political/sacramental acts”. And most non-religious people go, what the hell is that about?

KH: Yeah, what do you mean? What did you mean by that?

FK: Well, in other words, in this society, when you turn eighteen, you have to register for the draft. I was in my monk’s robes, Franciscan monks’ robes and the master comes to me and says, Friar, come with me. And back then, you stopped exactly what you were doing and you walked away with him. He takes me down to this post office outside of the monastery in Hanover, Indiana, and it’s a post office and they have this stuff to register for the draft. I don’t think twice about it. I’m filling this stuff out and he says, “Are you a conscientious objector?” And I say, “Master, what’s a conscientious objector?” And I remember he said, “Later, Friar, later.” And he wasn’t as tall as I was but I was like, Okay, so I signed up. I had no idea. I had never heard the phrase before, conscientious objector.

So what do I—in my senior year in St. John’s, Jim Hunt was my classmate and we lived together and his brother, Bill Hunt, was a priest in the Saint Paul Diocese, but he’d also been what’s was called a peritus or an expert at Vatican II. And Bill actually got appointed by the bishop to take [the Newman Center] over because when we got kicked out he was supposed to straighten everything out—well, he ended up leaving and marrying this former nun. He’s a really good guy. But where were we going?

KH: Why you called the raids a sacramental act.

FK: Oh yeah, so for me, it’s like, what the hell am I doing? Well, a sacrament—in the sacrament, there’s a symbol. So you take the Eucharist and it’s a symbol for most Protestants. For Catholics it really becomes the body and blood of Christ. How does that happen? That’s pretty weird because it still looks like a wafer, right? And so, you know, people have been arguing over that for centuries, since—so the draft raids were sort of the same thing. I mean, I could stand up at Coffman Union; I could take the Eucharist and I could take hundreds of them and break them up and throw them on the ground and nothing’s going to happen to me. And people may boo, you know, priests may come and want to do something or whatever. But I take a draft card, I hold it up and I burn it and like I said, people come in helicopters, they jump out of trees and they come and arrest people. I’d seen them to do that, you know, when I was in California. They’d come into the crowd and arrest the guys who were burning draft cards.

So but at that point in time the draft card had importance it doesn’t have right now, even though, it does have the—you still can’t do that. But in public people were burning draft cards and so I mean, it was really—I mean the prosecutor accused me of creating the eighth sacrament.
KH: Yeah, I read that.

FK: So anyway. And I understand what he was thinking. I mean, it was hard for, you know, Catholics, they’re used to sacraments were these personal things, monks shouldn’t marry; baptism. Socio/political is an act that is a testimony to society and the politics of the time, just starting—and you say, yeah, this is more important than the Eucharist. If I burn it, they’re going to send me to prison, right? If I desecrate any religious symbol of any denomination, they’re not going to send me to prison.

KH: Right, okay. Oh, so back to the eight of you. So some of you, some of the eight of you had been involved in the—

FK: Beaver 55.

KH: And you said earlier, a couple of times, and I think it was Brad who’d said, Oh, come on, Frank, let’s do one—let’s do one, let’s do some more—

FK: Brad was part of the 55.

KH: Before you do something, right? So you get to stick around—

FK: In the video that we did around the play, Don Olson says they—he didn’t even have a chance to destroy draft cards and Pete Simmons was the youngest guy. Don is six months older than me so Don was the oldest guy. And Don had been the head of Students—I forget what it was called—it was like Selective Service or something like that. Anyway, so like I said, wherever they were coming from, and Charlie Turchick’s Jewish—his father was a cantor—he has his own—he continues all these years, you know, to deal with this issue. And you know, Brad came from sort of a sort of very Protestant, less religious point of view and I was in the group. In that group of the Minnesota 8, I’m the weirdest guy, but Mike and I had the only trial where we were actually able to present a defense. And I called witnesses, which the other guys didn’t have a chance to do.

KH: So the eight of you—you’re at these meetings that you had described, where people were just coming to talk about, Okay, well, what do we do next? How—do you remember—and some of these details you may not remember and that’s okay, do you remember how it was decided who would go to which place? You were in Little Falls, you and Mike.

FK: Yeah, Mike and I—no, they just—I mention this in the little video about the play. We wanted to create a ring of fire. The idea was we had done Minneapolis, St. Paul, so we wanted to get these different places that were around, you know, and call it the ring of fire, make a joke about early marketing. So Little Falls and what was the other one up there? Little Falls and—?

KH: Alexandria?

FK: Alexandria, right. And then, you know, we were supposed to do down here—there was LaCrosse.
KH: Winona.

FK: Winona.

KH: And the one that doesn’t get, nobody does get caught is in Wabasha.

FK: Yeah, right.

KH: And so there is a raid that gets pulled off and nobody’s arrested—

FK: Right, and women were involved.

KH: Okay.

FK: And people used to say, well, no women—I could say, well, I’m not going to say anything but there were two women involved in the raids. So that’s what we do, friends and I, we get together, we laugh, because she never had to do time, which was fine by us. And she’s still a very dedicated Quaker, she’s an activist, so—

KH: Okay, so do you—? The plan you’re going to do at least three, four. Four raids. And I think you said one got called off because they went and figured out something was up and so they—so five planned raids at least—

FK: Yes.

KH: As part of this activity in July 1970.

FK: Right.

KH: Had you gone, I mean, how do you pull this off? You’re not—well, of course, by this time you are—you have a history; you’ve been part of the Beaver 55; you’d been doing other draft board raids. Do you go and like case the joint? Okay, that’s TV talk I know.

FK: No, no, because here’s what you do. You sort of look at the area and somebody does it. We did it this way that people cased the joint or cased the board and then different people raided it.

KH: Oh, okay.

FK: So that they tried to control that.

KH: Okay, all right. So tell me about the actual break-in. What do you remember of it?

