

BRUCE HARTFORD  
INTERVIEW BY KIERAN TAYLOR  
11 JULY 2002

BH: I'm going to put it in record.

KT: OK. Well, let's -

BH: See what's happening.

KT: OK. Well we'll see if this is working.

BH: Is it moving? All right.

KT: What I'm going to do then, I was thinking, is we're going to do this Civil Rights things Monday, so I'd like to just kind of briefly get some of your biographical data, the background, a little bit of childhood, schooling, and well kind of breeze through the 60s but really get into your work after the 60s, and that'll be kind of the focus. So just to start out, if you could for the sake of the tape, say your name and when and where you were born.

BH: OK. Bruce Hartford. 64987240. It's just a number I made up, because, you now, you've got to be ID'd. Well I was born at a very early age in Chicago, Illinois, and my parents, when I was real young - My parents were union organizers. They were with the CIO. They were the union called the ACA, which was one of the unions that was eventually Red-baited into non-existence. They were a precursor of the Communications - Actually, the CWA, the Communications Workers of America, was the company union the phone company set up to supplant and destroy, although now they're a fairly progressive union. So we moved to L.A. where I endured many years. And I went to school. I got active in the Civil Rights Movement in L.A. I was active with the L.A. CORE and the Non-Violent Action Committee, 63, 64, a couple of years. Then I went

south and went to work on the staff of SCLC in Alabama and Mississippi, 65, 66 and a little squiggle into 67. 67 I went up to New York City, worked with [James] Bevel on the first big - It was called the Spring Mobe, Spring Mobilization. It was the first big anti-war march in New York. I don't know, 100 thou, 150,000 people, quite successful. And then that fall I enrolled in San Francisco State. I'd gone two years junior college in L.A. and I'd gone to UCLA and flunked out because I didn't go to class and didn't do the reading and didn't do the homework and didn't take the tests, because I was busy doing civil rights stuff. And for some reason they felt that this was wrong. I mean, talk about an outrage. Just because I never showed up in class. Anyway, they flunked me out, the bastards. So I went to San Francisco State, which was of course a major center, a hotbed of SDS anti-war blah, blah, blah, which I was deeply involved in. And at that point - Of course, I'd grown up in a labor environment and pretty much I was putting myself through school financially. I got a little money from my parents, but mainly I was making it working as a casual longshoreman through the ILWU. And that was cool. That was a great job. You should ask me about that. You'll get some interesting stories. So I did that. Then there was the big waterfront strike of 71, which is a big story. And at the end of that, essentially the work for what we used to call casual work, part of the settlement of that strike pretty much eliminated that. Which was all right, because at that point I was getting involved in GI stuff and so I went to the western Pacific and worked with Marines putting out anti-war underground newspapers on the bases, you know in Japan, Vietnam, Laos. You know, all of the fun places. And so that was 70, 71 into 72ish. I came back, and there was no longshore work, so I got - I started working in factories and warehouses that were in ILWU Local 6, which they call the warehouse division. And I eventually -

Hold on. Let me step - Let me jump back a bit. During the civil rights period, you know I was a civil rights worker, and I had that mentality. During the SDS, late 60s, I became an anti-Imperialist revolutionary, which basically meant I was long on emotion and short on practical good sense. But the GI work sort of really exposed, you know educated me to the very serious shortcomings of that ideology. So I became - I started drifting into Marxism, Leninism, Communism, which essentially meant that I'd moved from long on emotion and short on common sense to viewing the entire world through the intellectual equivalent of a really strong hallucinogen. Have you even taken hallucinogens? Are you familiar?

KT: Can I turn off the tape? [laughing]

BH: All right. Well, never - I don't know if this metaphor will go over your head or not, but it was very distorted reality. So that was the political space I was in. When I came back and I started working full time in factory - And I was part of the Party Building Movement to build a real, true Marxist-Leninist Party or you know, in other words, to get a really stronger hit of the hallucinogen. And so I did that, and I eventually ended up as a Chief Shop Steward in a chemical plant in the Oakland waterfront, which I like to say that if you could take your typical Green Peace activist and delve into that persons deepest psyche of their nightmare of what a chemical plant at its worst would be, that was the chemical plant I was working in. I mean, you know, the pollution had pollution. So anyway, I ended up - Eventually I ended up in what can only be described as a Communist cult, which it went through a number of names. I think eventually it ended up as the Democratic Workers Party. It, of course, being totally not democratic,

having very little to do with workers, and it was certainly not a party, at least in the fun sense.

KT: This is Marlene's -

BH: Yeah, this is Marlene [*Dixon*]. She was our little Stalinoid figure, or big Stalinoid figure in her case. So basically I crashed and burned on that. I mean, eventually reality raised its ugly head, and I had to come off of the hallucinogen and sober up, and I escaped from the Party. And at that point, I was really down on Marxism, Leninism, and Communism, an attitude to which I hold dearly to this day. And all right - So I continue working in the plant, because I had to have a fuckin job, and then I had an industrial accident and I ended up - I decided I'd change careers to one that was less dangerous, and I became a tech writer. Then I became a founder of the National Writers Union, and I was an activist. Until just last year, I was the National Secretary-Treasurer for more than 10 years. And over the course of it, I've become - I've moved not only to being anti-Marxist, Leninist, and anti-Communist, I've moved to pretty much being down on the self-defying left in America. And I do not include in that people who are doing serious community organizing and you know - But I do include of it the people who portray themselves or put themselves forward as leftists. So basically that's sort of the arc there.

KT: Well, let me - That's good. Let me take this back a bit. So you don't remember Chicago.

BH: No.

KT: OK. And what year was it you were born?

BH: 44.

KT: 44. So as a toddler, you're in L.A., and your parents - So 44 - Their unions defunct by 50. What do they do then? By the time-?

BH: Well, it was not only was the unions defunct. Well, the union was destroyed, and they tried to work in other unions. The FBI, the hearings, the, you know, the committees. You know, so they were essentially driven out. Well, my father - The Party had set up this community medical center, and he was the manager of that for awhile, and then that fell apart. My mother had various jobs that the FBI would come and get her fired from. And then they left the Party in '57 after the, you know, Krushchev report and for a lot of other reasons, basically them being disgusted with the Party, which I should've learned. You know, I mean, after all, I went through this as a kid. I shouldn't have had to repeat it. But I did. And confirmed everything they had told me, but of course, you know, what do your parents know? You know, a bunch of idiots, you know. Although I noticed as I've gotten older, they've gotten smarter.

KT: Are they from Chicago?

BH: No, my mom was basically from Brooklyn, and my father was from the hills of Kentucky. That's a whole separate story. I mean, let's not go into that, because you'll be here for hours.

KT: No, I'm just curious. Just sort of the origin, you know, your family. I'm wondering about what - Do you have early political memories? I mean is there something that struck you early on that Well, my family's a little different?

BH: Well, yeah, I mean, you know, people spray-painting hammers and sickles on your front windows, and the teacher, you know, in sixth grade, you know, asking you, coming up and saying, Well, you know- and explaining all about democracy

and freedom and how Communism equals slavery and torture and murder. And Here, we have in Democracy, and we're so democratic, why we have a boy here in this class whose parents are Communists. Bruce, would you like to come up and defend the Communist point of view? You know, stuff - Yeah, so I sort of had a hint.

KT: [laughing]

BH: This -

KT: I'm laughing, but that's absolutely -

BH: It was rather -

KT: Tragic.

BH: It was -

KT: I shouldn't be laughing.

BH: Well, it is - You know, I said it funny, but it wasn't funny at the time. I look back on it now, and it's funny. So yeah - I didn't know I was a political - You know, Paul Robeson comes to dinner, you know. So shit like that.

