Oral history interviews of the Vietnam Era
Oral History Project

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Narrator

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Interviewer

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Dan Quillin -DQ
Kim Heikkila -KH

KH: This is an interview for the Minnesota Historical Society’s Minnesota in the Vietnam War Era Oral History Project. It is Wednesday, May 9, 2018, and I’m here with Dan Quillin. My name is Kim Heikkila. Today I’ll be talking to Dan about his role in the antiwar movement at Mankato State College [now Minnesota State University, Mankato, Mankato, MN]. So thank you so much, Dan, for your willingness to sit down and share your memories and experiences with us.

DQ: Happy and flattered to do so.

KH: So I know I just said it but if you could start by stating and spelling your name.

DQ: Dan Quillin. Quillin is spelled Q-u-i-l-l-i-n. Dan, D-a-n.

KH: Okay. And when and where were you born?

DQ: I was born September 7, 1949, in Tracy, Minnesota.

KH: What part of the state is Tracy?

DQ: Tracy is southwestern Minnesota, about eighty miles to the west of Mankato.

KH: Okay. All right.

DQ: And when I was two, my family moved up to Minneapolis and so I grew up in South Minneapolis, went to Roosevelt High School, Minneapolis Community College [now Minneapolis Community and Technical College] and then that’s where I got my AA degree. From there I went to what, at the time, was Mankato State College.

KH: Okay. All right. And how do you identify yourself racially and/or ethnically?

DQ: I’m Caucasian, Irish/German heritage.
**KH:** I know I said a little bit about this in the introduction, but if you could just briefly identify some of the major antiwar events or organizations that you were a part of.

**DQ:** Okay. In the 1969 through ’72 period, I was on the Mankato campus. I started out being a Dorm Council president in 1969, became a Student Senator in 1970; and was elected Student Senate speaker at Mankato in 1971 through spring ’72. And then, finally, I became the president of the Minnesota State College Student Association in 1971 through spring ’72 and that happens to be a group that represented all the state colleges before the state college board—Mankato, Moorhead, St. Cloud, Winona and Bemidji State [all MN state colleges], representing them before the state college board. So we had an inter college organization which was called Minnesota State College Student Association and that was the group I was president from 1971 through spring of 1972.

**KH:** All right. And what, now granted I’m making a very big chronological leap here, but what are you doing now?

**DQ:** Today I’m retired, sixty-eight years old. After leaving college, I went to work first for the State of Minnesota. I was an intern in the House Research Department in 1973 and eventually became a state employee in 1974, a full-time employee, for what was then the Minnesota Energy Agency, which was a brand new agency where I did research analysis work. And then I worked for the state for thirty-eight years, through basically October of 2014 [when] I retired. The last agency was the Department of Employment and Economic Development and I supervised the database administrators and programmers in that agency.

**KH:** Okay. So what was your degree in?

**DQ:** My degree was history with a social studies background. (Laughter)

**KH:** Naturally.

**DQ:** Naturally. We all evolve in our jobs over time but I always had a real interest in wanting to do some sort of a public service job, you know, so working in government was an area that I was interested in from my days as a student activist so being able to have a career working in state government for all those years was really—I’m very happy that I got to do a lot of what I wanted to do.

**KH:** Yeah, so it was in keeping with your history as a student and the things you were interested in then.

**DQ:** And it was kind of a transition. I actually was in public office in 1975. I ran for—I was appointed to the Minneapolis City Council when there was a vacancy. Once I came back to the Twin Cities, I got involved in local politics and government and was appointed to the Minneapolis City Council in March 1975 and was beat in the general election in November of 1975 and then started my career back with the State of Minnesota in July of 1976.
KH: Okay, all right. Thank you. So I’m going to go back to the beginning as they say and just ask you to tell me a little bit about your family.

DQ: I guess—my current family or my family when I grew up?

KH: The family in which you grew up.

DQ: Okay, I grew up, like I said, in South Minneapolis so over at 3808 Forty-Fourth Avenue near the Riverview Theater in Minneapolis. My parents were of very modest means. I have one sister and my mom at first was a stay-at-home mom. Eventually she became a substitute school teacher as well, but the family didn’t have—we didn’t have a lot of savings. My father had some illness issues, mental illness issues, and growing up—so when I came out of high school, didn’t have a whole lot of money and that was one reason I stayed locally in terms of starting my education, both at the University of Minnesota, what was Minneapolis Community College [now Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Minneapolis, MN] at the time.

I did just fine there. By the time I graduated from there in the spring of 1969, I had my Associate of Arts degree and I was able to get Pell Grants and assistance to be able to go to Mankato State and I was—I think there might have been—I’m not sure. There might have been a little scholarship money as well but I was definitely a beneficiary of the programs that the government provided at that time or I probably wouldn’t have been able to go to Mankato State.

KH: Now had either of your parents attended college?

DQ: Yes, my mother, who grew up in southwestern Minnesota, little town of Revere, which is not too far from Tracy, went to what was then called Mankato Normal School to get enough credits to be a teacher in these country schools. So before she got married, she was a country school teacher for a period of time, both in Minnesota and in Oregon briefly before she married my dad after World War II.

KH: So was your dad from—?

DQ: My dad was from the town of Tracy, Minnesota.

KH: Okay, so they were both—

DQ: They were both nearby. They met after World War II and got married in 1948 and lived in Tracy for about a year or two before they migrated with me up to Minneapolis.

KH: Are you older than your sister?

DQ: Yes, I’m five years older than her.

KH: So she was born in Minneapolis.
DQ: She was born in Minneapolis, yeah. And my father worked on and off for the Minneapolis Tribune [now Minneapolis Star Tribune, Minneapolis, MN] as a circulation person. At that time, of course, you have all the newspaper boxes that have papers in them plus drugstores, the airport and so on—so he would be in charge of both controlling the draw, the number of papers that each location got, collecting the money daily and then bringing it downtown. So that was his job.

KH: Now had he served in World War II?

DQ: Yeah, he served in World War II. He served for a period of time in England, in a clerical role mostly.

KH: Did you have other family members who had served in the military?

DQ: I had, yeah, on both sides of the family. I had two uncles on my father’s side who both served in World War II. One was part of a bomber crew, B-25s, that was shot down over Germany and he had been a prisoner of war. Then on my mother’s side, she came from a farm family of eleven and a couple, one or two of them, had served in World War II so, yeah, some World War II participation on both sides of the family.

KH: Was that tradition of service something that was important to your family, either or both sides?

DQ: Yeah, I think you would say my parents and my relatives were, you know, very patriotic. Their politics tended to be—they weren’t strong ideology wise, for the most part, but I know that they had some military background and were very patriotic for that period. So it was kind of interesting because as I was active on campus down in Mankato I would be, from time to time, you know, go with the college president, speak at local Rotary Clubs and stuff like that or be on the TV, be interviewed or something so they kind of got a kick out of the fact that their nephew, was this quote student radical at Mankato. But it was never—I think they were more amused by it than they were upset or anything like that.

KH: And what other values were important to your family when you were growing up?

DQ: I grew up Catholic, okay? So that was always part of my upbringing. My mother was a fairly religious woman and, as a teacher, I think I had a lot of traditional values which probably influenced my thinking to some extent during that college period. My family, though, I think had a bent towards Democrats. I can remember as a child when John Kennedy [US President John Fitzgerald "Jack" Kennedy (1917-1963)] ran against Richard Nixon [US President Richard Milhous Nixon (1913-1994)] and my good friend Finley Bishop, whose family was Republican, were Nixon supporters and my family, Catholic, they were Kennedy supporters, you know. And I’m probably what at this age—this is 1960, so I’m probably not more than eleven old and I remember talking to my friend Finley about this and he said they were voting for Nixon and I said, Yeah, you’re voting for Nixon because Kennedy’s Catholic. So I don’t know where I picked that up but I think I must have picked that up at home somewhere. I don’t know that I was
that, you know, 1960, I don’t know that I was that knowledgeable at eleven years of age of politics.

KH: Right, right. So your family was Catholic but did you go to public schools?

DQ: Um-hm.

KH: Did you ever go to any parochial—?

DQ: For the most part I went to public schools. My mother being a public school teacher or substitute teacher had a, you know, that was part of her, I think; she was fine with that. We did spend about a year in South Dakota [when I was] a third grader and when we were there I attended the Catholic school in Huron, South Dakota, for what must have been about eight months, but other than that, all public schools.

KH: So you were growing up. You were born in ’49; you graduated from high school in what fifty-eightish? Not fifty-eight—

DQ: Nineteen sixty-seven.

KH: Right, okay, so you’re growing up in the heart of post-World War II American culture where the idea, anyway, is that it’s an era of relative prosperity after World War II which leads—and there’s all kinds of developments around the suburbs—but there’s this idea that this is a very conformist, consensus culture, that everybody was subscribing to American ideals and virtues. Do you think that reflects your experience as a kid?

DQ: Pretty much so, I’d say. I mean, I would say I had—going into my college years, I had very traditional views and values. I wasn’t—in high school …I wasn’t politically active so to speak. I was more of the athlete, baseball, football, those were the things, so going into my college years I would say I was pretty much your traditional high school student. There was nothing—I mean, I was a C plus student; I was not an academic star by any means and that’s another reason why I ended up at community college. (laughter)

KH: Okay.

DQ: It was kind of funny. I actually wasn’t able to qualify for the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota so, anyway.

KH: And now look at you.

DQ: Well, I probably carried a little bit of a chip on my shoulder over that but—

KH: Over not being—

DQ: Qualified, accepted.
KH: So you did apply?

DQ: Oh, yeah, College of Liberal Arts, yeah.

KH: Who needs them?

DQ: Right. It makes for an interesting story.

KH: So part of—one of the hallmarks of this time period in, not only in American culture, but kind of in worldwide culture, was—it’s the peak of the Cold War. And this fear of communism both abroad, with our foreign policy focusing on containing communism, as well as these concerns about, Oh, now they’re in our midst.

DQ: Yeah, a lot of that.

KH: So we have McCarthy, searches for subversives among us. Was—how much, if at all, did that consciousness enter your world as a young person?