FK: Well, I remember I had my mother’s car which she later—she was traveling, yeah, and she had to go get it from—the FBI had impounded it. Hey, Mom, guess what I did this weekend?
Yeah, your car is in the St. Paul Police impound lot. After that, my mother, a lifelong Republican, both my mother and my father, right?

**KH:** How did you—well, I’ll get to that later.

**FK:** And so were Brad’s parents. Brad’s parents were head of the Republican State Committee, I mean, they were very involved with Republican state politics, but my dad was—there used to be a liberal part of the Republican Party that he was a part of, how it is today, I doubt he’d be Republican, but—

**KH:** So back to the night of the break-in.

**FK:** So we drive up there and in case we were being tailed, we drive up the Mississippi side of Minnesota, like to Stillwater and then we cut over and go up, you know, to Little Falls. So we get there and, you know, we’ve got some blow torches and different things in bags and stuff and so we park in this alley way, no one seems to be—we wait a while to see if anybody sees us; if anybody’s coming around. Then Mike goes up and the window’s open so that’s fortuitous, right? On the one hand, little did we know, right? So we move this plant and climb in and I climb in and we go around and the door to the Selective Service is open. This is really great; we didn’t have to break in or do any weird shit, right? So Mike goes over to the left and he says, “Oh, the cabinets are locked.” That was a little unusual. So we go to another one and Mike says, “I think I hear some noises.” And I said, “No, don’t worry about it; it’s just the street.” So he’s trying to open up this top cabinet and then there’s these guns pointed at us from the darkness. We don’t see the people; we just see the gun. Don’t move or we’ll kill you.

So, like I said, we go to Plan B—we never had a Plan B so I have no idea what Plan B is. So being really—and part of the time being the extrovert and all this other weird shit, I don’t know how you explain it. I go to them and I said, “You’ve got nothing to fear from us and we’ve got nothing to fear from you.” Yeah, right. So they come in, okay, and cuff us and put us up against the wall and Mike’s, what’s happened? What’s going on? Mike’s a really quiet guy; he doesn’t talk it through. I don’t know. So then they take us back in separate cars and I said, “Can you at least put me in the front so I’m more comfortable?” Because we were going to drive from Little Falls to Minneapolis or St. Paul. I mean, at the time, I really didn’t know. So, they said, Of course, so I start talking. Then I realize this one guy is writing it down and I said, “Are you writing down everything I’m saying?” And he said, “Yes,” so I said, “Well, fuck you. Then I’m not going to say anything.” So we just sat down and we drove down to St. Paul and they drove us to the St. Paul jail. We went and got fingerprinted and all this other crazy stuff.

I mean, if we were not white guys we might have been shot or beaten up or something, you know, at that time, the fact that we were white guys helped a lot. Now we know that in retrospect.

**KH:** And you said that the FBI and various local police forces had been waiting or watching other draft boards in other communities where there was no—

**FK:** Found that out later on, yeah, right.
KH: So how—now, and you said, too, that after the Beaver 55, Hoover is not happy and so he kind of floods the area with agents so they’re already here. They know there is stuff going on, but how do you think—? Do you have any idea about how they found out about these particular raids?

FK: Yeah, we actually talked to the—some guy got busted for drugs and he turned us in—he’d been in some of these meetings with us.

KH: Okay.

FK: Now that’s why I laugh at us; we were so clever. But, you know, we all made an agreement and we’re not going to pursue that. We’re not going to get the community all paranoid and it was like, yeah, we got arrested, so it happened, however it happened, you know, so let’s move forward. So then events sort of take over. It’s that there’s all this protest that’s going on and also we find out we’re sort of like the powder keg; the little fuse that started the powder keg. All these things start happening; people saying stuff and—

KH: The Committee to Defend the Eight forms.

FK: Right, just instantly, right, and they raise money and stuff so we spend the time and then the trial comes along and so we get these sentences. So at the trial, one day Ken Tilsen—he and I are co-counsels—one day he says, “Frank, you know, there’s a guy named Daniel Ellsberg, is coming from the—he used to work for the government.” And some movement heavyweight said, told Ken to sort of listen to this guy. What’s he going to say? Oh, he’s got information; we had no idea. So when he comes and we meet him and he’s all, you know, super straight, in a suit and—so this is a little aside:

At one point, I had mentioned that Garrison Keillor and I, who’s now in the news for other reasons, are like, we know each other. Garrison, after the Beaver 55 action, you know, wanted people to—I came on his show and talked and got to know him and stuff so he was going through this series of wives. So at that point, Ellsberg says, “Garrison Keillor? Oh, my wife Pat really loves him.” I said, “Do you want to meet him?” He said, “Sure,” so I set up for these two guys to meet at Garrison’s house—that’s another whole story—because they’re just absolute opposites. You know, the big, sloppy guy with the red socks and there’s Ellsberg who shaves three times a day and we go into his hotel room and he’s got three TVs, different networks. He’s—we still don’t know what this guy’s going to do. Well, why is he at the trial?

So when he gets on the stand, of course, the government knows why he’s there. We don’t know. And so they basically—he doesn’t say anything. The judge shuts him down. Ellsberg was always—so the real story was our biggest impact was on Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg had been traveling—he’d been to Vietnam twice as an officer so he knew—and he knew all about—so one time somebody said, Why don’t they just kill you? We were all out in Berkeley having dinner and he said, “Well, they don’t know what I know about nuclear warfare.” So what he did in Vietnam, the Vietnam stuff, Pentagon Papers is nothing. What they were afraid of with him is that if someone kills him, he’s told someone like me or somebody else and they have all these
papers about our nuclear strategy which is becoming—people are becoming more aware of right now than they were.

**KH:** Isn’t that interesting? So, yeah, okay—

**FK:** So we go back east and Brad and I are traveling and we ask Dan can we stay at his place in Cambridge, which we can—which is a whole other interesting story—and the Pentagon Papers get released. Is this what you were going to do? “Oh, yeah, Frank, this is what we’re going to do.” Well, we would have got fifteen years in prison, right? So he goes to trial, facing one hundred and five years which is what he was afraid of but he had been turned by us and by War Resisters League people. The early book that he wrote, Papers on the War, I’m one of the people that he dedicates it to.