KT: So your parents were at least mid-level, or they had some sort of -

BH: No, they were -

KT: Just rank and file.

BH: Yeah, pretty much. But, you know, they were, you know, they were activists. They were active in the unions and stuff. I mean, they weren't big shots. No, they were rank and file. They weren't even like district or anything. And the Party - See with my father - Well, it's a little hard to explain. My father had a sixth grade education. I mean, he finished elementary school. That was it. But he was very self-educated. He knew this shit. He was one of the very few people in the Party who actually had read

Marx. All of it, you know. And understood a lot of it, you know, to the extent that it was understandable. So he was self-educated, but he was very rare in the Party, because they had very few native non-Jewish southerners. So he used to pull all the great assignments like Mississippi [laughing] and Alabama. And they were always suspicious of him, that because he was a white southerner, he must be racist. So they would pull shit like - So he actually should've - You know, if the Party had actually been anything like it portrayed itself, which of course it was not, he should've been like way up in the leadership. But they would pull shit like one time we had a picnic up by the Rose Bowl. The Party had a picnic. Not we, they. He brought a watermelon, and they brought him up on charges of racism for bringing a watermelon to the picnic, that it was an insult to our Negro brethren or some shit like that. Of course, everybody enjoyed the watermelon, but that - you know, it was that kind of - Another time he used the phrase behind the eight ball. Now apparently, most of these Party apparatchiks had never played pool, so since the eight ball is black, they figured that must be a racist - So he was brought up on charges on that shit too. So, you know - So, did I learn from this? No! So anyway, where were we? I got lost.

KT: Well, probably about 1957. So I'm wondering, just to - You know, I know we don't want to get too deep into the Civil Rights, but was your first - How did you-? I mean, CORE was kind of the first organizational affiliation?

BH: Yeah.

KT: Who introduced you to CORE? How were you introduced to CORE?

BH: Well, we really are going off into the Civil Rights, but all right. My first year - my first semester at L.A. City College, a very prestigious institution of lower learning, I've had, you know - I was like, you know, my parents had left. I was alone in

L.A. You know no idea what the fuck I'm doing with my life, completely lost. And so I hung out at this coffee house, a beatnik coffee house called Pogos Swamp on Melrose. I'm sure it's now a very fancy boutique. Anyway, it was a real - it was a beatnik place. So I'm hanging down there, and I'm very - You know, I'm Jewish, and I'm very - and even then, I was not religiously Jewish but Jewish in a cultural sense, and the Holocaust had made a big impression on me, etc, etc. So they said, Oh hey, we're having a program here. A guy, Michael somebody- a Latino guy. I can't remember his name. Michael something. Hes going to show some movies he shot at the CORE demonstration for open housing in Torrance. You know, he could have been saying, Michael is going to be showing movies of Hicka-da-boo-boo-wah-ha-hm-hm you know, or something in Martian. I didn't know what the fuck he was talking about. So the guy sets up his camera, and he's showing these movies, and he shows these people, black and white. They're picketing. They got signs, Open Housing and Integration, Freedom. And the uniformed members of the Nazi Party outnumber them. There were like 10 pickets and 40 Nazis. And I What the fuck is this? So you know, I says, Hey. Nazis? Hey, I'm there. You know? And that was it. I got into CORE, and, you know, that was it. So that's how I -

KT: So you had -

BH: I'm going to get a drink of pop. You might want to turn that off.

KT: OK.

BH: You want something?

KT: Maybe some water.

BH: Water.

KT: Is that doable?

BH: Oh yeah. We got water. [Break]

BH: They couldn't - You know, they kept getting fired all the time, every time. You know, they were good workers, but FBI would show up. So what happened was some old - somebody they knew from the Party got my father a job as the business manager of the Yale University Research Lab, or Biology - something with the Biology Department or the Botany Department or Life Sciences, some shit like that. I don't know. And my father said, Well, you know, I'm gonna get fired. As soon as they find out I'm a former ex-Red. They said, No. This is Yale. So my father went there, and he was a little worried. They said, Don't worry about it. Turns out that the head of the Yale Security Department was a former FBI agent, and he started compiling a list of the Reds who had infiltrated Yale. And the Lord High Poobah of Yale - I don't know, the Chancellor or the somebody, the big shot heard - Oh, the Yalie Daily heard about this and wrote a story. The Lord High Poobah goes down to the guy, the security guy, and basically said, On the hierarchy of social status in America, Yale is way above the FBI. You do not do this stuff to Yale. Burn your fuckin files. And made the guy burn the files. So Yale considered itself - It was like insulted, you know, that the FBI would do this to Yale. So my father had a job. They didn't fire him. They said - I think their attitude to the FBI is You are our servant not our master. Go fuck yourself. I hope whoever listens to this understands that I was a longshoreman. I worked with Marines. I have a filthy mouth.

KT: Oh, we'll put a PG-13 rating on it.

BH: Oh, OK. Well one of those little [beep] things, yeah.

KT: So I want to jump ahead then to San Francisco State. Were you there during the major strike?

BH: Both the year before, which was also a very heavy year and then the strike.

KT: So was it the end of 67 then?

BH: September of 67 to the end of the strike.

KT: I'm wondering before - Well, was it in - during SCLC or in New York City or when would you have first sort of been exposed to people on the hard Left? I mean, can you remember that?

BH: Well, some of them, you know, you knew just cause they were around the Civil Rights Movement, and they were around the Spring Mobe to some degree, but really it was at - You know, and some of them I'd grown up with, you know, the ones who were like knee-red diaper babies. But before I went - When I was with CORE and NVAC - Non-Violent Action Committee - I'd had some contact with the early SDS when it was still in its, you know, participatory democracy - really the New Left. And I knew some of those people. I can't remember their names right now, but it'll eventually - One of my dead brain cells will wake up for a moment. I may remember one of their names. But it was really at SF State that I ran into the hard core SDS, which at SF State when I arrived there - SF State was one of the really big, active, important SDS chapters in terms of size. We didn't have the prestige of Cal, because we were just a state college, but in terms of size and activism - When we did Stop the Draft Week, right? Over in Oakland. You know, gonna blockade the draft, right? The big shots who led the thing were the Cal SDS, right? But they decided to give San Francisco State the honor of being the ones to actually block right in front of the [laughing] induction center, because a) they were chicken and b) we were tough, so - And one of the reasons that the SDS at State was

somewhat - was that way, I mean, was that the average age of State College was high. In other words, we had a lot of people who'd been out in the work force. We had a lot of veterans, you know, people who'd been to Vietnam. So we were an older group by, you know, a year or two average, but you know, we had people who'd been - See, Cal was basically you go to high school, you go to college, you know. They don't - never been out in the real world. Anyway, the SDS chapter at State was total - was strongly dominated by PL, Progressive Labor Party, which was a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist, you know, organization. And they did not react well to me, and I did not react well to them, because I was still coming out of the Civil Rights Movement, you know. I thought we should sing at demonstrations instead of chanting. Where did this-? What rock did this liberal bourgeois, you know, sell-out mealy-mouth liberal come from? You know? Anyway, by the end - by the end of the strike, I and - I and a woman name Joy Maxis and Charlie Rasmussen and a couple other people, some of whom eventually ended up in IS, had basically organized to the extent that we controlled - The chapter was split half between us. We called ourselves the Joe Hill Caucus and half PL. And we had a lot more fun, because one of our main points of unity was smoking dope. [laughing] Their main point of unity was having, you know, readings from the little red book or something. I don't know. What the fuck? You know?