DQ: I do have an interesting memory. I remember growing up in South Minneapolis and this was during the period where nuclear holocaust was discussed on kind of a regular basis, and I remember looking at the newspaper because they showed if they dropped an atomic bomb on downtown Minneapolis what the effect would be. And, like for eight miles, everything would be blown flat, or whatever. And I remember trying to measure how far we were from downtown and I also remember I had in my drawer a paper on how to build a bomb shelter. Never did it, but the fact that I kept it I think says a little bit about how the news at that time was affecting me. The whole McCarthy [US Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy (1908-1957)] era was a little bit before me, 1954, so other than for the fact that, you know, I was probably aware on a certain level that there’d been issues surrounding communists in the American government, I was probably aware of that but it wasn’t something I thought a lot about at that time.

KH: Okay.

DQ: Certainly in high school, and I think, too, that at that time, we really didn’t make—I’m not sure how philosophically we separated Republicans and Democrats, you know, in terms of how we saw them. Obviously my family tended to be Democrat, supported Kennedy—I’m not sure what their ideological basis for that was completely, because sometimes they sounded pretty similar during that period.

KH: In the days where, yeah, that was possible.

DQ: But, you know, like Kennedy was young, vibrant and it was this idea of creating new horizons, the Peace Corps and everything so there was, I think, an attraction to him just based on a young, new leader.
KH: Right. Now, granted you were young, eleven during the election, the 1960 election, and he’s sworn in and does the inaugural address in January—it’s January by that time in 1961—where he gives his, Ask not what your country can do for you—. Do you remember that at all?

DQ: By that point, the only things I can really remember about Kennedy—I think I have vague recall on the Cuban Missile Crisis because it was something everybody was kind of worked up about and concerned about because we could have [a nuclear war], you know, that’s maybe why I was keeping the drawer full of [papers on] how to build a shelter, or how far a nuclear bomb would reach. And then, of course, when he got assassinated, I can recall being in my health class at Sanford Junior High when that was announced. But those are—that’s the limit of what I can remember. Him being assassinated and then the Cuban Missile Crisis and concerns about nuclear war.

KH: So then, and maybe your answer to this question is implied in that one as well, in what you just said, but what about the civil rights movement. Were you aware of what was going on in the civil rights movement?

DQ: The civil rights movement starts to get into that period where I’m in high school and then transitioning to community college and so I’m aware of it. I see it some on TV, but I’m just becoming more aware. I kind of went under a kind of major metamorphosis in community college. I had some really terrific teachers. What did you say? You mentioned your degree was—did you say American Studies?

KH: Yes.

DQ: So I had a class by a fellow by the name of Ken Gilchrist and Ken was a young teacher and he—it was just amazing. We’d come into class and I remember he was kind of—he wasn’t a hippie—but he would come in and he’d take his shoes off and he’d sit up on the table and he’d start talking about stuff. And he [assigned] a book—it was called Beyond Berkeley; [Beyond Berkeley: A Sourcebook in Student Values by Christopher Katope and Paul G. Zolbrod, Joanna Cotler Books, 1970] that was class reading. And I read it and it really kind of started getting me thinking. It dealt with the whole student governance issue and free speech and I started, you know, writing in the margins. I kept that book and I have it today upstairs with my little notes in the margins, which tells me it had an impact on me.

And so my thinking was starting to become aware at that period and this is a period where Martin Luther King [Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)] and Kennedy [US Senator Robert Francis Kennedy (1925-1968)] are shot in a short period of time; the marches and how black people were being treated in the south, you know, those were visual images on TV. So I’m starting to be less interested in being a college baseball player, realizing that this isn’t going to go anywhere anyways, and becoming more interested in public events and people like Ken Gilchrist. And I had a wonderful speech teacher by the name of Mrs. Pratt and a film teacher, Mrs. Baker, who were all great, you know—I just kind of, just absorbed it all in that period.

KH: And this was all at MCC?
DQ: At the community college and at the end of that—and my grades improved quite a bit, too, and I ended up going in the spring of 1969, I was invited to what was called the Nobel Conference [Nobel Conference, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN, 1963-Present] which was a conference—it’s still held I believe once a year—by Augsburg College [now Augsburg University, Minneapolis, MN] and this time, it was at Gustavus. And so I went to that which was really a great experience—that was before I was going to be going to college down in Mankato. So, anyways, those are some of the—those things were influencing my thinking.

KH: And partly—

DQ: Making me a little more liberal, progressive, probably not radical but—

KH: Partly because, I mean, things are changing out there in the world and you can’t really avoid it and partly because you’re at that age where a lot of young people are starting to look outward rather than inward and then you have these teachers.

DQ: Yep, and I’m kind of growing personally to the point where I’m having more and more confidence in myself, you know, and in deciding to become more active. My final thing when I went to Mankato, one of the reasons I went there, too, is I wanted to play baseball still, right? So I get cut from the baseball team and at that point I started taking an interest in student governance more. And I was—at that point I’m in Gage Center [former Gage Community Center, Mankato State University, Mankato, MN, demolished 2013] in the fall of 1969 in a dormitory and at that point, they [had] accepted all my credits, so I’m in effect a junior, first year junior at Gage Center and I couldn’t get anybody to nominate me for the Dorm Council president because I didn’t know anybody so I nominated myself and I became the Dorm Council president. And that was my first kind of—my first entrance into becoming more active on campus.

KH: Let me come back to that, but before I do, we’re going to jump back to 1968. You had talked a little bit about that being the year that King and Kennedy were, the second Kennedy, were killed. I mean it was just—

DQ: It was pretty traumatic. I remember sitting in Loring Park with some of my friends because we were at the community college and going out into the park there. I remember it was like a—and this was the day, either the day that Kennedy or Martin Luther King was assassinated and just talking about it with my friends. It was pretty traumatic stuff. And all this stuff collectively was, I think, building up and creating a view of the world that, you know, then interplayed with later events.

KH: Now had you—I would imagine that many people across the country, even who would not have described themselves as, or been, active supporters of the civil rights movement, they knew who Martin Luther King was and would have felt unsettled at the very least when he is killed if for no other reason than it’s just another major assassination.

DQ: Yeah.

KH: But what had you, if anything, been thinking about him prior to his assassination?
DQ: I think the thing that people don’t realize is, you look back at Martin Luther King you kind of see this glorious man who was fighting for civil rights, but at the time he was really a controversial character. And there was this idea of, how do you get things done, and, look it, he’s just leading marches.

So the world I lived in was somewhat split on Martin Luther King. Was he a good influence or bad? And there was a large portion of the population who thought this guy was dangerous, and he was right on the edge and he was leading demonstrations and whatever people perceived to be the right way to do things, they weren’t sure he was doing it the right way. So people were split on King and it’s only with the passage of history that we’ve all kind of elevated him.

KH: And, even by the time in the spring of 1967 where he gives his “Beyond Vietnam” speech and finally says, you know, I can’t not speak against the war, he was getting criticized for that—

DQ: Well, all of a sudden, now he’s getting into issues that are not central to [civil rights]—he’s making the connection, but some of the general public thought that—particularly since the country was so divided on the war, that was such a controversial stand to take that, you’re right, that added a lot to animosity towards him in a lot of quarters, you know.

KH: And he was, you know, moving towards this analysis of the class, income injustice and inequality so, yeah, he was—

DQ: Yeah, there was the issue, too, at that point, of a disproportionate share of the soldiers in Vietnam being people of color and I think that also was something he was fully aware of.

KH: So, let’s— I just want to make sure. My phone shut off for some reason but this one looks good. Let’s talk about the war a little bit before we get to your really active time at Mankato State College. So by 1965, in March of 1965, the marines land in Da Nang [Da Nang, Vietnam], so we’re now engaged in at least ground combat if never a technically, officially declared war. When do you remember Vietnam and the war in Vietnam coming into your field of vision?

DQ: Yeah, I suspect it probably was right after high school, 1967, because at that point we were concerned, you know, we had the self-interest of the draft. You know, was my interest in college based on just getting a better education, or was it based in part that I wasn’t particularly—? I was either uncertain about whether I wanted to go to Vietnam—so I think it has to be that period right after high school, then later on, I think I mentioned in my short piece there, I had a number seven when they started doing the lottery. So I was, you know, I definitely would have been drafted and taken. So it’s a little bit fuzzy but we—it’s a factor in what I’m doing in terms of going to college, staying in college.

KH: Do you remember in ’67—you graduated in the spring of ’67 from high school and it’s the fall of ’67, where there is this kind of major Stop the Draft Week across the country and they’re shutting down the Oakland Induction Center [Oakland, CA] and there are things—was that part of—? You had just started college.
DQ: I had just started college and at that point I’m interested in trying to just survive in college and I haven’t become politically aware at that point.

KH: So you didn’t have any particular political views about the war itself? Right? Wrong?

DQ: At that point, you know, I probably was a bit conflicted on whether it was good or bad. I can’t—I think mostly it was a level of, you know, I grew up with certain values and part of that was a loyalty to the country, to the president so somewhere in there, that is still a major piece of my thinking at that point. I’m not an early—I wasn’t an early antiwar advocate in that sense.

KH: Okay, so in ’68, one of the other things that’s happening, of course, is the election. Johnson [US President Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973)] bows out early on, partly because McCarthy [US Senator Eugene Joseph McCarthy (1916-2005)] is making a strong showing.

DQ: Right, right.

KH: I know at that time you were too young to vote but were you paying attention to those kinds of electoral politics?

DQ: I think at that point I’m starting to pay attention to the, you know, Clean for Gene people going and being active. On the other hand, I’m also a Minnesotan; I grew up with Hubert Humphrey [US Vice President Hubert Horatio Humphrey Jr. (1911-1978)] so I am torn between these two figures and at a certain point, I am conflicted. The fact that Humphrey is vice president next to my growing awareness that, you know, he’s somewhat of a hero, okay. And then there’s Gene McCarthy who’s a little bit more of a rebel and willing to—and there’s this political divide developing here and so I’m early on kind of caught with conflicting values, I grew up with Democratic tendencies, and it is still playing a role here while I’m being slowly drawn into the antiwar views; I’m progressing and becoming more antiwar.

And even on campus, I mean, there was—we had fraternities and so forth that were very pro-Vietnam and they were even slower to come on board in terms of the antiwar effort. Now this was a period of transition for me.

KH: And I think probably for many young people at that time.

DQ: Yeah.