So we’d had many, many long conversations which I’m sure at one point were tape recorded, but I didn’t know about that at the time.

**KH:** So what was the reaction—either your own—you mentioned earlier, you know, that you had self-doubt—

**FK:** Oh, all the time.

**KH:** That you had no intention of getting arrested and you aren’t—

**FK:** No, I was going to travel around the country and visit communes and write a book on my academic side.

**KH:** Yeah, so what was your—like how are you feeling now that you’ve been arrested?

**FK:** Well, it was like, Oops! Here we are and then we go on trial and they gave us five years. I mean, I was the attorney pro se so I had opening arguments, closing arguments, I have all this stuff, right? And sort of like, you know, we knew that we were going to get—I’d opened the trial, in front of the jury and I said, “We did it and I want to tell you why.” I wasn’t trying to get off. Well, we knew we wouldn’t get off anyway so it was like I wanted people to understand. I don’t know—this is the hard part to explain to people is that it’s like guys and women who go to war. I mean, you’re in the midst of all of this craziness going on and you do the best you can. Later on, you say, what the hell was I thinking when I was doing that? Or why did I join up? I have a good friend—she joined—she was in the Iraq war—and she joined up because she wanted to become a medical person and they—she never got close to it so—

**KH:** So what was it—do you remember the reaction of somebody like, say, your mom, whose car is now—?

**FK:** My mother was like, Francis did what? I don’t know that boy; he’s always getting in trouble. I left the seminary and stuff, she would tell me, I love my son; that’s why I’m here. I don’t necessarily have to agree with his politics—we’re always on opposite ends. She never could understand hippies and all that type of stuff—free love, all that. She’s from a different
generation and then she had a husband who, you know, joined the military and then she went through all that stuff.

**KH:** What about your siblings? How did they respond to this?

**FK:** Only my sister Rita was really supportive of me. The other ones would say like, Yeah, I had a brother; he did that type of stuff. You know, in one sense, they were all supportive in that they were not not supportive, so they didn’t, you know, do anything to sort of oppose what I was doing but like did they understand it? No. Because all this theological stuff that I talked about, what did it mean? Not much.

You see, part of the problem of being an activist is that, even now when you meet people, they feel bad because they didn’t do something. But I say, well, you know, a lot of it’s just like accidental. If Gordy Nielsen hadn’t walked into my room and challenged me I would have finished my alternative service and gone back to teaching. That’s all I ever wanted to do.

So after I get out of jail I go to Berkeley and finish my doctorate at the Graduate Theological Union. I mean, I’m ready to take my comprehensives—just did my research, my dissertation. I mean, I did my comprehensive and did orals; did all that stuff, right. I was an oddball there, too, because I was studying prisons. And there’s a very famous American theologian named John Dillenberger and he was president of the Graduate Theological Union at the time. I said, John, why isn’t there—I can’t find any research on prisons? So he said, I don’t know. Healthcare, everything else but, you know, but the prison system. I mean I was the only guy sitting and reading about it so most of my advisers didn’t know what to advise me to do because there was not much written about it at the time.

And there’s very little written about it from the sort of real theological perspective, I mean, American—it was the American enlightenment, which is, as you know, a very strange little period, a blip so to speak in our culture. And they thought they were setting up—that’s why they call it the penitentiary—it’s a theological concept of penitence, you know, people were going to go through the system and come out better. And they’d get back and become good citizens. Didn’t work. So by the time they built the first penitentiary, which was Eastern States Penitentiary in Philadelphia, everything had been rejected that the early people thought about.

So we still have—most Americans thought if you go to prison you’re going to come out a better person and then we’d tell them, No, people go to prison three, four, five times—nothing ever happens. I mean, I’ve been very fortunate that there’s been a cultural shift. I’m an ex-con and I’m still considered a violent felon by law and the amnesty that Jimmy Carter gave to draft resisters, we get a letter saying, not you guys, which is fine. We didn’t want to say it didn’t happen.

**KH:** So—what about the response from other Catholics with whom you had been—?

**FK:** Well, you know, basically, my understanding of prison led me to sort of get involved with the feminist movement and so I look at my masculinity different. I’m not, in a sense, not afraid to affirm my feminine side. If you’re related to me, I’m a very old style guy. I open doors
for women; and I—even if I go out with women who make more money than I do, I like to pay for lunch. I mean, the feminine—the real issue in our culture is the masculine and the feminine. The feminine can be strong and can be warlike, too. You’ve got Athena, you’ve got all these other examples of strong feminine power. That’s why a lot of women right now have joined the military. In fact, the biggest shift for me is like when the play came out, the people I got to speak—Coleen Rowley, do you know who she is?

KH: Unh-uh.

FK: She’s one of the three FBI agents. She was on the cover of Time magazine, right?

KH: Oh, yeah.

FK: Coleen Rowley. She lives up in the Minneapolis area. I mean, she’s an FBI agent, but she thought that Bush II was a nut case and then there’s this Colonel Ann Wright. She was, again, she had worked for Colin Powell, and she was a poster child for women in the military. She came out against what they were doing, too. She said to me, “Frank, you realize that we study war and the alternatives to war more than anybody. It’s just that they’re still promoting people with battlefield experience.” So she made me aware that in the military there’s this huge number of people who think fighting a war like World War II, first of all, is never going to happen again and it would be the world war to fight and that, you know, there’s other things besides killing one another, to solve problems.

At the same time, recognizing that—like I tell people, nobody’s as unromantic about inmates as I am. I mean, I’ve had people steal things, come out of prison, stay with me and steal my typewriter, saying, I need this more than you. You know, there’s a mindset. So I know inmates who are just human beings; they’re just guys, you know, and of course then there are women, too, but which I eventually met in my other work which I was doing for the Quakers but, you know, I’m a real big advocate for reforming the prison system because it’s a mess. And so I think our military is a mess.