KT: But in terms of, I mean, organizing credentials, yours must have been -

BH: They totally disrespected the Civil Rights Movement. It was non-violent. And especially me, coming from Dr. King. It was non-violent. It was reformist. It was not revolutionary. It did not follow the Black Nation of the South, black belt business.

KT: Thesis.

BH: Thesis or whatever it was. They had some theory, cockamamie theory. But basically it was reformist and non-violent and therefore anti-revolutionary. And they actually were very suspicious. You know the fact that I had that credentials made them more suspicious of me rather than less. And also the fact that, you know, because, you know, I mean they're used to recruiting - Here comes some kid right out of high school or, you know, out of the Army or what, and you know suddenly they're being hit with all of this you know radical thought. You know, and they're just like, Oh wow! You know? But I had had a past. I couldn't say, Well, you fuckin idiot. So I was seen as a threat.

KT: Tell me about working longshoreman. So it was while you were at State that you -

BH: And then late after the strike.

KT: And then after you went down to the [fall] and-?

BH: Well initially I was - They had - They were sending casuals out on longshore jobs through Local 2, which was the ship scalers local. Kind of a really sleazy local, one of - sort of the back alley of [laughing] [...]. And it was kind of a rotten operation going on there. I mean, ILW is a really clean union, so when I say it was a rotten operation I mean in comparison to the normal ILWU. And then after the strike, I got hooked up as a casual with Local 34, the ship clerks, and that's where - I got a lot more work that way.

KT: Did you know a Don Watson who was a mainstay in the ship clerks-?

BH: Maybe. It doesnt - You know, I mean, Jimmy Herman, you know, was the only name I remember.

KT: I'd imagine -

BH: Oh let me tell you!

KT: Oh yeah, please.

BH: So the first day, me and - I think it was me and Charlie, Charlie Rasmussen. Great guy. Our very first day on the job as a longshoreman, on our very first ship, we go, you know, Wow. You know, It's a fuckin ship, man. You know, and we're like, you know, Wow. And we climb down into the hold down this old, dirty, grimy ladder and all this shit, and there's this old guy down there. He says, Oh, I see you kids are new. You know, I mean it was like, you know, it was like we were wearing a sign. We said, Yeah, yeah, yeah. He says, OK. He says, Well, looky here. I want to tell you what's what. He says, Now, I'm the gang boss. Uh-huh. And he says, Now here's the way it is. You see them guys up top? And he points up to the - He says, Them lookin over us? They got those white hats on? They're the bosses. Down here in the hold, we is the workers. They are you enemy. We are your allies. You don't got no loyalty to them. Your loyalty is to us down here. You know? And he'd like ran this whole - Oh, yeah. We can dig it. We can dig it. You know? He says, OK. Now what we want you two guys to go- Now there were six men - We had a gang boss, six men in the hold, and - He says, Now, at any time, two of our people, of our six, are sleeping over there in the wings where they can't be seen. So you two go take a nap for a half-hour, and then you'll work. And of course you don't tell nobody about this. Oh yeah, we can dig it. We can dig it. So that was our introduction to life on the waterfront. And it really was a lot like that. I mean, you know, they had a real good class consciousness. So anyway, the guy, the old guy, right? He goes to lunch. He gets completely soused. You know, I mean, basically - I don't know how he got down the ladder again without killing himself, so he had to sleep

the whole rest of the afternoon. He was out. He was knocked out. So that was the other aspect of it.

KT: A little perk of [...].

BH: Yes, exactly. So that was our introduction to proletarianizing the workforce. Yes sir, they really needed us. [Laughing] Yeah, we brought a lot of consciousness to that.

KT: Your reason for going in though was just to -

BH: Make money.

KT: Support yourself.

BH: Well, you know, PL - Well PL was really pushing the worker student alliance and sending students out to proletarianize their class consciousness in the factory. So of course being anti-PL, we [Blah! Blah!] Bunch of fuckheads! You know? So, but, you know, I mean that consciousness was around, and you know, we considered our - See, by that time, you know, all right, so within a few months of being at San Francisco State, I was no longer a Civil Rights worker. I was an anti-imperialist revolutionary.

KT: Longshoreman.

BH: Longshoreman! Whoa! Well, of course most of the other anti-imperialist revolutionaries, except those in groups like PL, being a longshoreman was a - you know, one of the - you know, belly of the beast traitorist, you know, worker. I mean, they just had utter contempt for people who did work. You know, so - but - you know, anyway - So it was all in the air, in a sense. So I don't think we ever particularly radicalized

anybody on the waterfront, but I wasn't there to do political work. I was there to make money, and it was good money too.

KT: So from State, you said that was when you - began a GI [...].

BH: Well, after the strike, I was, you know, no longer in State. And I, you know, I was continuing to support myself on the waterfront, and then I got involved in a GI work, GI support work, and then -

KT: How did you do that? Through what organization?

BH: How did I get involved? Or how did I go to West Pac?

KT: Either or both.

BH: I don't remember how I got in - Oh. Oh shit, I don't remember. There was a couple years now. Let's see, the strike ended like real early in 69. 67 to 68 was the first year. 68 to 69. Yeah, by late 69, I was out of school, and I was in a collective. Oh, I became a part of a collective.

KT: Did it have a name?

BH: No. But this collective was originally formed by the boyfriends of women who had formed a women's collective called Red Moon Rising. And then I got accreted onto that. We were very revolutionary at that point. And they were really what turned out to be Weather sims, and of course I really loathed and detested the whole Weatherman thing. So I was never really simpatico with the collective, but you know, we were in it. What the fuck? And so I really didn't like the collective, and so then when people started saying, Hey, you know- I don't know how it happened, but I got involved in a support work for the sailors on the Coral Sea, which was an aircraft carrier, and they had formed a Stop Our Ship movement, SOS. And they were trying to have sailors refuse

to deploy when the Coral Sea deployed to Vietnam. So that was my first you know that. And then as I got more involved in that, I, you know, eventually, you know, left the, you know, dropped the collective.

KT: It was a Bay Area based - Were you all living communally?

BH: Hm-hm.

KT: Whereabouts?

BH: Bernal Heights. And we had a house.

KT: And I assume the focus in the collective was study or were you-? Was there-

BH: The main focus was turning ourselves into really revolutionary anti-imperialists.

KT: OK.

BH: Which I always never really felt comfortable with, because a lot of the bullshit - I mean, they had a real an- You know, the Weather line was very anti-working class, which I never felt comfortable with. And the fact is, I always had this fuckin trouble. You know, a real revolutionary is perfectly capable and enthusiastic of staying up to four o'clock in the morning doing criticism and self-criticism and struggling over their bourgeois tendencies, but I had to get up and go to work. And the work was dangerous if you fell asleep or weren't paying attention. So I needed to go to bed by midnight. You know, well this is a clear evidence of my counter-revolutionary bourgeois you know blah, blah, blah. And they basically were pretty much down on, you know, anybody with a - If you didn't come from Harvard or Cal, well fuck you.

KT: So I'm assuming this is mostly a middle, upper middle class group.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

KT: I mean, are you experiencing, as a, you know, a working class upbringing, are you aware of these kinds of tensions?

BH: To a degree. And I would try and raise them, and they'd just - It was like, you know - It was like talking fish to a bird, you know? I mean, they just -

KT: It really didn't matter.

BH: It didn't matter, and the American - They were all moving into this, you know, America is the problem. The American people are the enemy. We are in the belly of the beast. So anyway, it was a very unsatisfactory and unsatisfying period of my misspent youth. So I was really glad to get into the GI movement. [laughing] Which was completely different of course.