KH: Maybe I missed it, what did Ken Gilchrist teach? What department or—?

DQ: He taught, I want to say American Studies, or, I think, it probably was because I don’t think it was straight history. I mean, it was contemporary stuff that we were reading and he was this young professor and he was obviously into it and he was exposing us to it and so he had a real effect on me. And also, I have to say, this is kind of a side note. I had a wonderful baseball coach at the community college, I could play baseball there and the coach—his name was Arlen Burmeister—and he kind of saw that I had limitations athletically and he ended up having me
emcee the athletic banquet for the college and he said, and “You’re going to emcee this.” And I said, “I don’t think [I’m the best choice.] We’ve got a lot of these great stars. I think you should pick one of them to emcee.” “Nope, you’re doing it.”

And the only reason I bring that up is it was part of a personal growth thing for me and so I did that, I had to be the public speaker and all that and it went okay. All of a sudden, I’m beginning to develop a little more confidence in myself. So then, all of a sudden, I had a period from when I was, you know, nineteen to twenty-six, [when I eventually became a member] of the Minneapolis City Council, where I almost went the other way in terms of wanting to do everything or be involved. So anyways, I digress.

KH: So this book that Gilchrist had you read, that you still have, Beyond Berkeley, was it—what was it about?

DQ: It was a series of essays on everything from what was happening at Berkeley [University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA]. There was a student at Berkeley, Savaggio—or no, I’d have to look—

KH: Mario Savio [Mario Savio (1942-1996)]?

DQ: Yes, Mario Savio, and he has an essay in there and there are people who talked about higher education who have essays in there so it was kind of looking, you know, at free speech, how the college was run—different essays and each one was maybe fifteen to twenty pages long. Then you’d read that and talk about it. College governance was one of the themes in there so, yeah, it has just a, you know, an impact on promoting discussion about how things were being run at the college to what the role of the student would be.

KH: So through that, that course, that teacher, that book—now you’re kind of tapping into the strain of the student movement that has started in the sixties.

DQ: Yes, this is my exposure to that. And, you know, you throw in that and the events that are happening with the assassinations and so it led to a very rapid increase in interest. And for whatever reason, I was a better student in community college than I’d been in high school so I was also starting to absorb this stuff and it was having, I think, more meaning for me.

KH: So now to Mankato State. You arrive the fall of 1969 and you become president of the Dorm Council. So what does the Dorm Council do?

DQ: The Dorm Council runs the dormitory. Gage Center was where I was at. Gage Center, which eventually was torn down, was two twelve-story towers and the Dorm Council would conduct, develop policies that affected how the dormitories on everything from policies in the cafeteria to, of course, the big—the hot item, was having women in the same dormitory. In Gage Center they were split. The “B” side, twelve stories of women; the “A” side, twelve stories of men. Of course, the big deal was at the time they were separated and there was this kind of thinking that that’s the way it should be, you know. And there were those of us who wanted to invite women over, and vice versa, to our rooms and there were all these rules about what you
could do and what you couldn’t do. They created visitation rules, so you would have to sign somebody in on your floor, right? And you had a rule that you had to keep a crack in the door of at least two inches. So as Dorm Council president, it was my job—I was promoting these more liberal rules, right? So then I had to be responsible for making sure everybody obeyed these rules so if somebody didn’t have their dorm room door (laughter) [cracked open two inches I had to knock on the door and have them open it] and we had the sign-in sheets on the floor, you know, everybody had to sign in and, of course, everybody’s cooperation fell apart in a real hurry and some people would write in, Mickey Mouse’s, (laughter) name rather than their own. So anyway, these kinds of Victorian rules were slowly eroding and the Dorm Council would play in trying to liberalize these rules.

And then eventually people would run for the Student Senate from our dorm. I actually went to a convention in the spring of—I think it was the spring of 1970, National Residence Hall Convention that was held in Texas, Lubbock, Texas. We drove down there and I got my first taste that Mankato wasn’t kind of a national center of attention. When they announced our school they said, well, we have delegates from MonKato, Minnesota (laughter). So, anyway, yeah, so I spent that first year in the dorms there.

KH: So it sounds like, from what you were just describing and what you’ve said in the piece from the Nickerson [Out of Chaos: Reflections of a University President and his Contemporaries on Vietnam-Era Unrest in Mankato and its Relevance Today, by James F. Nickerson] book, too, was that, you’re also reflecting and being caught up in this wave, not just of the student movement, student power and student government, governance, but also, you know, this is the sixties. This is sex, drugs, rock and roll; this is, the Summer of Love was 1967; and so there are all these challenges to the traditional values and morals with which people your age had been raised including like, oh, come on, do we really need to have a “A” Tower and a “B” Tower.

DQ: Exactly; it would eventually evolve into floors that alternate, you know, that was—and I don’t know how far, if we got any further than that, but that’s what I recall.

KH: So, and your point about going to Texas and being referred to as the students from MonKato—

DQ: Right.

KH: Did you have a sense of, being in Mankato at that time, for how Mankato was relating to some of these things that were going on in places like Berkeley or New York or Chicago or L.A., you know, in terms of the counterculture, you know, the youth culture that sex, drugs and rock and roll? Was that coming into Mankato?

DQ: Yeah, I think it was, yes, it was definitely. We had Vietnam veterans returning from the war; everybody, lot of long-haired people. In fact, I always remember I had an army jacket that I used to wear with a gold medallion hanging down and so, yeah, it was. And I think Mankato also had a desire to be recognized, too. We recognized we weren’t the University of Minnesota, right? And so I think there was this—but we’re a pretty big school in Minnesota, you know? Next to
the U of M, we’re the next biggest, so I think we also wanted, you know, there was a desire to feel we could have and should have a place, be a well-respected institution in the state.

The big drive at this point, by even President Nickerson [James F. Nickerson (1911-2009)], was to get university status for the college and that, to me, that says something that we wanted to be equal to the University of Minnesota, so I think that’s—there’s a lot of pride in Mankato in wanting to achieve that status.

KH: And I think in that Nickerson book, somebody, I can’t remember now who it was, is talking about the changes that the institution is undergoing in the 1960s, that being one of them, an attempt to transform itself from a college to a university. And there are also different—it’s drawing different students onto campus.

DQ: Yeah, definitely it is.

KH: Yeah, so what do you remember about the demographics of the student body?

DQ: The demographics of the student body are beginning to change. There are more students of color for the first time. In fact, I mentioned Mark Halverson earlier; Mark was the head of the People’s Party group and they would run on a ticket, of nine people for the Student Senate and several black students that were part of that coalition so I had an opportunity during that time to meet and work with many of those black students. In fact, one of the students on our Student Senate was Peter Bell, who would later become head of the Metropolitan Council and the Enterprise [American Enterprise Institute] conservative think tank at the University of Minnesota. You know, how wonderful—you would never have guessed that transition would have occurred—I wasn’t very close to Peter Bell, but he was a Student Senator.

Tom Hooks and Donald and Ronald Bell, all who were fairly militant black students. I always remember Tom Hooks would come to our Student Senate meetings and he was brash and he was bold and he’d always bring a big walking stick with him and put it on the table (laughter).

So, yeah, the demographics are changing. The Student Senate, instead of becoming a bunch of fraternity guys who are concerned with the homecoming event and that, all of a sudden, now become politically much more progressive, liberal, call it what you will—less traditional. And so we end up with kind of a split Student Senate. You have the conservative fraternity types; you have Mark Halverson’s People’s Party and then I and a couple of others ran as independents, okay, so we were kind of trying to bridge the gap, you know, which we did to varying degrees of success. But so that was the make-up.

We had—the black students were much more, you know, they were reacting to events of those times and were becoming much more militant in their approach in demanding their rights. And we’d, for better or for worse—it was a wonderful experience to be speaker of the Student Senate because I ended up trying to maintain decorum in these meetings of people—fraternity guys and then over here the People’s Party and my good friend, Larry Spencer, who was the student body president. We were very close; he was president and I was the speaker and we ended up having
some very productive years together. And so the demographics, yes, were changing and it was represented pretty good on our Student Senate.

KH: So, it sounds like Mankato was undergoing some of the same kinds of transformations that campuses elsewhere were. There was just the fiftieth anniversary of 1968 all year, and so Vanity Fair had just run an article, an oral history of the student uprising at Columbia University [Columbia University, New York, NY]. That happened in the spring of 1968, which had to do both with the war and with issues of race with the gym they were building.

DQ: Yeah, I can remember those images of them standing on the steps of [Columbia], black students.

KH: Yeah, and the same thing at the main “U” up here, with the occupation of Morrill Hall in 1969. So were these black students at Mankato doing, lobbying for similar kinds of things, representation on campus? You know, black studies, that kind of stuff?

DQ: Yeah, they were making demands similar to that on Mankato’s campus. I want to say I think, the Black Student Union, and the college had brought in instructors that were supposed to I think focus much more on the students, on the issues related to students of color. They were, like I said, they were more militant and many came from the central cities so, you know, you’re having an interesting mix of kids from small rural Minnesota towns where there were real traditional values—and then you had this group of black students, students of color moving in and some international students, too.

One of whom you’re going to interview, Mehr Shahidi [Mehr “Jay” Shahidi (1947-) ]. Mehr was a roommate of mine in those days when I moved off campus after my year in the dorm. We lived in the same house, thirteen guys rented and so I was the one who kind of got Mehr Shahidi involved in the student government. So we have maintained a lifelong relationship. He was the best man at my wedding.

KH: Wow, okay.

DQ: So that was another component, the international component, and Mehr had a very close relationship with a person you’ve probably read about, Abbas Kessel [Abbas Gheselayagh, or "Kessel,”], and they were both from Iran, and so they had a lot in common. Mehr was a lifelong friend of Abbas Kessel’s and there’s something called the Kessel Institute [Kessel Institute for Study of Peace and Change] at Mankato State and Mehr has played a role in that.

KH: So there’s a lot going on.

DQ: Lot going on and instead of taking fifteen credits a quarter, I’m taking twelve, which is slowing down my graduation process, you know, from two years to more like two and a half, but part of it was because I became kind of involved in these other activities.