KH: So I’m going to come back to the prison experience—because you were in Sandstone, so I want to ask you a couple things about that. But let’s back up just one step prior to that and we’ve talked a bit about the trial. So there were three separate trials.

FK: Yeah, and why were there three separate trials? Because the Chicago 8 had thrown mud on the face of the other one, so they had decided not to consolidate.

KH: And keep you separate.

FK: Right.

KH: And so you and Mike—

FK: Just accidentally were in Philip Neville’s—
KH: Right, and there were originally—okay, so it was just you and Mike—

FK: Two other trials on the docket.

KH: So you appear before Judge Neville. How would you describe him as a judge?

FK: Well, in one sense, you know—Devitt basically made up his mind before everything started and simply said, you guys have nothing—you broke in and entered, that’s all I want to talk about. This stuff about the war is a bunch of bullshit. Okay, Neville gets the same results but in a different way. He basically says, Talk, say whatever you want until it’s over. I’m going to throw it out and send you guys to prison anyway.

KH: So you think he knew that—

FK: Oh, sure.

KH: In advance?

FK: And Devitt actually sentenced the other guys before our trial began which was very unusual. It sent a message. He was the head of the federal district—it sent a message to Neville that, you know, you better find these guys guilty. So in my case, I don’t know how much you read, after we make our presentation, Ken Tilsen, who was my co-counsel, we decided just to go down to the cafeteria in the building we were in because we expected them to come back summarily. So we were there an hour. Not unusual, but it was a little bit longer than we thought but then we get called back in. And we’re sitting there and one of the jurors tugs on the pants leg of the—what do you call the person who speaks on behalf of the jury?

KH: Oh, the foreman.

FK: Foreman, yeah. And they whispered something to each other and he stands up and he’s holding copies of the Vatican Council II and he said to Judge Neville, “Can we read the documents of Vatican Council II?” Now, Neville was physically a laid back type of guy; he let everybody talk. That was his idea—talk all you want; say whatever you want and then I’ll throw it out. Neville gets up and said, [shouting] “You cannot read the documents of Vatican Council II!” just like that. And everybody in the court, like his hair raises; the people get off—he just like, Wow—so of course, they realized. So we found out later than they were split fifty-fifty. The people were reading—these were mostly Protestants; but they read the documents of Vatican II, and all the things I had underlined, about condemnation of total warfare, all this other stuff. So they come back in like twenty more minutes and then, of course, they say, Okay, we find the defendants guilty on all counts. And I tell people—I kind of fell through a hole in the universe—I spoke my message. I said what needed to be said. I gave testimony and then I, you know, who I am is really—it is true I mean none of it is relevant to—I mean, the war goes on, you say what you say.

KH: Because you, acting as your own attorney—
FK: Right.

KH: Had brought in all of the documents of Vatican II, entered into evidence—

FK: Testimony from priests, Vietnam veterans, you know, sociologists who’d gone to Vietnam.

KH: Dan Ellsberg was there; Staughton Lynd, I mean, you—

FK: That’s right.

KH: As opposed to Devitt’s courtroom, Neville did allow all this stuff to come in.

FK: Oh, yeah, right, so here’s the deal. I opened the argument; I explained what I am going to do; I have the jurors now—if you’ve ever been to a trial, you can’t answer the jurors’ questions. You don’t know if they’re following you or not or if they’re out in la la land playing tic-tac-toe, I don’t know. So I fully expect he’s not going to allow me to go to closing argument. Plus, normally, if you go to closing argument, the jury takes that in and it’s in the closing argument and you sum everything up and tell them what you think and they’re supposed to go in and mull it over.

So I do closing—he says, Frank, you’re going to closing argument. Great, I go to closing argument and then he says— (phone rings)

Pause in recording

KH: So we were talking about closing arguments.

FK: Oh yeah, right. So, you know, if you read the transcript I have opening arguments; I do witnesses; closing arguments and then in instructions to the jury, he throws it out. So the jury has nothing to consider so the jury goes back and, of course, they’re human beings so they’ve listened to this maniac, me, talk for, you know, seven days, a whole week and they get all of these documentations and they’ve been reading them. And I’m very fortunate in retrospect that people were reading things and thinking and paying attention. I mean, there’s no doubt about the fact that by the legal standards we were guilty. I wasn’t expecting to be let free but I also—it was sort of a curve ball when he let me go to closing argument because that’s usually what you give the jury to take into the deliberation room and then they make a decision.

So then he comes to the sentencing. Now, the other guys, like I said, they didn’t have—they only could testify for themselves. They had no witnesses so when they—they expected their appeals to be summarily dismissed, which they were. So I don’t know, January, February, sometime around then, they go into jail, right? So Mike and I were—I went down to St. Louis and argued in front of the appellate court and, of course, I’m expecting—my life’s on hold. Everything’s in boxes and I’m waiting to go to the jail so the first month goes by but that’s not so odd. But by the second month, I’m beginning to get a little annoyed—I can’t do anything. I can’t meet a girl and say, “Let’s have a relationship; I’m going to prison for five years,” you know.
But it’s then the third month. Nothing’s happening. We go to the mail every day, you know, trying to see if a decision’s been made. So I decided to do a couple things. That’s when I put all this information together that we put in the Minnesota Historical Society. I started writing about it; collecting stuff. I do that and we’re in the fourth month. What the hell is going on? Nothing is—we’re not getting any decision.

The other guys have already served four months in prison, right?

KH: Yeah.

FK: Mike and I are sitting out there—lives on hold. It’s the worst part of the whole deal. So I decide—this is again, laughable, because it’s before the Internet and everything, so I dressed up as a Catholic priest. Like I said, you know what? I look like a Catholic priest naked. So I go to these jails—I go to visit the guys. I go to Milan, Michigan; I go to Ashland, Kentucky. I put on my collar, you know, that I—now I’m at the Newman Center, so I’ve got access to all this stuff. They’re a little suspicious of who I am but I got a chance—I even went to Sandstone to visit people up there. I had a friend from another group called the Milwaukee 14, Father Joe Mulligan, and I said, “Hey, Joe, what’s it like in here? What am I getting into?” And so, you know, basically, the guys, it’s dull; it’s boring, blah-blah.