KT: Well, tell me about -

BH: Oh, the GI movement was the best organizing I have ever done other than the Civil Rights movement. I mean, second only to the Civil Rights movement. And it had a lot of the same - You know, it was a people's movement. It was real people doing real things. Rooted in reality. There were left - you know the hard core lefties brought in a certain ration of bullshit and insanity, which I bought into, but basically it was really good work.

KT: Yeah. And you did that from about when to when?

BH: Oh I think Stop Our Ship was I don't know early 1970, something like that. And then I guess I went to Asia in 71 into 72ish.

KT: Tell me just - you know, about Asia. How did you get to Asia?

BH: Well, I was - [laughing] This was of course in the third phase of the war, the latter phase, the winding down of American involvement. In the middle phase, some church organizations had set up an outfit called Pacific Counseling Service, which was to help GIs who wanted to file for CO. And so they trained counselors to know how to do CO counseling. By the time I got there, most of the counselors were revolutionaries like me, and our line by this time had shifted or evolved to saying, Well, we'll help you get a CO if you want, but really wouldn't it be better to stay in and organize within the military to bring it down? And to, you know, fight the war from within?

KT: So that's what you were counseling, as a counselor?

BH: Well, I mean if somebody wanted to do a CO, I would help them get a CO, because anything we - you know, but in terms of where our ideology was, it was to - And actually, if I'd been drafted, I would've gone in at that point. But of course - I was not up for the draft, because I was morally unfit to go to fight in Vietnam because of all my Civil Rights arrests. I had what was called a 1Y classification for those who are mentally, physically or morally unfit, and since I'd never had a psychiatric exam or a physical exam, well, draw your own conclusions. But the reason I was able - The reason they classified me 1Y is that - Where I had grown up in L.A. is now called the Crenshaw district, and it was a working class district. It's now all black. It was half and half when I was there. And they have so many people to draft, they didn't need - You know, if they had a student deferment, Hey look! We got a student deferment here! Jesus, mother fucker! So they had no trouble filling their quotas. So as they saw, Oh look at this mother fucker. He's under arrest and this and that and probation, trials. Fuck him! We aren't gonna let him pollute our good boys over in Vietnam.

KT: So you did it as a counselor.

BH: So I went as a - [laughing] Right. So I'm one of the few people in my generation who did not have to worry about being drafted, so I went to Vietnam anyway. Now talk about fucking stupid, right?

KT: Where exactly were you stationed?

BH: Well, there was a string of coffee houses, GI coffee houses: Japan, Okinawa, Hong Kong, Philippines. Well, the Philippines ones had just - Marcos had just declared his dictatorship, and he put all of our people in the Philippines into concentration camps with all of the other progressive Filipinos. It took us six months to get them out. So the [Subic] Bay and the Clark Coffee House had just been shut down when I went to Asia. And then we had - Let's see. Okinawa, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, Australia, places where either there were bases or where they went for R&R. Now of course you couldn't have it in places like Vietnam or Laos, because they would be closed down. So we would go in on trips until they caught us and deported us. Then we'd wait a few months and go back, you know, and get caught and deported.

KT: Now at this point you weren't - I mean, this was - You know, your line on the war was the you know GIs -

BH: Should resist.

KT: Should stay in and resist.

BH: Right.

KT: Basically undermine the war effort.

BH: Right.

KT: Which was also, at some point, I think that was PLs line, but you weren't  
- This wasn't part of an organ-

BH: That was just our consciousness. And there were some, you know, yeah. I mean, I was there as an ind- You know, I wasn't associated with any group at that time. But that was sort of the general gestalt of the people who were doing GI organizing at that time in Asia. And I was partnered with - See each project had an organizer who would do the CO counseling and help the GIs put out the underground paper. Ours was called the Semper Fi, and then we would be partnered with a lawyer who was from the National Lawyers Guild who would do the court martials and the defense work. Really was very effective.

KT: Incredible.

BH: Oh, but you know, I mean the stuff we really did - I mean and actually, you know, we really did help generate the resistance to the war. A lot of people don't understand that one of the main reasons Nixon had to withdraw the troops was that the troops were not gonna fight anymore. And to some limited degree we helped encourage that. I mean, we didn't cause it, but I remember one time. I mean, we would do shit like this. Right? The - July 4th. The Lord High Admiral of the Pacific, you know, the big enchilada admiral, is coming to this base, this Marine base to give the July 4th speech. So we make a special edition of the Semper Fi, on which it is the Declaration of Independence on the front page. It was a single fly. And on the back was a modern English translation, which was - we did it straight. I mean, it was a legitimate, you know, but - You know, if you don't think the government is doing right, you have a right to overthrow the government. You know, duh. Now normally you could not publicly

distribute the Fi on a base because that would be, you know, bad. But we got six Marines who said, Well, hey, this is the Declaration of Independence. This is mother-fucking July 4th. You know, there is a connection, right? We'll just go on the base and distribute the Declaration of Independence. Which they did. And they were doing it, and there was lots of upsettedness, and they were arrested.

KT: Genius.

BH: And the shore patrol, the MPs, grabbed them and took them to the brig and suddenly there was this mob of GIs and GI wives. Why are you arresting people for handing out the Declaration of Independence on the 4th of July? And there was actually like a big protest demonstration outside of the brig. So and as it turned out, they were- Oh, we were really - We were gonna go to town on the trial. We were all ready. Have the British taken over the Marine Corps? But the bastards, you know, in their inimitable fashion, they gave all six of them general discharges. Not dishonorables. Not - I forget what the next one is, the other bad one. Anyway, it was a good discharge for which they would still get their benefits, because they didn't want anything to - They just wanted to hush this all up. [laughing] Well, that was the kind of stuff we did. And it was good.

KT: Did you make trips to Vietnam?

BH: Yeah. You know, you never lasted long, because the Naval Intelligence Service would - They would take pictures of me. I would take pictures of them, you know [laughing].

KT: Did you dress straight at the time? Or did you have to try to-?

BH: Well, what was dressing straight at the time?

KT: Right.

BH: A suit? No. I mean, no. You know -

KT: Short haired, shaved.

BH: I had press credentials. I was a journalist. And I was. I was with the Semper Fi. But no, I also did stories for Pacific News Service.

KT: Did you?

BH: Yeah.

KT: OK.

BH: And you know Metro Media and stuff, so I did do some journalism.

KT: All right.

BH: And I traveled on a press credential. So I looked like all the other press people. In other words, like a college kid. You know, and actually I spent more time in Laos, because their security was less efficient than I did in Vietnam. I was pretty much all over Laos in the free territories. Of course we never went into the [Pathet Lao] territories, for obvious reason.

KT: But and your idea when you were - I mean was to what? Identify or make connections to GIs?

BH: Hand out the paper, talk to people, do counseling, find out, you know - People would say so and sos in trouble. This happened. You know. I mean, do whatever we could.

KT: You know, I was aware -

BH: Collect stories. You know, the GIs wrote most of the stories. But what would happen is that whenever somebody was known or they got caught working for the

Fi, they'd either be discharged or transferred. So you had to have a civilian there to keep the thing going, you know, otherwise they could destroy it just with transfers.

KT: You know I was aware of the organizing that took place at air force bases in England.

BH: Yeah, same thing.

KT: Bases domestically. But I had no idea that there was an Asian presence.

BH: Oh yeah.

KT: I mean I knew that there was a you know, among the troops, but there was this structure.

BH: Right. Well, we didn't have any institutions like coffee houses in Vietnam or Laos, because they couldn't survive. But in all the surrounding support bases and the R&R places, yeah.

KT: It strikes me as a story that's probably not been told.

BH: I think somebody might have wrote a book about it.

KT: Really?

BH: I don't know. Maybe. I never read it, but somebody told me somebody was going to write a book about it. They didn't interview me, so fuck em. You know?