KH: And I think, granted, you had a little bit different role in that you were so involved in student government so that was your—
**DQ:** Yeah, and that’s a good point you’ve probably picked up. We had—people that were involved in student government who were probably seen a little bit more as establishment people, while the real Vietnam Veterans Against the War, they were people who were so angry about the war that they were willing to go beyond peaceful protest if it’s necessary because the ends were so important that they were willing to fudge a little bit on the means to try and get it accomplished, while there were those of us who probably were a little more tradition bound, but still antiwar. And we were looking at the electoral process to try and make the change.

**KH:** Right.

**DQ:** So you had—I’m sure that probably existed to some extent everywhere, a diversity of groups, you know, on our good days we cooperated together and on the bad days, we kind of hurled insults at each other. But those were two kind of groups.

**KH:** So that was a question I did want to ask and I asked John Kaul [John Kaul (1947- )] about it a little bit as well. It seems from the book, and even from the things that you’ve said, that there was a pretty strong veteran contingent or group on campus. Do you know why that is? Were they guys who had come from the area, served in the war, or in the military and came back home, decided they were going to pursue an education? Who were these guys?

**DQ:** These guys kind of broke into two groups. One was the more traditional veterans who’d served and I think were concerned about the war but many were from southern Minnesota. They weren’t all—so they came to Mankato because if you weren’t going to the University of Minnesota, this is where you’d go to college, you know—[and they had traditional values]. And then you had others who had had an experience in Vietnam that really made them angry. I think they probably—many of them were from parts of southern Minnesota, too, but their experience, based on their Vietnam experience, made them instantly credible when something came up because they had served in Vietnam. You couldn’t say to them, you’re chicken, you didn’t even go serve. And so they had instant credibility or more credibility.

**KH:** They had done their patriotic duty.

**DQ:** Yeah, I mean, when they’d march through town they had credibility. There were two groups of veterans, okay?

**KH:** Yes.

**DQ:** They weren’t all the same. And, you know, I have a good friend, Barry Tilley, who was more of a traditional veteran and his friend Bill Strusinski, they were more traditional veterans. They were from southern Minnesota. They also ran on the Student Senate but they represented more progressive, but more traditional views. Barry lives out here in Inver Grove Heights [Inver Grove Heights, MN] and we’ve stayed fairly close. Anyways, I digress a little bit.

**KH:** So at what point would you have said I, kind of firmly and clearly, I am an opponent of the war in Vietnam?
DQ: I think it probably—it’s hard for me to point to the exact time. I would suspect it’s probably about nineteen—I started writing a lot of letters to the editor, to the student newspaper, but I don’t know that any of them necessarily focused strictly on the war. I would say, probably fairly late coming out on that—I would say it’s probably ’69, ’70. It’s in there and I can’t tell you an exact time because I’m still somewhat conflicted between Humphrey and McCarthy in 1968.

KH: Now the fall of ’69 is when you arrive at Mankato State. It’s also when the big moratoriums happen in October and November of that year. Were you involved in any of those activities as they were occurring?

DQ: I think I was but they don’t—I don’t have strong recollections of those. I mean, people like John Kaul would, you know, because he was more—I think Dean Doyscher [Dean Doyscher (1945- )] and others did. To me, they were—I was becoming more and more concerned in that period both because of probably my draft number, but also it didn’t seem like we were getting out of the war, obviously. We were getting deeper and deeper and that influenced my thinking a lot that this was not getting better at all.

KH: Right, and then by the spring of 1970, you have the “incursion” into Cambodia and then—

DQ: That is a big item because that sets off Kent State [Kent State University, Kent, Ohio] and that polarizes, you know, everything, in terms of the tragedy. I think we all identify them as kind of the first martyrs of the situation. So, yeah, I think by 1970, I’m, you know, completely against the war. I think I was torn in 1968 between Humphrey and McCarthy and I don’t know—part of that might have just been loyalty to the Minnesota politician. Of course, they’re both Minnesotans, so—

KH: Yeah, Minnesota’s in a unique position during that election.

DQ: I remember very divided—yeah, divided caucuses in 1968. But I’m still just getting politically acclimated at that point in terms of my thinking, in being involved, you know. I was really nineteen before I really, you know, leaving community college in the spring of 1969, is when I’m really both aware of what’s going on and I’m starting to become politically activated.

KH: Well, and maybe by that time, it’s easier politically to identify your allegiance when Nixon is in office, right? So it’s not having to decide between McCarthy and Humphrey, two kind of good guys, that you have an affinity for. Now it’s Nixon.

DQ: Yeah. And even in Humphrey’s case it was kind of like balancing—he was, you know, he was seen as so closely associated with Lyndon Johnson that it was like, you know, it was just kind of frustrating. But, like I said, I was a little bit later to come to that conclusion than some others.

KH: Okay. All right. The question I have written down here that I skipped; now I can’t remember what it was. Did you know, aside from the veterans that you may have met in the
student government world, did you know anybody say, from your high school, who was drafted or enlisted and served in Vietnam and came back? Were you hearing stories from any veterans?

**DQ:** Some of the guys, one of the guys, a close childhood friend of mine, Lonnie Swenson—I went to community college with me as well and at some point, got either discouraged or it was after he graduated, I can’t recall which—but anyways, he volunteered to go into the service. He ended up going to Vietnam with the air force, served in a place called Cam Ranh Bay [Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam] and served his four years, came back. So he was a friend that went and served. And from my high school class at Roosevelt, in 1967, I was looking—we had our fifty-year reunion and they always list, you know, deceased members, so there was—I know there was one guy who was killed in Vietnam, but not as many as you would have guessed. I’m trying to think of others. That’s all I can think of off the top of my head.

**KH:** All right. So how attuned were you and maybe your fellow students at Mankato to things that were going on, on other campuses, around the antiwar movement or just kind of student empowerment? Were you looking outside of Mankato or were you pretty focused on—?

**DQ:** I think we tended to focus on Mankato, but we were aware of what was going on at the University of Minnesota, as I was president of the Minnesota State College Student Association, so I actually had some interactions, small interactions, with Jack Baker, who was student body president at University of Minnesota during that period. And even the student newspaper, the university student newspaper, took an interest in the Minnesota State College Student Association, wrote some articles on it, so I had a little bit of interaction there. I think our antiwar activists stayed in touch with other groups statewide and nationally.

The National Student Association called for a strike on April 21, 1972. It was in response to, I think, the mining of Haiphong Harbor [Haiphong Harbor, Vietnam], and those events—or that may have been a little bit later, but anyways, it was just the bombing and everything else that was occurring. We stayed in touch with the National Student Association. One of those articles [in the student newspaper] says the “National Student Association Calls for Strikes,” on April twenty-first. And so we coordinated with that. We had people and faculty, you know, would make trips to Washington during some of this period so there was that coordination and that’s part of what set in motion some of the events of the spring of 1972—was this initial call from the National Student Association for strikes across the country and so we organized in Mankato.

**KH:** And I do want to spend some good time talking about the spring of 1972, but I want to go back to Kent State two years prior to that, so in the spring of 1970 and you said that that made an impact on you. You described these students as the first martyrs, student, campus martyrs of the movement and the war. What—did you do anything in response? Were you, were there antiwar demonstrations?

**DQ:** There were marches in Mankato, rallies at the—we had this area between the library and the student union where we would gather and so I took part in that. We decided that we would dedicate a monument at Mankato. We actually were going to put it in on the one-year anniversary of Kent State and it ended up being the second anniversary before it got put in so the Student Senate paid for the initial monument. So those were kind of things we did. There were
teach-ins, as I recall and some of my level of participation was more just as a participant, not as a leader of those events. In part, probably because, yeah, I wasn’t necessarily seen as part of the leadership of the antiwar faction. I was more of the Student Senate. We would pass resolutions; we would send people to Washington, you know, those sorts of things so that probably was part of it. And I was just—1970, I was just elected to the Student Senate so I was relatively new but I did become speaker of the Student Senate in the spring of, let’s see it would have been very late in the spring of 1970.

KH: Okay.

DQ: So that was my first year on campus pretty much.

KH: Right, right.

DQ: So I mean, there were already a lot of people that were involved and so I was just kind of moving into a more central role.

KH: So I’ve been asking everybody this because I don’t want to take the answer for granted, even if I might speculate. Why did you oppose the war in Vietnam?

DQ: You know, I think it was both a combination of self-interest and believing that it was a bad war for us, that it didn’t represent traditional values, that the idea of the domino theory—we just—we came to reject it and we saw the harm that it was doing to the country. And fifty thousand people our age were getting killed and we didn’t buy in at that point to the Cold War theory any longer, that if Vietnam fell, they would be in Mankato the next day or that, you know, that it would go that way.

And that was the transition that I mentally went through, part of it just being exposed to other people’s thinking, you know, and trying to come to the conclusion—on the one hand, this idea seemed to have had validity during the Korean War, but it was doing a lot of damage to the people and we just, at a certain point, we rejected the idea that if Vietnam fell, that they would be in San Francisco [San Francisco, CA] the next day.

We started seeing the war as a little bit more complex than just this single block, the Free World versus Communism, you know. And then when you mix into it your self-interest, you know, that you would be apt to go over there and maybe die, that obviously had an impact as well. So it was kind of the interaction of those two, self-interest and academically rejecting the idea that we had to hold Vietnam or we’d—they would continue to move in aggression and take over the world.

KH: So did you have a sense at the time that your new understanding, you know, kind of the academic rejection of the domino theory, was a challenge or a rejection of those traditional values and beliefs that you had grown up with? Did it feel like you were—?

DQ: Yeah, it felt like I was parting with a little bit of my traditional values I think and that’s part of what made it difficult. And, you know, I mean, even the politicians in my formative years, the Hubert Humphreys, were believers pretty much in the domino theory. So, yeah, it
required a transition for me personally. And it may have—my traditional values may have influenced me to be less radical than I would have been maybe otherwise.

KH: And so did this change in your politics, your political views, impact any of your relationships with people, with your family, or with people who may not have gone along that same transition with you?

DQ: I didn’t experience a lot of negativity towards me, but a couple of things that I remember was that I think I—my dad didn’t talk a lot about it but he was kind of a traditional guy, but he died in December of ’72 and he—when he and my mom came for graduation—I graduated in December of ’72, he told me, “I just want to let you know, I voted for George McGovern [US Senator George Stanley McGovern (1922-2012)],” like it was his way of trying to bridge the gap with me. But I don’t ever remember a lot of criticism from either of my parents. I think I was kind of a little bit of the first generation into college, and they were just probably happy that I was in college and getting a degree and so I didn’t get too much heat there.