So then I go back to Minnesota and the fifth month comes and still nothing’s happening. So I start writing stuff and I put all this stuff in the Minnesota Historical Society and finally, six months out, we get a notice that we’re supposed to go in. So what happened? And I only find out after I get out of Sandstone, I’m working on the Wounded Knee Defense Committee, and I go to visit this young lawyer, whose name unfortunately, right now I’m forgetting. She’ll kill me. And I knocked on her door and I say—I hear something I never want to hear. “Frank Kroncke, I’m really glad to meet you.” So I go in and find out that she was the clerk to the judge, the head of the appellate court, Judge Heaney, was from the Duluth area. And she and all the young lawyers felt that we had, you know, the appeal should have—we should have got a new trial, that they had made procedural errors and stuff. But of course, there was politics.

So evidently this Judge Heaney, who may be dead now for all I know, he waited as long as he could then finally, five months later, we get the decision and we had to go to jail. Thank god, something’s happening, you know.

KH: So there was no specific reason that it took him that long.

FK: Well, I think he was waiting for the war to end or something so it would become a non-issue. I mean, the rumors were that the people who were doing draft resistance, not draft raids, draft resistance, that judges were giving them six months whatever, so they’d do like three or four. There’s even some guy, remember the story—the judge told him, Go and sit outside of the court on the bench and at the end of the day he sent him home. He said, Okay, go home. I mean, we had the highest amount of draft resisters of any state in the nation but—this was in the newspaper—but over half of the cases were draft related. So, you know, the judges were tired of sending young men off to jail so—in our case, off we go, starting five years.
KH: And so—on what grounds did you appeal?

FK: It’s called a defense of necessity—to commit—this is where you get back to that idea that you know, you steal a car to take a pregnant woman to the hospital, all these sort of vague and very controversial cases in the legal system. So we had what’s called the defense of necessity. It was necessary to commit a crime to avoid a bigger disaster. Well, that didn’t get us very far, but anyway.

KH: So that doesn’t work in the trial with Neville, right?

FK: Right.

KH: Right, so you’re convicted anyway but you can’t go to the appeals court right, and say well, we’re going to try this defense again? It already didn’t work so was it just procedural issues then, do you remember?

FK: Well, we argued that the jury should have heard this.

KH: Oh, okay.

FK: The jury really should have heard it and they didn’t. But the judge didn’t put it in front of the jury.

KH: Okay.

FK: So anyway, when we go into prison, Mike and I, we’re six months behind the other guys—some of whom I visited in prison so I knew what it was like in there, so—

KH: And this was ’72 by the time your appeal’s—

FK: Yeah, right, so we’re waiting for all of this stuff to unfold and then our sentencing—Neville did our sentence that we had to serve a year before we went to the parole board so it was a one-year sentence.

KH: Okay.

FK: And I don’t know, five years—I don’t know what the deal was but the other guys went up right away to the parole board—this is what they do and they just knocked them down so they thought they were doing five years. So we—Mike and I go and we were following these other guys by half a year. There’s a rule of thumb—equal time, equal crime—and so—an inside prison rule of thumb. So we’re waiting to see what happens to the other guys, right? So we’re pro forma, you know, at the end of the year we go up to the parole board and, Will you do it again? Probably, you know. So, I can still see Mike walking across the yard, waving this and saying, “Hey, Frank, we’re getting out of here in sixty days,” or something—I can’t remember what it was. And I said, “What?” Yeah, so here he’s got this thing—we’re paroled.
KH: So you and Mike were both in Sandstone?

FK: We were both in Sandstone together. They moved some other guys—so Sandstone had about almost thirty guys there for antiwar stuff, Gutknecht was there. David Gutknecht’s another famous case. Nixon was trying to get everybody in prison that he could and then this thing kind of backfired on him. So Mike—we’re supposed to get out of prison but the other guys had done six more months than us. It doesn’t make sense. So Charlie Turchick immediately gets on the horn, calls Ken Tilsen, who was alive then, and says, you know, you’ve got to file something on our behalf. So all of a sudden, they never go back to the parole board—they never go back to a hearing, these other guys. They all get a letter saying you’re getting out the same day Mike and I get out. So the same, day in June, June thirteenth, something like that, we all get out of Sandstone and the other guys get out.

KH: And that’s ’73 by that time, okay.

FK: So the other guys served six more months than Mike and I and it was like, that’s weird.

KH: Yeah, so what was your prison experience like? So you were there for a couple years?

FK: Fourteen months total.

KH: Fourteen months, okay.

FK: Yeah. Well one of the other things that happened in prison was that at that time they had a director of education and he calls me in and he says, “Frank, I have a grant for the Write to Read program so we can send some inmates out to the local elementary school. I want you to help me screen people.” So I told him after—I mean, the drug people were not going to fly with people outside the jail; the Mafia people who were the next best educated weren’t going to fly. So I said, Charlie Turchick’s perfect. You know, he’s educated; he graduated from the University with a degree in philosophy. The guy looks at me and he says, “I want you to go.” What? “Yeah, I’ve decided you’re the one that’s going to go, Frank.”

So I go to Sandstone elementary school. The teachers are the wives of the guards. I mean, I get up every morning for six months; I take off my prison khakis; I wear normal clothes. The guards are hating me; something they hate in the jail all this time doing it, so I get out. I go out. I come back at the end of the day. I have to get stripped naked again, put on my inmate’s stuff, go back to the yard. “Kroncke, go back and cut your mustache. It’s too long.” You know, they hated the fact that an inmate was going into the local educational, the local elementary school (phone rings). Excuse me, I didn’t want to get calls.