KT: So this winds up at what for you - where are we?

BH: Late 72. Yeah, 73.

KT: OK.

BH: So 73 by the time I got back.

KT: Bay Area?

BH: Yeah, back to the Bay Area.

KT: Why the Bay Area?

BH: I loved it. I like the Bay Area. I escaped from L.A. I hated L.A. and I never went back. I've never been back.

KT: Well, after what the sixth grade teacher did.

BH: [laughing] Among other things, yeah. To say nothing of the L.A.P.D. But those are Civil Rights stories, which I will not go into.

KT: We'll talk about them later.

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE B]

KT: So coming back.

BH: Well, I came back and you know I had to get a job. After the 71 longshore strike, which I went through - It was very educational. You should ask me about that later - All of the casual work on waterfront - There was no casual work. So I, you know, I got through contacts, I got into Local 6, which is the warehouse local, and I, you know, I bopped around. The system there - They have a hiring hall, and in those years the employers used the hiring hall as really a casual labor. And it was very difficult. If you managed to hold onto a place for 90 days, you had seniority and could - and then they couldn't fire you except going through the grievance process. But they could just fire you at whim up to 89 days. So most of the time you never lasted more than 88, 89 days. So I, you know, I was at Thrifty Drug. I was at Golden Grain Macaroni. I was at [GI] Case. You know, I mean I went through about a dozen places and eventually I got onto someplace and I got my card and I became a regular member and you know I started getting active in the union. Eventually I ended up at this chemical plant, which, when I was there, it was originally Ash - Well, not originally. I forget what it was originally, but Ashland Chemical bought it. And then I went there as Ashland Chemical and then - I was there for four years. And then a German outfit bought it, and it became [Sharex] Chemical. [Shearex], some fucking thing like that. And I eventually ended up Chief Shop Steward there, so that was like, you know - And of course that was every day. You know, it wasn't casual work. I was there. So what was the question? I'm sorry. I'm getting lost.

KT: Well I was just wondering about returning to the Bay Area. What you did next? I mean, you had this history of Civil Rights -

BH: Well, oh yeah, yeah, yeah. OK.

KT: GI and then -

BH: So by the time I come back, you know, the GI movement pretty much, you know, put the nail on the coffin of the revolution - anti-imperialist revolutionary phase, and what seemed to be going on - I got sucked into Marxism, Leninism. So I decided over the course of period, OK, this - clearly the Weather line and the anti-imperialists bullshit is bullshit, we gotta, you know, so, you know, I fell for the Marxist - Leninist crap. And by that time of course I was hardly different from the PL people who I still loathed and detested, even though by now I was exactly like them. So that was my mindset, you know, working in -

KT: At Ashland.

BH: At Ashland.

KT: So who-? Were there individuals that you fell in with?

BH: Yeah, friends. You know, people in the Party Building Movement.

KT: Which group sort of initially held your attention?

BH: Well see I know - I've known PL, the Revolutionary Union which later became the Revolutionary Communist Party, and the other one. The one that began with a Mike Klonsky was their shithead.

KT: Was it one of the revolutionary youth movements?

BH: No. That was RUs front.

KT: Was Klonsky with October League?

BH: October League. Yeah, and then it became something else. Klonsky, Jesus. We had this house, you know, when I was at State, or he was going around organ - I forget where he was. He was going around organizing. His line was white skin privilege, which I never understood what the fuck he was talking about. But where he queered himself with me is that - He's one of these guys who will try and convince you in his argument by throwing up sources and facts that he figures you know nothing about and thus can't refute. Well one of the things he threw up as an example was the Van de Kamps demonstrations in L.A., which I had organized, and he didn't know that.

KT: [laughing]

BH: And he had never been there. You know, or if he had, you know, he may have attended one demonstration where there was a lot of people, and I didn't know who he was. But I kept the fucking lists, you know. So I didn't confront him on that. I regret that I didn't. I should've.

KT: What was Van de Kamps?

BH: Oh employment -

KT: What year about?

BH: 64.

KT: So CORE stuff.

BH: Well NVAC. Yeah.

KT: So you knew Klonsky well, or just passing through?

BH: No, no. Passing through. But he told me this thing. He bullshitted me, and I knew it was bullshit. So I said, Fuck this - you know. Write him off.

KT: Right.

BH: So then I was, you know, with people who were in the Party building frame of mind but had not yet picked or been picked or fallen into, you know, so - You know, we hung out. There was the August 29th movement, which was mostly Latinos, and there was one that was mostly Filipinos, and one that was black, and one was that, you know chartreuse and you know, because you couldn't have integration because of the national questions. So each, you know, race -

KT: You had a sense that somethings happening. I mean, this is where people are

BH: This seemed to be where it was going, and I was, you know - I don't know. I was so alienated from America, from - You know, the war had a profound effect.

KT: Sure.

BH: I was really, you know - Particularly - You know, I mean people were profoundly alienated from the society in which they live just by hearing about the war being in America. I was there.

KT: Right.

BH: You know, and - You know, I didn't suffer the way the GIs did, because I was a civilian. I was only in country, you know, for brief periods. But even so, I mean, you know, so something has gotta be done, you know? Watergate, Vietnam War, you know, so the only thing being presented that I hadn't already rejected was Marxism/Leninism. So eventually, in the spring of 1976, I got recruited into the - at that time it was called The Party, later called the Proletar- The League for Proletarian Socialism, and the Rebel Worker Organization and The Proletarian something something. Anyway, it eventually became the Democratic Workers Party. She used to love to change

the name all the time. I don't know why. She thought that was very revolutionary I guess.  
And hold on. I'll turn on a light here.

KT: OK.

BH: So -

KT: But with your sort of toehold in the factory, in the plant, that you would have been of particular interest to them, I'd imagine, right?

BH: Yeah, and also the fact that I had a lot of political experience. The DWP was - The core of the people she found to form it were disaffected radicalized lesbians who did not have a lot of political experience. No organizing experience, were not into the factory at all. So yeah, I was a real find, and actually I had known Marlene way back when in the CORE days, because she had been active in the Bruin CORE when she was a - I guess a grad student at UCLA. And I was at UCLA, and you know NVAC was sort of an advisory to the Bruin CORE people. So I had known her back then. Yeah, and as a matter of fact, I ended up as one of the three people on a three-person central committee for one brief, short, thank God, period. Which was really actually very fortunate for me, because I was able - You know theres that great scene in the Wizard of Oz where Dorothy peaks behind the curtain, right? And most of the Party members never got to peak behind the curtain. I did, and that's why I was able to get out so quick. So that was one of the things that helped me escape.

KT: How did being in the Party affect your work as a trade unionist?  
Because you were also - did you say steward?

BH: I was a Chief Shop Steward. Yeah.

KT: I mean did that affect your mind in the plant?