And I’ve always been kind of a person that I can handle disagreement with another person so I’m not an extremely confrontive individual, so I don’t think by nature drew a lot of strong negative reactions from my family and relatives in southern Minnesota. They were more like, Yeah, we saw you on TV the other day, Dan. What were you doing? So I’m trying to remember if there were more personal confrontations. I don’t recall any off the top of my head.

KH: So, and again, we’re building up to the crescendo of the spring of 1972, and I’m sure this will come up in those conversations, but how would you have described or describe now, the relationship between Mankato State and the greater Mankato community?

DQ: Yeah, at that point, Mankato is, as a university or college, is moving more and more to the upper campus; there’s a lower campus and an upper campus. Old Main is still the lower campus, nearer the town so there are interactions with the town, but it’s more—we don’t have as much interaction as would probably be desirable at that point. The Mankato Free Press does a pretty good job of covering events at the college, so I think you’re a little bit more in a fish bowl. You get more, I thought we got more publicity, in a way, more exposure from the media than if you were up here in the Twin Cities where you have the Minneapolis Tribune; you had—to get coverage is easier in Mankato because it’s a smaller fish bowl. It wouldn’t be unusual as a student leader to be quoted in the Mankato Free Press or the Free Press. Because the college is more central to the community, it gets, I think, a good amount of exposure.

Having said that, the townspeople probably viewed us a lot of times as those crazy radicals at the college, you know, so there was that and as we had more confrontations, there was more tension and that became an area of concern. So Mankato was a fairly traditional town of probably, at that point, thirty thousand people. So our opportunities to interact were somewhat limited—there wasn’t a lot but there was some interaction back and forth.

KH: Okay, let’s talk about 1972 and the spring of ’72. And again, this is—Mankato is not the only place that sees campus protests as a response to Nixon widening the war he had promised to be ending as he begins bombing North Vietnam in the Haiphong Harbor. So walk me through the
spring of 1972, as you remember it. And now, you know, you’ve been on campus for two years. You’re established.

**DQ:** I was more established and I had more interaction off campus as president of the Minnesota State College Student Association and with the State College Board and other areas. The events that would kind of set things off as you describe, the escalation of the war, we’re getting more and more concerned even I am becoming more and more frustrated and concerned. And then we have first, the increased bombing, which was being resumed and so we’re thinking, oh, this is going the wrong way. We’re not disengaged, you know. And then I think it’s about in early May there’s this mining of Haiphong Harbor in addition to the bombing of Hanoi [Hanoi, Vietnam] and Haiphong again and so this is just kind of ratcheting up and we’re—we need to do something.

And the event that I remember—we were both—we were involved in putting up this memorial to Kent State, which was supposed to happen on the second anniversary, May fourth, and then we had the National Student Association call for a strike on I think it was—my recollection now is it was the twenty-first of April, okay? And we had events on campus that day and I remember being so frustrated that I had to do something.

Larry Spencer, who was the student body president, and I got our backpacks and a pair of signs and after the event on campus, we walked down to the post office and we started picketing the post office, just the two of us, you know. And we slept overnight there and pretty soon others started to join us and we had, for like two weeks, [we had a 24 hour, round the clock student vigil] at the post office. We didn’t move and gradually members of the community joined us, other students, so we kept this around-the-clock vigil with the goal of doing this until May fourth, which was the second anniversary of Kent State and Jackson State [Jackson State College, Jackson, MS]. And so we had, you know, the news media started to cover it and they would come down and interview us and, of course, people who drove by, either they’d wave to us or they would give us the finger and shout and so forth. There were different events that happened.

And so we maintained this vigil and I remember the local radio station came down and asked how it was going and I said, Well, I think we’re getting two victory signs for every one barnyard gesture. (laughter)

**KH:** So the ratio was in your favor.

**DQ:** Yeah, it was in our favor, so—

**KH:** So you slept there?

**DQ:** Slept there.

**KH:** Who brought you food?
DQ: Townspeople would bring cookies and coffee. College professors joined us. I’m not—I don’t think—once it got established, it wasn’t like Larry and I had to be there all the time, others were there in our place. It wasn’t just us for two weeks.

KH: How many people do you think overall participated in that vigil?

DQ: I’m guessing probably, because it kept rotating, and they were always marching, and I would guess something in the two to four hundred area, you know. And anyway, so we did that and then at the end of that we’d go up and we had a big event at the—on campus where we dedicated [our Kent State-Jackson State Memorial on May 4, 1972]. At the same time, we had—I think it was the Monday, May 8th afterwards, there was the announcement of the mining of Haiphong Harbor and there were various groups calling for demonstrations on the mall, that week, the week of—it would be like from Monday, the seventh, I think, through Friday, the twelfth.

And so the one on Tuesday was very large. I actually was not there for that one. I was in Moorhead at a Minnesota State College Board meeting where we were trying to get the rules changed for liquor on campus. So that’s, you know, that was the day that people marched down the hill—I think a couple thousand it may have been, marched down, occupied Main Street, moved on to the roads and blocked Highway 169. Some people say that the cars were blocked for a couple miles. They held the area for three hours and others said the cars were backed up to St. Peter [St. Peter, MN] which is twelve miles, so I’m not sure which it was.

But once I got done with my meeting in Moorhead with the State College Board, then I drove back and I was hearing, at that point, students actually crossed the bridge into the other county. There’s Blue Earth County and then Nicollet County and the sheriff from Nicollet County, he was the one who decided that they were going to clear the bridge and they gave an ultimatum to the students on the bridge. Mehr Shahidi, who you’re going to interview, was there with Nickerson and he can provide, you know, detail on that. Mark Halverson was also there. Mark was very close with Mitchell Goodman [Mitchell Goodman, 1924-1997] and Mitchell I think viewed this as a big success because it really made an impact and it alienated everybody in town but it also got publicity. WCCO TV from the Twin Cities covered it and like I said, I think it probably was on national TV.

What happened was that [they] couldn’t convince the students to leave at five thirty. Nickerson talked to them, President Nickerson, and basically the sheriff’s people shot tear gas in to disperse the students. The students, many of them were able to toss the tear gas back at the police so there was, you know, some confrontation. But basically, they were dispersed and that evening there was planning to be done for the next day’s activities, which was Wednesday, and by that time I’m back in Mankato and start to participate in those.

So there was a concern that the next day on Wednesday would be violent, you know, and so there was this discussion of, well, what do we do to make an impact without having violence? And the groups were divided. Some believed you had to have that civil disobedience to get the exposure; others, and I was in that group, felt that we needed to have a nonviolent protest. We
wanted to convince the town people—we didn’t want them to be absorbed with the violent stuff. We wanted to convince them that the war had to be stopped.

And so, our plan basically was to work with several of the faculty to propose that we have a nonviolent silent march the next day. We had five hundred students march from Gustavus to Mankato to be part of that day’s activity, which is a twelve mile walk in itself. And we had—most of the newspaper accounts say three thousand at the upper campus so there was a debate that went on with various people speaking. Some of us, I don’t know—it’s a little gray, okay? But the newspaper said I said, “We’ve got two choices: we can go back to the bridge or we can have a silent march through Mankato.” and my recollection is that I said we should do the silent march. The paper doesn’t say—it just says I outlined two options for the group, so I don’t know, it’s kind of gray.

In any case there were different speakers. Mitchell Goodman got up. He said, “It’s stupid. You’re not going to make any impact at all if you do this silent march. You need to shut down the city; you need to shut down the college; you need to shut down the nation.” And there were faculty members who were, you know, advocating for the silent march. We had—so it was a very tense situation as we were trying to decide what we were going to do.

So the long and the short of it was I become one of the parade marshals, with—we all put on these orange vests and I had a bullhorn and we decided we’re going to do the silent march. Well, everybody agreed to at least walk down in the silent march but there was a subset of the thirty-five hundred, I don’t know—the number’s interesting because depending on whose account you read, one account says six thousand; but the Mankato newspaper said three thousand were there, so I use that number generally. But it was an incredible line, four abreast, we marched downtown and it extended for a couple miles and we were absolutely silent that day.

So that was, you know, our idea that we would march by, and the townspeople would just kind of look at us and so we get down to the point in Mankato where two streets, where one heads back to the bridge and downtown and the other continues on our march path—it would be like a seven-mile march. And anyways, my more radical friends and brethren, at that point, they had some bullhorns, too, and they’re yelling for everybody to take a left to head back to the road, 169, and I’m on the bullhorn saying, Continue straight ahead. So you have these competing bullhorns at that point in about—and I always remember that. I mean, one of the guys, we had like the more radical students, they had their gas masks on; they were ready to go, you know. And so about two hundred went back to the bridge. The remaining thirty-two, thirty-three hundred remained on the march.

And they didn’t really have enough manpower that day to shut down the roads and the sheriffs were out and had everything kind of figured out that day. So that was our, you know, the biggest antiwar event in Mankato’s history. In fact, I don’t think you have this particular—this is when the strike was called. I’m looking for the picture from the mall. I don’t see it.

KH: This?
DQ: Oh, it’s in that group. This is the one I think you have on your website. This is the Tuesday and the confrontation with the protestors. This is the following day; this is the one that I spoke at so that was the shot at the library. So after that, later in the week, we, on Thursday, the day following that we had a big concert where we invited the townspeople to come up to the campus and we had Pete Seeger [Peter Seeger (1919-2014)] coming in that particular day. So he did his concert and it was an evening concert and the townspeople came and so forth.

And, oh, there was one other event I should say about the day on Wednesday, when we had our big event at the college. WCCO had covered the Tuesday blocking of Highway 169 and the reporter who’d covered it was back on Wednesday in the news crew and they got singled out by one of the speakers for feeling that they covered our closing of the highway, and blocking the highway, in a negative way. And so the person speaking called out the WCCO reporter and he yelled back, “I just covered it the way I saw it,” so that was part of it. The other thing was, you know, Mitchell Goodman was upset with the silent march. He thought it was stupid; that it wouldn’t get publicity; it wouldn’t shut things down enough. And he tried talking people into going back to Highway 169 and, you know, accused those who did the silent march of being naïve and short-sighted.