*Brief pause*

So where were we?

KH: So you were talking about the guards not liking that you were going out to teach.
FK: Oh, yeah, they hated it because I was teaching their kids. I mean, they go home to justify that they’re protecting the world from these bad ass guys and here’s a guy that the kids are liking, as a teacher. I love teaching so, you know, I have all these kids that are the hard cases for the teachers and so I’d come up with a strategy to get them to start writing stories about what they’re talking about. Well, they start out writing one or two sentences and by the time we’re finished with them, they’re writing pages. Well, you know, I enabled them to talk about what they thought was important and I’d accept it and then we’d talk about it so they learned to read. It was the Write to Read program. It was to help them learn to read.

So I’m out there I get attacked by the John Birch Society. There’s an article in the John Birch Society, “Erstwhile Criminal, Francis Kroncke is Teaching.” So they have a meeting of all the local people and they all agree that I can continue teaching.

KH: You were very popular. At that meeting, they were overwhelmingly supportive of you.

FK: Yeah it was, and Peggy Cahoon, was the principal. She became a friend of mine. So they’re all perplexed. How can this guy be a criminal? Frank Kroncke, right?

KH: So what—you said how many other draft resisters or antiwar people were up there?

FK: Oh, we had almost thirty-five.

KH: Thirty-five? And you were saying that the guards were not happy with you for being released. Do you think that was because—they would have had the same reaction to any inmate going out or did the officers, the correctional officers, have a specific attitude towards you because of your antiwar stance?

FK: Yeah, they did. So when I go to Sandstone from the county jail, Hennepin County jail, I go through [Admission and] Orientation. You take off your civvies and get your prison stuff and you take a shower and then they come with the sprayer, like they’re spraying bugs and you have to lift your arms, spread your legs and the crack in your butt and you put on the khaki clothes. Then they take me too solitary, which instead of being solitary, like you think of as a hole—it’s this pastel blue room with a bed and all this stuff and part of my story is I go crazy. You know, I don’t want pastel blue; I want dark black, I want pain, you know; I want to—I mean this was all just this mind fuck stuff, right?

So I’m there for like a week and then they—a couple guys come and get me and they start saying, you’re a resister. You going to resist? I’m looking at them like, I mean, I’m in jail. I’m not on the outside anymore. So I’m in this room—they take me down to this room and in the room is the assistant warden; there’s about five different guys there—the head of the guards, big guy—and this one guy—they were talking about something and I said, “You want to know what I think?” Absolute silence. That’s what they were there for. What are you going to do, Frank? Let me think about this and this one guard leans over the table—I can remember him looking at me. I tried to stand up and two guys put their arms on my shoulders and down. I’m supposed to sit down. And he said, “I know how you think Kroncke.” You know, so it’s like, okay, so I said,
“I don’t plan to do anything.” “Well, you better not do anything here. You’ll be spending twenty-five years in jail.” And all that bullshit stuff and so they do that and then they take me into this admission orientation dorm which is to get into the main dorm and one of the guys, Brad Beneke, comes in to pick me up, because if you don’t say this is my guy, you know, he could get fucked or something. So he said, “Frank, what did you do? The rumor is that you’re telling, you’re talking.” “No.” So he, “That’s not what—”

So I go back in the population and the guys are all like, why were you up in solitary? They weren’t quite sure whether I was spilling beans or telling them the other guys were doing stuff so—

KH: So you’re getting hairy eyeballs to put it very lightly from both ends of the prison here.

FK: The full spectrum, right. And I used to just say, No, I’m just me.

KH: So who else from the Minnesota 8 was with you in Sandstone?

FK: Well, Brad Beneke was there; Mike Therriault was there; Charlie Turchick was there—

KH: Oh, okay. So half of you.

FK: Yeah, half of us, right.

KH: Okay.

FK: Bill was at Milan, Michigan; Brad had started out at Ashland, Kentucky, and somebody else was down in—Olson spent most of his time right outside of St. Louis. He was in jail there and Pete was out in—somewhere in Colorado at a youth facility.

KH: So you said earlier that each of you experienced prison differently.

FK: Oh, yeah, very differently.

KH: So how would you in general describe your response or your experience with prison?

FK: Well, this is how most guys deal—and it’s the way you deal with negative situations. You build a wall around of things that you acknowledge give you comfort. So some guys come in and they start reading and they have eight thousand books. Or, like my partner, he went over and he became part of the kitchen staff so that he could—now he was a vegetarian so he could eat what he wanted to eat and also gave him something to do. So part of what I tell people which is, you know, not trying to be overly dramatic about it, but I was just lost. I’d lost my church. I mean, after the trial the local bishop came out in a letter to all of the priests in the diocese saying, “I’m shocked that you allow a criminal—“I kept thinking was he wearing a crucifix. I mean, Frank Kroncke. And then he signed it, “Your Excellency, Archbishop Byrne.” I used some of that in the documents and—
So I went into prison basically, I didn’t have anything. I’m facing five years. On about the third visit, my girlfriend, Karen Clark, who comes and tells me, “I’ve been in Europe. I was in this women’s commune and I’m going to move into Bread and Roses.” That was the lesbian group so I knew where that was going. And like I said, she and I have remained friends. She’s a wonderful person. So there I am in the joint, don’t have my church; don’t have my country; don’t have a woman in my life—

KH: Family? Your family? Mom?

FK: Yeah, they visit, but they don’t know what to do. What are we going to do with Francis? You know, Francis is always doing weird stuff. I’m going to go visit my brother in prison. How many times are you going to tell people that, right? And they said I was going to be there for five years.

So while we’re in prison one day, Watergate happens. This is where the shift occurs. And so by the time we go back to the parole board, Watergate had happened and people were saying, why are we locking up these guys when the president’s a criminal? So there’s this huge oceanic shift in consciousness, you know. People still didn’t like to talk about Vietnam but the day they dumped us out and we get out and the movement was now basically women’s and a gay movement. It was feminism and civil rights, was there and antiwar stuff was there, but, you know—

KH: And well, because the war has ended by the time you’re out.