BH: No. Because I really - Well, that's a long discussion. Let me just give a short - the other side of it. My trade union work had actually more effect on my life in the Party than the other way around, and eventually I was deposed from leadership and heavily criticized for being a trade unionist, a petty bourgeois trade unionist, a liberal trade unionist scum who actually was concerned with winning the 76 strike as opposed to advancing the Party as the vanguard of the proletarian working class. Fucking bastard me. You know, I thought we wanted to win the strike, and of course Marlene wasn't opposed to the strike being won by somebody, but the Party was to build the Party. Because the Party is the vanguard of the working class, and the Party is what counts, and I'm the President of the Party! Lucky me! Build the Party! And meanwhile, sand my floors and buy me new furniture! But anyway, so part of the - see the reason the factory work more affected me in the Party is that - Remember now, at this point, you know, I'm still in the Marxist/Leninist world view. In other words, I'm seeing the world through a total hallucinogen, but the real world kept being real. You know? Its outrageous! So I would - So I get elected Chief Shop Steward, and the Party people, Oh wow! Boy, Bruce must be really doing great organizing there. Oh, Bruce, well congratulations. You've really won the respect of the people of the masses. No! I was the only idiot foolish enough to take the risk of being willing to run to be the Chief Shop Steward, because the Chief Shop Steward is the idiot with his ass hanging out. He's gonna get his ass fired if he does anything. So, OK. I'm gonna be the Chief Shop Steward. Motherfuck. So I'm trying to radicalize, you know. The workers should control the means of production. What the fuck, man! I don't wanna, you know? They didn't want to control the - It was

too much work. The thinking, planning. Who wants that shit? They just wanted to go to work, get their paycheck, and go home, get their boat, go fishing, watch TV. They were not interested in controlling the means of production. They didn't want to have anything to do with it. I would say - I mean this was a really dangerous plant. We had people - No one was killed while I was there. But a couple people were like crippled, right? So I said, We gotta do something? We gotta- Don't you raise - They will close this plant. If you raise any sand- We had things - [laughing] One night, we were doing something. They were doing some new chemical reaction, and this huge -They fucked it up somehow, and this huge cloud of toxic pollution belches out of the plant and drifts over Jack London Square restaurants, and they're running around hiding stuff and trying to get it to stop. And all the workers said, Bruce, you don't tell nobody about this. Because they knew I might, you know? We don't want anything happening, you know, because they'll close this plant. So I would say, Look. We should form a safety committee. No way! That'll just cause trouble. Right? See, what I learned - Well, I didn't read as much Marx and Lenin as my Dad did, right? But I read some. In fact, I read more than average. And well, first of all, the whole Leninism stuff I totally reject. Marx, what I learned - Marx has some good insights, but as a world view and as a strategic plan, its like totally irrelevant today. One of the things that - See, Marx said - Or one of Marxs base - one of the main components of Marxian theory is that your relationship to the means of production shapes your consciousness. OK. To some degree that's true. But what he never took into account is that for modern people, yes they have a part of their life which is shaped by their relation to the kind of work they do, but they have a bigger part that's shaped to their lives as consumers. And this whole consumer consciousness didn't exist when he was

writing, because people who worked in factories barely got enough to eat let alone to have anything to consume. But I remember in ILWU, they had this strike out at some place, I forget what it was, but it was like a warehouse of a - like a Home Depot thing, except it wasn't Home Depot. It was something else. And they had killed a striker. You know, it was a big deal. You don't kill ILWU strikers. So the ILWU sent us to leaflet and to picket at all of the retail outfits. Most of the - Almost everybody crossed our picket line, including other union people. UAW people, Teamsters, you know, [OCAW]. And why? Well, it's cheaper in here. You know? They were reacting, not because of their relationship to the means of production but because of their relationship to the consumer stuff. And that was a bigger shaping on the consciousness than - So that's why the guys - It was an all-male plant. This was before feminism had penetrated this far. Actually, at one point they did send a woman down. I was the only one that would talk to her, and they drove her out. But the guys, you know, they wanted to keep their, you know, stuff. And you know I liked these guys. They were great guys. You know, well no, they were a mixture. We had a stone-cold Ku Klux Klan racist asshole, and we had really good guys. I mean, and it was an integrated plant. I mean, it was black - You know, ILW was already very good on the race issue. So some people I liked; some people I hated.

KT: It was an Oakland plant? Or Richmond?

BH: Oakland. It doesn't exist anymore. Eventually they did close it down and paved it over and stuff. So - But basically the consciousness was that all of the Marxist theory about the working class, proletariat, vanguard of the blah, blah, total bushwha. And eventually I came to the conclusion that you know, who am I to tell these people what to do with their lives? You know, they know what they're doing. You know, they're

as smart as me. You know, the arrogance of the left is something that every year I get more distraught about. You know, Power to the people! Except if they don't believe what we believe in, they're fucked, and we've got to correct their incorrect understanding. No, these people know what the fuck they're doing.

KT: False consciousness.

BH: Their false consciousness, yeah. No, their consciousness was pretty damn good. They knew what they wanted in life. They knew which side - They knew what was going on. And they made their - You know, they were doing their shit, and I, you know, eventually came to respect them more than these fucking left-heads. So the plant actually affected my leftism more than my leftism affected the plant. And I never really was able to do - You know, I was able to do a little bit. I did get a safety committee, a sort of half-assed let's not rock the boat but at least have a safety committee. And you know, occasionally we could get something fixed a little bit. And they were also very cautious to ride herd on me, because they knew, you know, oh what is this guy? He aint married. He aint got no kids. He's obviously educated. You know, OK, we know who he is, but let's use him. You know? [laughing] Oh, hey, we got a leftie here to take on our Chief Shop Steward. We're lucky. Hah-hah! None of us have to do it, and we got a fool there, and if they fire him, no big deal, because he ain't got no family to support. So they were very -

KT: There was no - As a Party member, were you expected to recruit [...]?

BH: Yes. But there was nothing coming out of that factory. In our group, you know, there was always - because it had such a feminist lesbian, you know - They were always a little uneasy. You know, their line was we should be recruiting lower and

deeper. In other words, poverty-stricken people. So they never really put - They actually -  
What they wanted me to do was to get Party people ILWU jobs, because they paid a lot.  
The Party had this policy that they set an income level at - if you lived collectively, right?  
You could survive on 2,000 calories a day. Everything else went to the Party. So they  
wanted these good jobs, high-paying union jobs just to bring in money for Marlene. And  
that's what they wanted. They weren't really that interested in -

KT: So were you able to fix people up with work?

BH: Some. You know, I told them how to work the hiring hall, etc, etc. So a  
few of them, you know, several, ten - I don't know - got jobs, you know, for awhile. But  
then, you know, Marlene would pull people out and you know to reassign them to this  
and you know, but it brought in some good money. And then later on - See now I was  
already working at the plant when I was recruited. Later on as I became - I like to say that  
I was a member of the DWP for about nine months, and then it took me a year and three  
months to work my way out and escape. And towards the end of that escaping period, I  
had been in leadership and demoted for various sins of omission and commission. And  
Marlene calls and she says - Oh I got to explain this. This plant, right? I mean this total  
hellhole of a plant. We worked a rotating shift, which means you work five days of day  
shift. You're off for 48 hours. Five days of swings. Forty-eight hours. Five nights of  
graves. Off for 72 hours. Which means you never got any sleep. I mean, its, you know,  
the rotating shift is the most sleep deprived, really bad - In fact, that's how I had my  
accident. I was just - I fell - You know, I was just so asleep, I just did something stupid.  
So I'm in this plant breathing chemical - Oh, safety, right? While I'm there, the OSHA,  
the mighty powerful Occupational Safety Health Assholes, issue an emergency bulletin

that [acrylonitrile] is a major cancer, death killing chemical. And oh boy, our management was right on it. They went out to the acrylonitrile leaking pumps and put up a sign that said, Warning: Acrylonitrile. That was it, you know? So this is the - You know, I'm breathing this shit.

KT: I thought you were going to say they dumped it in the Bay.

BH: Well, they may have. I didn't see it. No comment. No, they kept using it. But they put up a sign! Be careful! Right. I won't breathe. So this is the plant I'm in, right? Rotating shift, pollution, danger. Marlene says, Well Bruce, I think its time to bring you back into leadership and work full-time for the Party. And I said, Well, I think I'd rather stay at the plant. [laughing] I would rather - rather than work with her and the Party, I would rather be in this hellhole, which she took exactly the way I meant it: as a sign of disaffection. And within a month of that, I was out.