And he wasn’t completely wrong because the coverage of the silent march got good publicity in Mankato, the Free Press and all that and the townspeople—got a lot of positive comments from the townspeople, but it didn’t get the national news. And that was, you know, big—once again, do the ends justify the means? If we’d shut down 169 for a second day with three thousand students, would we have made the national news? Yeah, probably.

KH: So how important was it in your mind at the time to attract media attention?

DQ: I think I was aware of it, but it wasn’t probably—it was part of an equation and part of it was convincing the townspeople that the war was a bad thing and winning the townspeople over seemed to play more—it influenced my thinking a little bit more. And then quite frankly, this wasn’t—we weren’t just talking civil disobedience; many of us at that point were afraid it would be violent and so the risk was real. People, and there were members in that group of thirty-five hundred who wanted a violent confrontation because [they thought] you need to take it beyond civil disobedience. The violence would be more—raise the exposure even further. So how far are you willing to go?

KH: And to what end? What—to what end does greater media exposure lead ideally?

DQ: Right. Ideally it leads to discussion, increasing the level of discussion nationally and shutting down—the thinking there literally was you need to shut everything down to stop the war. We had—we’ve been doing this since 1964, right? And we aren’t getting it done. In fact, look, it’s getting worse. So the feeling really was you need to shut the town, the college, the country down in order to change this. And even at that, of course, it didn’t necessarily reflect a majority of opinion at that point, right?

KH: So to the extent that maybe that did happen in pockets and in certain situations where, you know those who believed that did manage to shut some things down and get—do you think
it worked? Do you think the resulting conversation was what they had been aiming for? Was it, did it stimulate greater conversation about the war or did it stimulate greater conversation about how are we going to manage these protests?

**DQ:** A little bit of both, but there’s no doubt that the shutting down of college campuses, the violent events, Kent State, Jackson State, created a national conversation—it was kind of a cumulative effect where eventually people decided they’d had enough, but had there not been those strong demonstrations, how much longer would we have been in Vietnam? At what point would it—you know, there’s no doubt that the protests, whether it was Johnson or McGovern or Nixon, did have an impact—it did not allow them to pursue a course that they would have otherwise pursued.

And so it’s always a question in the end of, do the ends justify the means? You know, and people come out at a different point on that and I probably was a little bit more on the cautious side, but still, I wanted to make it happen and I was going to make it happen in part through the electoral process. I hadn’t given up on that. Other people had almost really given up on that and part of that justified a more civil disobedience type of approach.

By the way, now that I mention it, the book *Beyond Berkeley*, Henry David Thoreau [Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)]—is in there with his famous essay on civil disobedience and I remember there’s a quote in there where Emerson [Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)]—Thoreau is in jail and Emerson comes to visit him and Emerson says, “Henry, what are you doing in jail?” And Thoreau says, “Why aren’t you in here with me?” (laughter) So anyways, but I digress.

**KH:** I want to talk a little bit about some of the people you’ve mentioned and you’ve talked about Mitchell Goodman quite a bit. But tell me, us, what this Chair of Ideas position was. What’s a Chair of Ideas?

**DQ:** Chair of Ideas was an idea of—we would bring into Mankato somebody from the outside to expose us to thoughts and ideas that we maybe wouldn’t have gotten from the regular college campus. And I think—I’m trying to remember how that Chair of Ideas person was selected. I think the students had a role in that. So that was set up in Mankato and I’m trying to remember how often it occurred before Mitchell Goodman and after.

We had an art person by the name of Arnold Gruter [Arnoldus Gruter (died 2015)] who held the Chair of Ideas I think before Mitchell Goodman and he had a full-time art studio in the student union for a quarter. Then it was Mitchell Goodman and I’m not sure—I’d have to double check and see if the college ever allowed another Chair of Ideas after Mitchell Goodman. (laughter)

**KH:** Was it a teaching position? Did he teach classes?

**DQ:** Yes, he did teach some and, in fact, some of—he’d teach kind of nontraditional classes, but like Mark Halverson, who’s a guy I’d suggested, he took some of Mitchell Goodman’s classes. Yeah, it was something that the college and the students were very supportive of it. It was bringing in, you know, somebody that we wouldn’t ordinarily have on campus that we
would pick. I can’t even remember the selection process but in the end, Mitchell Goodman, was selected. The traditional faculty just saw him as the Pied Piper and he would truly instigate and was not concerned about any good impressions that he left, you know. It challenged traditional thinking.

I think he probably comes a little bit out of the Saul Alinsky [Saul David Alinsky (1909-1972)] school, you know, of organizers and community organizing. Yeah, he was quite a character. There were some threats from townspeople to do him physical harm they got so angry. In fact, I actually didn’t recall this, but in reading the essays, Mark Carson, who was the head of the political science department and involved in the college faculty, had heard rumors and talked with people and tried to convince Mitchell Goodman that his life was at risk and that maybe it would be a good idea for him to leave town.

And then Abbas Kessel was—they would have these debates where Mitchell Goodman would get up and call for an assertive, aggressive, civil disobedient action that could possibly be dangerous or turn violent, then Abbas Kessel would get up and push more of a nonviolent type of approach. And so they had some interesting debates on that before the throng of three thousand students. In fact, I was going to show you one other here—yeah, so here’s a picture at a rally. Mitchell Goodman is about to speak and this is Abbas Kessel, okay? So Kessel was quoted here and then Goodman is quoted below that, “Why every time that I speak, does Abbas Kessel disagree with me?” So they had—it was kind of an interesting thing.

KH: Do you think these debates, these kind of—the opportunity to listen to these two people who had pretty different ideas about how to approach this work—do you think that was a useful thing for the rest of the population? The students?

DQ: Yeah, I think it was. I think, I mean, it laid bare the disagreements [between] the people who were leading on this and, you know—I mean, Mitchell Goodman helped me understand the world and how it works better even though I philosophically probably didn’t agree with his tactics. But I, you know, understanding—he understood that it wasn’t going to be easy to stop this war and that we would have to do something dramatic to do it and were we ready to do that? It was a challenge and those of us who believed in nonviolence or civil disobedience were challenged to think, is what we’re going to do accomplish our goal or is it a waste of time?

And so that debate took place on a broader scale at some of those forums and we had faculty who would get up and speak and state how they felt. We had students, so it was kind of an exciting though chaotic time.

KH: So there were these debates kind of within the broader left, i.e., the antiwar movement. Do you recall there being debates, whether at these or events, or the planning for these events, with people who supported the war in Vietnam?

DQ: No, those that supported the war did so more silently. They might write a letter to the editor. During the early teach-in periods, I think there probably was more, you know, broader discussion, certainly in some of the political science classes and so forth. We had—I think they tended to be silent. Nixon always talked about the Silent Majority. Obviously, the campus was
much more liberal than the area around us, you know. One of the things—one of the interesting points that were made by townspeople when we had these big demonstrations through downtown and the closing of the Highway 169 is why had we not had events like the Thursday night when we invited the town up [to the campus for a dialog on the war]? The question from the townspeople was, why couldn’t you do this all the time? And our response back to them, we don’t think you would have showed up. So we had to grab their attention and [that of] the leadership in town before they became engaged. At that point, townspeople were worried that there would be violence; it was affecting businesses and everything else downtown. So they became engaged and many of the people on campus felt had we not been so strident, they never would have become engaged with us.

KH: So that brings us to the TV program that came, what? A week after this week-long series of events?

DQ: Yeah, one of the—the way it evolved was we had a town meeting during this week and one of the suggestions was we should ask KEYC TV for a half hour to do a program so people would understand what was happening. And so we decided—KEYC TV gave us a half hour and we wrote the script for it and we invited the president of the local bank, George Leeland, to it and there was two student representatives. One was Larry Spencer who was student body president and a woman by the name of Rita Gallagher, who was part of a women’s—she was an antiwar person—she was also very active in women’s liberation. She happened to be from my high school, too, which was interesting. And then we had John Hodowanic, who represented the college administration.

So the idea was kind of to bring together town and gown to discuss what was happening. And so we kind of summarized events, what created this, and then I would ask the different people on the panel, How did the students feel about this? How did the business community feel about this? Why did President Nickerson and the administration act this way? So we did that half hour program on it.

KH: Do you think it was a productive conversation?

DQ: I felt it was very productive but I was kind of at the center of it so I probably have a biased point of view. But, you know, you asked earlier about the town and that, so it was an effort to try to bring people together to understand what was happening. To a lot of town people, we were just those crazy college students and so at least we had—and I think the town wanted to give us an opportunity in a civil way to make our case.

KH: Did you hear about any kind of responses that the program got?

DQ: No, I didn’t. You know, I think overall the people who participated in it felt good about it, and the fact that we could talk with the business people from downtown and continued to do so, that was a—during this whole chaotic week, we would have periodic meetings with the people from the city, the community and it gave us an opportunity—I had an opportunity to ask them for funds to send some of our students to Washington to lobby, you know, against the war.
KH: Did they?

DQ: They helped provide funds, yeah, yeah. I can’t remember. Yeah, I know I asked for it. In fact, it may be mentioned in one of these newspapers and we did send a delegation to Washington so I assume it was helpful and they did do something.

KH: And that’s kind of remarkable given the hostility that we know existed between people of Kent and the students at Kent State. And I remember—I’ve watched and used in my classes a documentary about Kent State and we have footage of, you know, reporters going in and talking to the people of Kent, including the parents of some students, and they are saying things after the four students are killed that they got what they deserved. I mean, there was such hostility. Granted, before the shooting occurred, there had been some pretty significant damage done on campus and in the town of Kent. So, I mean, the tensions were so strong that it’s kind of interesting to hear in Mankato you’ve got a two-to-one ratio of supportive gestures and business people were, you know, contributing funds and there was this forum set up, that kind of thing.

DQ: There was tension. There was a lot of tension I think but there was an effort because part of our goal was to win the town over. I mean, one of the actions we did during the middle of this was to canvas the whole town in terms of getting people to sign a petition against the war so there was that. And I think they—the town—the other thing that Mankato had was a wonderful—it would break into two—the [Mankato Police Chief] was a person by the name of Alexander [Charles Alexander] and he was very good at working with the college administration and the students and, in effect, was the major reason why there wasn’t more violence.