FK: Yeah.

KH: January of ’73; March of ’73 the troops come home.

FK: Yeah. Nixon’s saying everybody’s coming home. The war’s over so when I went out to Berkeley, you know, and worked for the American Friends Service Committee, that was sort of my last involvement in social justice stuff. I got—I went back and studied to get a doctorate. That didn’t work out; I went into business. I became very successful in sales, won all sorts of national awards and did all types of stuff so I took all that energy and I put it into selling encyclopedias. How’s that?

KH: What did you think about the end of the war given all of your years of thinking about it; opposing it; trying to stop it; going to prison because you tried to interfere with the system? Do you remember how you felt when you heard that the Paris Peace Accords had been signed and you’re in prison? What’s going through your mind?

FK: Right, you know, we were watching what was going on with Ellsberg, too. I mean, he was—I mean, the real thing—he’s one of the major players. He got the attention of the national people. So I did what I had to do. That’s sort of the way it is. I’m just a guy from Minnesota who’s in Minnesota, right? I mean, Ellsberg is the big shot. He’s the big—he’s on the big stage. He knows all these - McNamara and stuff so Dan and I became friends and like I said—I mean, if I called up he’d say, “Frank, oh, yeah, come visit me,” that type of thing. So it’s been a while
since I’ve seen him but I was out—when I got divorced I spent some time—he and I catching up on stuff.

KH: So after you get out of prison, you have just said that you had nothing when you were there, that you were feeling lost. The war ends in kind of this inglorious mess and it ends technically for Americans and continued in Vietnam for a couple more years. Were you—in the immediate aftermath of this experience for you, after you’re out of prison, maybe when you’re in school in California, are you looking back and thinking it was worth it?

FK: Yeah, I mean, people are—yeah, I tried to do a couple things. It’s like, you know, I tried to get people to understand that not everybody—when you look back on things you tell a story as if there was continuity. I had to do something so I felt it was worth it. I mean, you know, some people think I was a fool. So you go—I can understand that. Some people think I’m a hero? Okay, that’s fine.

KH: So tell me about—because it’s before I think your prison term—maybe even before the appeal decision has come down—when you start writing Patriotism Means Resistance.

FK: Right.

KH: So tell me, why did you sit down and decide to write that? I mean, you’re a writer, you’re an academic, you’re an intellectual anyway.

FK: Right. Well, I wanted to understand it myself, so part of that type of writing, you talk to yourself about things. And part of it also is I wanted to explain, you know, I didn’t have kids at the time. I have two boys now, but, you know, they’re—one of them’s going to be forty years old. God, talk about feeling old, and the other one’s thirty—just turned thirty-four. Eighty-three to seventy-four, okay, whatever. I wanted—a couple things I’ve been trying to do is like put it all behind me. It’s like, I mean, it’s obvious that you and I are talking about all this stuff because I have had this stroke and realized that I could be dead easily and so I’m trying to figure out what to do.

And most of the stuff—I mean, we’ve had the play. I didn’t want—I mean the play came as a total surprise to me. I didn’t want—Doris Baizley did the play and I’ve written some things and I’ve got about four published articles and one’s coming out probably in the spring. Basically I’m a teacher by temperament, an academic, so I don’t know. You know, when you have kids, you sort of get involved and you have to—I was married and so you have to provide a living and the only thing that would do that was sales. I was on commission-only sales and so—

KH: So when I was reading Patriotism Means Resistance, what struck me—one of the things that struck me about it was you talk about in there—when you’re talking about your goals for the trial and for representing yourself and you’re having this chance to speak to the jury and to the judge, to a lesser degree maybe. You’re really talking about trying to relate on a human, moral level rather than within the strict confines of the law.

FK: Right.
KH: And, of course, that didn’t work, in terms of the results at the trial.

FK: Yeah, right.

KH: But when you’re writing and granted, you’re still in the middle of it pretty much when you’re writing this. I mean, there’s such kind of passion and disappointment to me that it didn’t work. How, if at all, have your ideas about this whole experience changed over the years since then? Do you still carry that same kind of passion, the disappointment, however you would describe yourself, that you did at the time or have the intervening years affected your view of it at all?

FK: I’m a little more distanced. I mean, I think in the early part I thought I could make a change. So I thought like, you know, bishops would come out against the war, but when I look back I realize that all along I sort of knew that I just had to do what I had to do. It’s sort of like my mom would say, “Oh, that’s Francis.” You know, of all of her kids. “Yeah, I’ve got nine kids and they do this and then there’s Francis. Francis had to do this. I understand him. I love him.” Mom came to visit me in jail, you know, she was like in outer space, like what’s this all about. So here’s her son coming out in khakis and guards over there with guns.

KH: To see her son who was going to be a priest.

FK: To see her son who was going to be a priest, right. Little Francis, the nice one. So he can’t keep his mouth shut, though, he’s got to stand up there in court and say all those things so they gave him five years in prison. So some of what I did was more painful for the people who loved me than it was even for me and I realize that now. I mean, I realize it as a dad. You know, if my kids—I don’t want my kids to go through what I did. My kids are still trying to figure out their old man.

KH: Yeah.

FK: I mean, I have a good relationship with my boys but it’s like Dad’s Dad. It's funny.

KH: So what—where does this experience, by which I mean, not just the Minnesota 8, but as part of it, being part of the Beaver 55, these antiwar experiences, where do they fit into your overall life now?