KT: So I don't understand what the attraction to her was.

BH: The attraction?

KT: Not on your part necessarily but just other people. I mean, how did she maintain power?

BH: She used the same - All of these cults actually, whether they're religious or political, they all pretty much follow the same - In fact, there are books written about it. But they follow the same techniques of bringing someone into the cult and keeping them through I would say - Well, the term - I think the euphemism is socialization. And with Marlene, what very few people in the Party knew, but she told me when I was in leadership, is that she was - Her doctorate was in that field, and her - What's the thing you do for your doctorate? A dissertation? Yeah. Her dissertation was a contrast and

compare the socialization techniques of the United States Marine Corps, the Jesuits, and Comintern. And so [laughing] she knew her shit. And basically she was charismatic. You've got a lot of people completely alienated. They don't know what's happening. They're distraught about the state of the society. The war has ended, but, you know, all kind of stuff is going on. Nixon, etc. And she presents a world view that explains everything, right? Which is very attractive. And presents it in a charismatic way. Then once you're in, right? The first six months - And she went through all this, because I was in leadership. She had fucking manuals that she had written for the leaders, right? And she lays it out. All right, now in the first, you know, three months or so, the main objective with the new comrade is to get them to recruit every person in their social network that can be recruited and to break them completely apart from everyone who cannot be recruited, even if that's their husband, wife, son, daughter, whatever. And so after - by six months, everyone in the Party has absolutely no social connections with anybody else other than Party people. And your every input, everything that you hear, touch, smell, fuck, see, eat is Party. And so your reality - there's nothing to check reality, unless you happen to be working in a plant like I did, which she was a little - that was one reason she never kept people working in places. They were not into the proletarian colonization, because they were lower and deeper. So then what happens is, if every human being to whom you have any relationship at all is in the Party. Leaving the Party means breaking every human contact you have, and most people can't do that. They're just - You know it's just too terrifying. And it's - And if someone is expelled from the Party, everyone in the Party - you cannot talk to them, even if it's your husband, your wife, your kid. And she would - She was vicious. I mean, she would analyze - OK. Now

weve got so and so and so and so, and they're married. And this ones in the Party, and that one - we cant recruit that one. Break up that marriage. You know? Shit like that. But you know, then people who were in the Party, you know, later then got into cult work. In other words, you know, deprogram - not deprogramming but working with people in cults. And their experience was that the religious cults were almost the same. You know, they worked the same way. And yeah. And they're books written about it.

KT: Was your exit difficult?

BH: Well, it was emotionally wrenching, but I had certain advantages. One is I had seen behind the curtain. Another was I'm a loner. You know, I really am a loner, so the fact of being cut off doesn't really - isn't as big. You know, it's something, but it's not as intense on me. I had had previous political experience. I had the growing up in the CP experience. So it was very wrenching, and you know, I carried a pistol for a year, just in case. You know, because she could be violent. Not her personally of course. She would order - If she got drunk and she got drunk fairly often, she could just do weird - You know, she would just make - And people would carry out her orders to the fucking letter, so that was what was dan- And you know, rationally I knew when she was sober, she wouldn't order anyone to come after me. But if she was drunk - So nothing ever happened.

KT: So your official exit would've been what year?

BH: April of 1978. Free at last, free at last. Thank God almighty, free at last. Yes, that was - you know, I've served prison time. I didn't feel as good getting out of prison as I the day I got expelled from the Party.

KT: How did the expulsion come about?

BH: Well, I'd been getting more and more disaffected, and she had recently gone through a whole show trials and you know, mind fuck of a bunch of people. The culmination - Well, see the theory was that you create artificial crises to mold the cadre, and that if they remain united going through this terrible trauma, if they're still in the Party, then they're more tightly bound to the Party. So the climax of this shit with these other guys was she demanded of them, Do you have enough unity to stay with the Party? Oh yes, Marlene! Oh please! I want to serve the proletariat! Right? So she brings me in for one of those, you know, and she's yelling at me up, down and upside, and she looks at me and she says, Now do you have enough unity to stay with the Party? And I immediately see a golden door opening. I'm free! All I have to do is say, No, Marlene. I don't have enough unity to stay with the Party. And she was stuck, because, you know, at that point, according to the paradigm she'd set up, that was it. And she was flummoxed. She didn't know what to do. So she screamed, Well, go get your secret Party papers and turn them in! And I rushed out the door. I got in my sports car. I drove at 90 miles an hour across the Bay Bridge, got my papers, drove at 90 miles an hour back across the Bay Bridge to San Francisco - I was living in Oakland - turned in my papers and left.

[laughing]

KT: Unbelievable.

BH: And I think that she - I think that she was like - She never understood me. She really never did. And she was like - I think she totally fucked up. [laughing] She gave me this out, you know, where I could without having to, you know - I couldn't quite screw myself to the sticking place of asking to resign, to be a traitor, etc, etc. But she

gave me the opening, that if I don't have political unity, I'm free. So that's how I got out of the Party. Well, after that, I stayed actually in the fucking plant for another two years until I had my accident. But I wasn't proletarianizing. I was just making a living.

KT: Right.

BH: You know, and in fact at that point, I was pretty disgusted with everything that had to do with the [I].

KT: By the late 70s, early 80s.

BH: Yeah, yeah. And pretty much to the extent that I can read his stuff, which is not much of an extent, because he's such a fucking academic. Todd Gitlin pretty much speaks for me.

KT: Really?

BH: Yeah. His analysis of the left and what he's written. I find him very difficult to read, because he's such a fucking academic, but to the extent that I've been able to read it and understand it, I'm pretty much on his team. Have you read anything of him?

KT: Oh yeah. Yeah.

BH: Twilight of Common Dreams.

KT: Sure. But the National Writers Union, that's a - that suggests a continuing commitment to organizing.

BH: Yeah, and to union. Yeah.

KT: And what year was that founded?

BH: 81. Well, the organizing committee started in 80.

KT: So right after your work in the plant.

BH: Well I escaped from the Party in 78, and I essentially did absolutely nothing of any sort of even the slightest indication of activism for three years, until I started getting involved in the Writers Union.

KT: Right.

BH: Joy Maxis. She did it. It's her fault.

KT: How so?

BH: She was my first true love, back in SDS days. And she had this thing where she was very political, and she would get something going and get me into it. And then she would lose interest and go off, right? And she did this two or three times, and eventually we parted. And she married a guy and had kids and so forth. Anyway, at one point in the early 80s, she was writing and I was, by this time, just starting as a tech writer. And she said, Hey Bruce. There's this organizing committee for, you know, the Writers Union. Why don't you get involved? And you know, I still have - I mean, she was my first true love, so I, Oh, yeah. OK. And I, you know, six weeks later she's off doing something else. She went to England or something to live, because she couldn't stand America. And then for the next - Well, let's see. From 1980 until 2001 [laughing], 21 years.

KT: I'm wondering - You know obviously there's something of a negative experience with the DWP to say the least -

BH: Yeah, I'd say that.

KT: But can you see any sort of - was there any up side to the turn to Marxism/Leninism?

BH: Up side for me being involved in it? Or upside to the left?

KT: Personally or even more broadly. Well, take the DWP. Did they do any legitimate organizing? Were there any campaigns-?