Across the river there was a different sheriff in Nicollet County [George Witty], who was much less—didn’t work that much with the college; he was very unwilling. So we had a good group, you know, good police chief in Mankato that helped and they would—if we organized a protest they would help; they would make sure we had the street cleared; they would provide, if necessary, a police car to lead it, you know, so I think that reduced the possibility of violence—I might just mention Jim Nickerson. He joined in our seven-mile march, you know, was right out there so it wasn’t quite as flashy but having said that, a lot of the townspeople thought he was way too lax and wasn’t tough enough with these college students.

KH: And he was president of Mankato State.

DQ: He was president during that period, yeah, and in fact, he’s the one that wanted to write the book on the period and then he asked several of us to contribute chapters and so—

KH: Did you work with him personally?

DQ: Yeah. Worked with him personally, I mean, I had a good relationship with him. More than once I went with him when he’d have to go out to a small town and talk to, you know, the local chamber or the Kiwanis and so—and yeah, I did—and after I graduated, we stayed in contact; I visited him a couple times at his retirement apartment. And Mehr Shahidi, who was also very close to him. Mehr was part of a cabinet that Nickerson organized to kind of deal with the crisis. Mehr and Larry Spencer were both part of that so they were—the one thing they bring
to the table is experience on that day. Of course, Larry Spencer’s dead, but Mehr and Mark Halverson, once again, were on the bridge that day and Mark represented a little bit more the radical perspective.

A funny thing on that, coming back to the rock and Mark Halverson. Mark acquired our initial rock with—by going to St. Cloud in a state car and bringing back a thousand-pound rock. And it was of questionable origin in terms of how he got this thousand-pound rock for a hundred bucks, you know. (laughter)

KH: Yeah, that might be suspicious.

DQ: So we initially were not going to use it because we didn’t know if it was hot, you know. And then the other rock that we had for it ended up breaking, just a week or so before the event and we were desperate so—

KH: But you came into another.

DQ: That is the rock.

KH: The one that’s still there?

DQ: Yeah, the one that’s still there was the one that Mark miraculously came up with from friends in St. Cloud—

KH: Ah, it is the one.

DQ: and actually drove a state car up there to pick up the rock and bring it back. And then he came in with this explanation that he had this beautiful rock ready to go and we were suspicious of it, myself and Larry Spencer, so we had this other smaller rock inscribed. At the time, because there was some construction being done on the student union and, anyways, long story short, it got knocked over and it broke ten days before the big ceremony so we ended up using that rock—

KH: The rock of ill repute.

DQ: Yeah, the rock of ill repute or Mark used to refer to it as Pandora’s Rock, you know.

KH: Don’t ask. Don’t open that one. So I also wanted to ask about women, because with the exception of Rita Gallagher that you mentioned, it seems like most of the people who were involved in these events were men. What was the role of women in some of these events?

DQ: There was, you know, that’s a good point. We had on our Student Senate, we had active women. There was a woman named Vicki Bolton, who—I don’t know if she has a memoir on that, but it does seem—Joyce Stenzel was our vice president of the Student Senate. She was a woman, she was involved but didn’t really have a leadership role in these activities. You know,
I’d have to think about that more, but you’re right. It seems to be—Rita Gallagher was a point person in a lot of these antiwar efforts and was also a feminist, early feminist.

The head of the student newspaper was a woman by the name of Pat Campanaro and she gave the Student Senate and our activities a lot of coverage and from her transition to Dave Phelps, who is oftentimes listed in here and Dave, you know, wrote a lot of stuff on it. As I understand it, he is working on a book on this, and I don’t know whatever happened. I haven’t touched base with Dave probably in seven or eight years and you didn’t have luck, so I’m not sure where he’s at.

KH: Last I heard, from what I found was that he retired from the Star Tribune, but—

DQ: At one point, I was a Facebook friend with him—

KH: Okay.

DQ: And I thought he was maybe living out in St. Louis Park [St. Louis Park, MN], but yeah—getting back to the role of women, you know women were playing a stronger role at this time. We had several of them on the Student Senate. There was a woman by the name of Patti Stafford, who was active as a Student Senator, various—but it is interesting. I’m having trouble identifying more women leaders so Rita Gallagher—I’ll guess I’ll give that some more thought but it’s a good question.

KH: Well, a lot of the history of the women’s movement that has been written captures this—the evolution of the women’s movement, the feminist movement, coming out of the student movement, the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement in part because women start thinking, You know, all of these progressive men are still asking us to make the coffee at these meetings, and so they move out and do their own—and focus their efforts on their own movement. So who knows? Sixty-nine, seventy-two—you know what I mean. Maybe attention is elsewhere by that time.

DQ: Yeah, but, I think it’s—I would have to give it some more thought. I think you raise a good point that there wasn’t as many women in these leadership roles at this point and they’re just beginning, the Rita Gallaghers and the others are just beginning to move into positions of leadership. It would be interesting to know, in terms of our Student Senate, you know, how long was it before we elected a woman president at the college. I think there was—in later years, I know there was a woman [Stephanie Schriock (1973-)] who now heads up Emily’s List.

KH: Oh, yeah, that—

DQ: She was a student leader at Mankato and then she eventually went on to that role and she’s the head of Emily’s List now, but, yeah, I hadn’t thought through that very much, but—

KH: Well, so you had talked earlier about the Mark Halverson wing, the People’s Party and there being some more militant black students involved in that. Are they part of these events of 1972?
DQ: Yeah, in fact some of the—I’m trying to—I’d have to double check on it but one of the events that occurred later in the week of—when we had the big march, was there were two takeovers of Old Main, okay, by antiwar activists and I think some black students as well. The black students had an issue that they actually would bring up at our big antiwar demonstrations. There was a black teacher [Walter Reed, a professor in Vocational Rehabilitation] who had been released from his contract that they wanted reinstated and that became a big item for them every time they spoke and they pushed Nickerson on the whole issue, too. And I think, if I recall right, in the two takeovers of Old Main, one was—they were tossed out on one day and then they came back and were there for the full weekend and Jim Nickerson stayed in the building. That might have involved some black students who were also antiwar activists.

As you look at the pictures and everything, it seems to be primarily Caucasian people but they did—I do know that they did—probably part of it was while there were more and more black students at Mankato, they were just—their numbers probably were only one hundred-fifty.

KH: Out of how many? How many were enrolled at that point?

DQ: At that point, there’s thirteen thousand students at Mankato. It’s a relatively small proportion. The faculty is, you know, we have an Office of Minority Affairs; we have some black faculty, but I think it’s a relatively low percentage.

KH: So this TV program airs what? May 24, 1972? So that’s right at the end of spring quarter/semester, whatever at the time, and you’re graduating. Do you graduate—No? You graduate—

DQ: No, originally if I’d graduated in two years, I would have graduated in June of 1972. By this point, in ’72, though, I’m coming to the end of my term both as president of the Minnesota State College Student Association and as speaker of the Student Senate, so I’ve got stuff on that, too. But—so that’s towards the end and things calm down. One of the things that we really haven’t discussed is there was a lot of effort to figure out with all this disruption, Could students take incompletes? So there was a whole lot of leniency in terms of taking incompletes that quarter and being able to make things up later. So the school provided some special rules in the spring of 1972 that made it—so we didn’t lose half of the students to bad grades and being dropped out. So there were some special rules that were developed in the spring of 1972 that eased that allowed the completion of the quarter in some form of orderly fashion because there were so many days where everything was literally lost in terms of the marches and everything else.

KH: So how does your—how do you end your tenure at Mankato State? You graduate in December of ’72—

DQ: Yeah, I do, and interesting little tidbit that I worked from June to December to get all of my credits that I needed for graduation and we had a program there that helped you get internships and speaking—there was a black person that headed that program—and he helped me
get an internship with the House Research Department at the Minnesota Legislature in January of 1973.

KH:  Okay, so you were—?

DQ:  So I got to work in the—I was very lucky, it was a wonderful job and it was—the House Research Department which had, and still has, a nonpartisan staff. They service the different committees and people—when the legislators want research done on something they ask the Research Department to do something on it, so they needed interns. They actually paid the interns, so I had a six-month internship there during the 1973 Legislative Session.

That was kind of why—I moved back—I hated to move from Mankato. In fact, I had, at one point, they were looking—they wanted to run somebody for the State Senate in Mankato and I had gotten enough publicity that my name was included in a list of people to possibly run against the Republican Senator who was Arnie Ueland [Arnulf "Arnie" Ueland, Jr. (1920-2004)] at the time, but there were other people that were better known and probably wasn’t the best of times to run in a Senate area that took in a lot larger area. We had, that fall of ’73, for the first time, we took a city council member named Dave Cummiskey [David R. "Dave" Cummiskey (1949–)], and we ran him for the State Legislature against a Republican by the name of Gus Johnson [C. A. "Gus, Little Gus" Johnson (1893-1977)], who had been the attorney there in town and he’d been a legislator for like twenty terms, you know.

We organized a campaign that fall, using kind of what we’d learned from our antiwar Student Senate stuff and we had a twenty-four-hundred-dollar budget and we had thirty-six hand painted signs and we door-knocked and he ended up in the fall of 1973, unseating Gus Johnson so that was a little political thing I got involved with in the fall of 1972. And then from there, the opportunity to work up here at the Capitol was like a big, you know, exciting opportunity for me so I moved from Mankato back up to the cities in 1973.

KH:  So you’re up here then when the United States signs the Paris Peace Accords; we’re pulling our troops out; the POWs come home. How did you feel about the war’s end and how it ended?

DQ:  I was a big Jimmy Carter [US President James Earl Carter Jr. (1924–)] supporter in 1976. Because I was up here and I wasn’t on campus, I didn’t, you know, I lost a little bit of my contact down there. I stayed in touch with some of the people, Mehr Shahidi, and Larry Spencer and, you know, I was happy we got out of the war. I was really happy in support of, like I said, Jimmy Carter. I was a big George McGovern fan back in 1972.