FK: Well, it sort of explains a little bit of who I am. Like I said, when I had my stroke, I’m seventy-three. I was, in a sense, fortunate that I had it at the gym at the college so I was able—people took care of me right away—emergency medicine. I could have had the heart attack. I could have had the stroke inside my apartment and been there for ten days dead before anyone knew, ventured in to find me. I’m the type of guy, you know, I’ve got to move on. What am I doing now? That’s what’s more important, so I continue to write. I was teaching at Viterbo here when you run into this national problem of decline of population. They laid off a lot of us guys and I was an adjunct; I wasn’t on the permanent staff. So I’m back at a point trying to figure out what I should be doing, you know. I mean, writing is a little bit of it but my writing’s changed
quite a bit from when I was talking Catholic, as they used to joke, I talk Catholic. And now I
don’t do that, you know, as much.

And America is, you know, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, we’re still making the same mistakes, doing
all this stupid stuff. Trump’s president—that’s a real mind fuck, so—

**KH:** What advice, if any, would you give to young people today who are concerned about
their world and about these things?

**FK:** I’ve said this to my classes and when people like want to talk to me, I’ve said, “Just be
true to yourself. What do you want to do?” The thing, in the morning I had to wake up and look
at myself in the mirror because there was nobody else there; there was just me. Well, like now, in
marriage and stuff, am I a good husband? Do I love my wife? Do I treat my kids well? Do I, you
know? They’re not stuff that you read about in the paper or they’re not big stuff but what does an
individual do? Every now and then you have a chance, like the war came along. We might have
told our brothers the Vietnam War wasn’t part of their life. We might have been in the military
when nothing was going on. And his whole naval career was just shooting stuff out into the
Pacific Ocean and blowing it up and then writing down stuff. That was his navy experience,
right? And so my other brother didn’t even— he was an academic so he kept getting deferments
and then you were old enough—

My young son, who’s about to turn forty—sort of a little wake-up call—he’s an academic. He’s
doing good stuff. He’s got his own challenges. I mean, war is a very—throws all of society into
chaos.

**KH:** So it sounds like the things that you, at least as you describe them to me that you took
from—I’m not going to pronounce it right—Teilhard de Chardin

**FK:** Teilhard de Chardin, right.

**KH:** are still relevant—

**FK:** Oh, yes.

**KH:** To you in that everything you do does matter; it counts.

**FK:** It matters, right. And it doesn’t matter if you’re doing it on a big stage, so you have your
five minutes of fame as Andy Warhol said, or something like that or probably ten, fifteen or
whatever it is I’ve had the microphone; I’ve been on trial; I’ve been interviewed; I do all that
stuff but then, you know, it’s like marriage. And I go home and, do I care for my wife? Do I love
my wife? Am I a good dad? You know, those are the challenges. Some of this other stuff is, it’s
passed; it’s done; I did it, you know, the thing is what am I doing today and how do I treat you
and what do I think about you and that type of stuff.

**KH:** Well, is there anything else, Frank, that you think we should talk about or that you want
to get on the record, so to speak, before we wrap it up?
**FK:** Well, I think a lot of us in the antiwar movement are like a lot of the veterans coming back from Vietnam. We’re still trying to figure it out. Because in one of the, what was it? Tom Trow did the thing on the play and the guy who played me, Nicholas, he says, you know, he’s still trying to figure out the Vietnam War. Well, a lot of us are still—because the war keeps going on; it mutates; it does things, you know. The thing is, the biggest difficulty is how people lie to you. So like if I meet other religious people and I say, you know, “I did what I did because if Jesus was here, he certainly wouldn’t have gone to the war.”

And there really is a feminization and part of this whole, part of my whole story is the emergence of the feminine that meets the masculine as well as just women. I mean, you don’t have to be religious. In one sense, Jesus was not a religious guy. He was—when you see him on the crucifix, there’s usually three women at his feet. Why are they there? Are they idiots? They’re as much the message as he is. And in the tradition they try to take all of the feminine attributes and give them to Jesus which wasn’t his way. The fact is that, you know, men and women have to discover love between one another, that’s what it’s all about. So you can’t love somebody when you’re sticking a gun in their face, you know. It’s hard to love somebody when you’ve locked them up in an iron cage.

So people feel that if you go to prison, you get reformed and you’re in an environment that is totally hostile twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. You have to be an extremely different type of person to sort of come out of that not to feel—be worse than when you went in. And so most guys who do time, they come out into a world where they’re marginalized. They can’t get a home; they can’t rent, they’re felons. Like, I’m a felon but I’ve been able, because I’m white and I’m articulate and the type of crimes that I committed, I was able to sort of get beyond that. But, you know, a lot of guys don’t. I mean, there are colleagues who don’t understand me when I teach. They don’t understand so they don’t—they’re glad when I’m gone because I always get people to think about things.

Even to talk about the feminine, you know, I mean, it’s just—I mean many women have been masculinized. And then I see what my relationship is with my sisters, you know. So when I sort of say that the whole story comes down to the fact that I’m a feminized male, because that’s what the war was all about, is that, you know, I’m not just a father, I’m a mother to all those people. So when I meet those people, and even part of my family, they’re part of me. We’re all one and the same. So when veterans come up and they have their struggles and everything, part of it is they don’t have to think the way I that I think or feel the way that I feel. They have been trained differently. They’re supposed to kill somebody and feel good about it and it just doesn’t work.

**KH:** Have you—you alluded to this kind of long-term legacy for both those of you that were involved in the antiwar movement and the veterans—have you watched any of the Ken Burns series—

**FK:** Oh sure. Some of it, yeah.
**KH:** Do you think—this is kind of getting into a more specific area of discussion then the general comments you were making—but do you think that the antiwar movement and the people who were a part of it, like you have been incorporated sufficiently into our understanding of that time period.

**FK:** No. You know there is a big effort by certain people in the military like what they did to Coleen Rowley and Colonel Ann Wright try to make us look like we were just aberrations. But we represent a lot of people who even fought the war and who wanted something different for America—even wanted something different for the Indochinese, but you know nothing good comes out of a barrel of a gun except a bullet.

**KH:** Anything else?

**FK:** Oh, maybe when you leave I will think of a thousand more things.

**KH:** Well, then you can email me.

**FK:** Alright.

**KH:** Well, thank you.

*End of interview*