And in fact, John Salchert was the head of the House Urban Affairs Committee at the legislature and I ended up being the committee research person and he offered me a job at the end of the 1973 legislative session provided I would support all his candidates. He was from the north side of Minneapolis and they were a very cliquey group up there so I decided not to do it and I ended up driving taxi cab for a year which was a lesson in itself. But at one point, he said to me, when we were having this heart to heart discussion and he says, “Dan, let me ask you. Who did you support in 1972? George McGovern or Hubert Humphrey?” And I says, “Mr. Salchert, I think
George McGovern was an awful good man.” And he looked at me and he said, “Ach, he was a weak tinkler.” So anyways—

KH:  (laughter) Well, and yeah, that ’72 election—

DQ:  So I was a big McGovern person. I went to the National Student Association Convention back in—that was 1972 as well and that was when McGovern was just beginning to run so, while I was probably in it, so I was just all in on McGovern; Humphrey I didn’t have time for at that point so somewhere along the way here I make a transition—I was more uncertain probably on McCarthy and Humphrey when they were running—or I was in the process of transitioning but by 1972, I was solidly in that camp and I remember we did the caucuses and everything, too, in ’72. We just overwhelmed the caucuses in Mankato and we thought we were pretty hot stuff, that we were changing the world, you know. Well, the world’s a little bit wider than just the college campus at Mankato. Had to learn that.

KH:  So do you consider yourself an activist?

DQ:  Yeah, yeah, I do. What I do today, after I retired, I’m very active in faith-based organizing. The group that—you apparently found my name through ISAIAH. ISAIAH is a faith-based organization of about a hundred churches across Minnesota who organize for social justice and so I’ve been involved in that group at my church in South Minneapolis, Mayflower [Mayflower United Church of Christ, Minneapolis], since 2008. After I retired, I became active on the board of ISAIAH and I’m statewide treasurer for that now. And we are involved in things like health care; things like paid family leave for people; fifteen dollar an hour wage; payday lending; a variety of issues. Expansion of MinnesotaCare [Department of Human Services MinnesotaCare]. So I do that now. That’s kind of carry over. There was a transition—and I get a lot of enjoyment out of that, or satisfaction’s a better word.

After I came back to Minneapolis, back in 1973, I ended up—this is kind of getting off the subject matter here quite a bit but—I ended up getting involved with community organizations. At the time a group called the South Minneapolis Coalition. I was also at the same time active in local DFL politics, you know, as a twenty-three-year-old and the South Minneapolis Coalition—there was a series of community organizations, Northeast Community Organization in northeast Minneapolis; Organization for a Better St. Paul in St. Paul. And then we kind of brought these all together in something called the Twin Cities Federation and that was supposed to represent the entire metro area.

So I was very active on housing issues. I was very active in local politics which led me to get endorsed for the twelfth ward alderman at twenty-five and being on the city council for a brief period of time. Dennis Schulstad [Dennis W. Schulstad (1944-)]—I don’t know if you’ve ever heard the name—he was the Republican or Independent that beat me— But anyways, I ended up meeting my wife during this period. We were married for thirty years. She was an organizer for the South Minneapolis Coalition and she ended up getting out of organizing, coming back to the Twin Cities here and getting a degree in industrial relations from the University of Minnesota and we have two adopted children from Korea, who one’s a special ed teacher in Bemidji [Bemidji, MN]; the other runs the Hammer Made Shirt Store [Hammer Made Men’s Clothing]
out in Galleria [Galleria, Edina, MN]. And then working for the state for thirty-eight years, [starting in 1976 and ending with my retirement in 2014].

KH: Did any of your values or opinions either about the war or about how best to achieve social change change over the years from your time at Mankato State?

DQ: Yeah, I think I evolved at Mankato State and then my activity in community organizations involved working in organizations that had some influence locally. Saul Alinsky, who was a community organizer in Chicago and understood what motivated people, you know, that altruism was nice but you have to understand self-interest oftentimes to motivates people. So, you know, I think I still retain that view—though I’ve never been a radical really. I’ve always been kind of on the edge of progressive politics but believe very strongly in organizing and the need to organize and that it can make a significant difference and it’s, you know, one of the ways you can kind of change society.

KH: What impact do you think the events at Mankato State made either on the college campus or in Mankato or on the antiwar movement as a whole?

DQ: I think we were part of a, you know, small part of a very big picture and we had influence; we activated a whole generation of activists. Mankato had never had a student city council member; or, like I mentioned a little bit earlier, replaced an old very conservative Republican legislator with a progressive young student so there were those kind of things where we had local impact.

I think we were part of a bigger picture with what was happening here in Minnesota and nationally. It’s hard to measure your impact. I think it influenced a generation of people that became very active in, you know, probably up through the early Reagan period, I think we had an impact on society.

KH: What impact did those years have on your life? And maybe there’s an answer already woven into what you’ve been talking about.

DQ: Well, what it would do, it kind of spurred my interest in public service, you know. It influenced my desire to be an elected official. We felt we could do a better job than those before us. There was like a little touch of arrogance in our thinking probably. So it spurred me to want to make a difference, that period in Mankato. And I saw that we could have an impact, you know. And so, when I got done with four years of college, I was not interested in going on to get a graduate degree. I wanted to do something where I could have an impact right away. And so I never kind of looked back at trying to get a graduate degree or anything like that because I wanted to get out there right away.

Plus I had a pretty good student loan debt, too, but it engaged me so much that I knew I wanted to do something in public service and if that was elected office, that was great. If it involved working in state government, that was good, too, so at a certain point, I kind of scaled back my personal ambitions, had a family, found myself in an area where I was making a difference in
government, enjoyed what I was doing so I guess that’s how it influenced me, moving me into an interest in elected service and/or public service of some sort.

**KH:** And what do you think it takes—this is another question I’ve been asking people. What do you think it takes to be an activist, particularly in light of the likelihood that you will encounter challenges, if not failures along the way? What sustains you as an activist?

**DQ:** I think what sustains you is when you see those small victories and you see that you’ve made a contribution to the direction [you want the state or nation to go]; the last thing I want to do is spend a lot of time on something and not have it make a difference so I tend to be somewhat pragmatic where I spend my time. I don’t want to chase windmills. I want to think strategically. Where maybe can I make a difference? Then I’m also driven to some extent by my religious faith. You know, I read the New Testament and it talks to me. It says, you’ve got to go out there and do something, and I see it differently than a lot of conservative evangelicals. I get so upset when conservative evangelicals are seen as speaking for organized religion. I grant you they’ve got their place, their interest, but that kind of upsets me.

To answer your question, part of the, you know, I’m faith driven. That’s part of what I see my job as is to make this world better and to me it’s pretty clear we haven’t gotten anywhere close to where we should be as we see the disparities in society since 1980 increase so much. We’ve got all this abundance; we seem to have difficulty sharing it and so that’s kind of what drives me and has driven me for a long time. There is a period of time when you’re raising your family where you have less time to do things, but now that I do have some time, I try to make sure that I’m doing [what needs to be done]. My faith is what also drives me and motivates me to share our abundance.

I think it’s Economics 101 and people don’t oftentimes understand it. It’s the old Wellstone [Paul David Wellstone (1944-2002)] idea, we all do better when we all do better. I think that works. I think it not only works on a philosophical and a moral basis, I think it works on an economic basis.

**KH:** So do you think that the United States has yet—I don’t know how else to ask this—this is phrased thusly a lot, come to terms with the war in Vietnam?

**DQ:** Yeah, I think we have to a good extent. I think we recognize we’re a little bit better in understanding that we can’t be the world’s policemen. I think we always face this international question of—there’s a moral injustice we may feel going on somewhere and does that warrant us going in and fixing it militarily? And I think we understand that a little bit better today as a society and our understanding of communism is a bit more nuanced than it was in the early sixties, so I think we’ve made some headway on that.

**KH:** Do you think there are—let me ask it this way. What lessons would you like people to take away from your experiences in the antiwar movement or from the war experience as a whole?
DQ: I think I would say beware of entangling foreign engagements that you think are a necessity because often they aren’t. And Vietnam is kind of example number one. We had to be there; if we lost it, dire things would happen and today we’re good trading partners with Vietnam. So sometimes we get too much caught up in this international chess game and we just need to be very careful before we commit our blood and treasure to foreign endeavors. I’m a little bit of a Midwestern dove. You’re going to really have to have a strong case before I’m ever willing to commit blood and treasure in foreign lands.

You know, our situation in Iraq, we went in there because we were convinced Saddam Hussein [Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti (1937-2006)] had nuclear weapons and here we are, ten, fifteen years later and we’re still struggling with it, you know. So I just think we need to be super careful. There’s a tendency to jump too quickly into foreign engagements and I think that’s the lesson from Vietnam.

KH: And what do you want people to know about the antiwar movement in Minnesota and specifically in Mankato?

DQ: Well, I think it’s important to recognize the antiwar movement was made up of a variety of individuals and philosophies and that it wasn’t just one monolithic group. That would be, I guess, the one takeaway on that comes to mind.

KH: Did you—and I don’t want to open up a whole other train of discussion here but you just reminded me—did you at the time, or do you now when you look back at it, see connections between the antiwar movement and some of the other social justice movements of the day—the civil rights movement, economic inequality?

DQ: Yeah, I think I do and there was a—I think the fact—and we talked a little bit earlier about Martin Luther King and how he would eventually come to the conclusion that he wasn’t just working for civil rights. He thought the war was a bad thing. You know, these things tend to be interrelated. Sometimes the reason for going into a particular country or taking an action, has to do with our economic interests and businesses that the United States wants to maintain or help and are located in these countries, you know.

Guatemala, 1954, we overthrew a democratically elected government so that we could protect American Fruit Company [former United Fruit Company (1899-1970)]; we overthrew in Iran in 1954, a democratically elected person because we were afraid they were going to be too socialist, you know. Same thing was true of land sharing in Guatemala, so yeah, I think these things are interrelated. It’s not always a one to one relationship but—and in the antiwar movement we tended to see people who shared an interest in civil rights, the women’s liberation movement, and economic fairness—they were all part of this kind of antiwar movement to a large extent.

KH: Is there anything else you want to get on the record before we wrap up?

DQ: Well, I think we’ve covered a lot of ground. Good luck editing this.

KH: Well, thank you so much, Dan. It was really, really interesting.
DQ: I enjoyed it, too.

KH: Good.

End of interview