BH: They did some campaigns. They actually did, in the mass work is what they called it. They organized some good coalitions around some decent stuff, but nothing that ever lasted. Because the contradiction was that everything they did was not about what they were doing but was about building the Party. And the people they organized, who they attracted - And they did give good training in at least initially how to do good organizing. But then what would happen is that the people they were organizing would very soon tumble to A) this is totally undemocratic. Everything is controlled by the Party. B) They're only interested in me and in this issue to build the Party. C) The Party is often cloud cuckoo land in a lot of what, you know, and then they would fall apart. So you know, I actually, you know, I really did not benefit much from their organizing training, because I was way beyond that. But what I did learn is, you know, they taught me a really strong work ethic. Because boy, mother fucker, you had to work mother fucker. Aint no time for no partying in the Party. You worked. You got up. You were working, you know, working at work, working at Party work, studying, doing class stand struggle, going to meetings for 15 hours, 20 hours a day. You know? And I had usually been sort of a lazy - So it built up in me and put strong work ethic. As far as affecting America, no. I think a - I don't know. A snowflake falling in the Rockies had as much effect. I mean, it destroyed a lot of people's lives I think, the people who were in the Party, who were very good people, most of them. Really good people. They attracted the best, the brightest, the most noble, the self-, most socially conscious, most

compassionate people, and turned them into - either drove them crazy or turned them into Stalinoids. And eventually, years later, the Party blew apart, and you know, some people, you know, are still emotionally fucked up from the whole thing. But no, I don't think it had any lasting effect. I know certainly - Well, let's go back to the ILWU Local 6. In the late 60s - Let me get my dates right here. All right, throughout the 50s and the 60s, Local 6 was a really vibrant rank and file union. You'd have two, three, four hundred people at a meeting, right? Then in the late 60s, the left began - Well, there'd always been the CP and some Trots. You know, there's always been an Old Left active in the [...]. But then the New Left, and by New Left I don't mean SDS. I mean RU and October League and whatever the name of their party was of which I still can't remember. The Spartacusists and you know this -ist and the that -ist, and the ISOs started coming to these meetings. And within a couple of years, they had so alienated everyone that by the time I was active, a typical ILWU membership meeting would be down to 50 people from 500, and everyone there would be a partisan adherent of some faction there to do battle with the other factions, unless he was some poor working Joe who had some problem, which of course everybody immediately tried to use. So they really seriously damaged that union as union, I feel. Yeah. Now I don't know whether the ILWU - See they may, in some areas, like the Teamsters, where they had Teamsters for a Democratic Union, where they were really fighting against a corrupt authoritarian structure, they may have actually been - They may have actually done some good stuff. I don't know. I don't know that much about the TDU people, and you know Steel Workers and some others. But as far as the ILWU was concerned, I think the overall effect was negative.

KT: It was pretty negative, yeah.

BH: See here's another thing. Now another thing that I think that the New Lefties going into the plants did for a lot of places is they did bring an anti-racism and later, to some degree, an anti-sexism consciousness. But in the ILWU, you know, coals to Newcastle, hello? You know? The ILWU should've been teaching them, you know? So that was - I think that - So on some of that stuff, I think that some kind of - are-energization of anti-government attitude, suspicion and hostility may have to some degree been, not sparked but you know, supported or increased a little bit. But I don't - I really don't think that it had much of an effect of really changing the consciousness of the working class, because, you know, you can say - you can look at the consciousness of the blue collar workforce, and look and say, Well, wow. It has really changed a lot. And you could go through 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, but most of that change was the demographic change of young replacing old, the alienation of Vietnam veterans, and then the closing and the death of blue collar industry as a major force. I mean those were the things that really radicalized, to the extent that there is radicalization, but those things, you know -

KT: External to the movement.

BH: External to the Marxist/Leninist revolutionary, were going to lead the working class fuck heads. I mean, Vietnam veterans [laughing] did a lot more to you know - And here are our fucking revolutionaries won't stand up for the Pledge of Allegiance. [laughing] Yes sir. OK. Go team! [laughing] And you know, I mean - And the Vietnam veterans who are very bitter about the war, What the fuck is with these people? You know, I'm a mother fucking Vietnam veteran. I'll stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, mother fucker. Where are you at? So no, I don't - I really don't think -

KT: How about - I'm thinking about - There's been a revitalization on campuses over the last five years of interest in labor struggles, but none of the kids are talking about becoming coal miners or even longshore workers.

BH: Well, you can't. There's no work.

KT: Right. But they are going in as organizers, and they're staff reps and researchers.

BH: That's good. You know, I think that's probably - As long as they're not coming in, you know, with - under some intellectual hallucinogen, of some ideology that, you know, is total off in cuckoo land.

KT: That's what I'm wondering. I mean is there anything that the 70s experience has to say to these younger organizers?

BH: Don't listen to the people who are still in that leftist mentality. Listen to the workers who totally reject them and have nothing but contempt for them. Although they were happy to use them. You know, lots of times when they had a strike or something, and the workers knew, I don't want to get arrested. I got a family. Oh hey, we'll get some of those revolutionaries. They'll come and picket and blockade the doorway. And they were happy to have the revolutionaries. Oh God, every time there was a strike, every fucking Marxist/Leninist cult and sect in the Bay Area would swarm down on the strike as though it was the beginning of the October Revolution. And you know, the workers on the picket line - And I was on these picket lines with the ILW. They knew what the fuck was going on. Come on! It was pathetic. And they would just laugh. You know, and some of the people who did that, they learned, and others never learned. And to this day, they're still in the same, you know, place. The thing is, the other thing I

learned, you know, from doing union work is that unions are very important. They can provide a certain level of protection and defense, but they are very limited in what they can do. And this happened, you know, as you might imagine, the ILWU was a seething cauldron of rank and file movements to throw out the sellout rascals and bring in the, you know. And several times those rank and file movements in various locals succeeded in throwing out the rascals and bringing in - Were gonna- And every fucking time, they had to become rascals. And the reason is it's just inherent. I remember in ILWU, right? They threw out the rascals. Brought in - So, OK. Were gonna really- - Well, you got a contract. If you go out on wildcat strike, they can sue the union and bankrupt it and destroy it, which is fine for you revolutionaries, but you know, those old geezers who are living on their pensions? They still vote at the meetings, and they're not so enthusiastic about a strategy that is going to destroy the union and seize the pension fund. Oh, we didn't think about that. And neither are - you know, not even just the retired people but you know the 40-year-olds and 50-year-olds who have families and are trying to put their kids through school. So OK, gee maybe we can't do this wildcat strike and interfere with the means of production quite the way we thought. Well, we can go with the grievance system. Well, except the grievance system is basically run by lawyers, and you lose more than you win. And now you got this problem. Well, you're sitting down across from the manager, and you got old Joe or old Sally, and they've been working at this place, and they came in drunk and they did this, and they got -

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE A]

BH: - get their Joe's job back or solve this problem with who's going to get the promotion to the nicer better job, right? You can try and fight it through the system, which will take years, or you can try and strike a deal with the management association dude who - They will be willing to do this, but they won't be willing to do this if when there is some spontaneous uprising and trouble at the plant if you don't come down and suppress it and stop it. But if you don't develop a modus vivendi with the management then you can't get Sally her job back. And if you can't get Sally her job back, the people who vote for you ain't gonna vote for you, because that's what they want you to do. And yes, the one plant where there was a spontaneous work stoppage may not vote for you, because you had to go in and get them to go back to work, but the 15 or 20 or 30 other plants who are only concerned with, you know, getting the day to day stuff. You see what I'm saying? And so what happened is that the people who threw out the old rascals were forced, even though they didn't want to be, in order to just -

KT: Function.

BH: Function.

KT: Right.

BH: They had to become compromisers, and eventually - I mean the basic function of those unions is to help control the labor force, and they had to do that. Now the Writers Union was a different story, because we haven't reached that level of you know acceptance and power and integration into the industry, so we can still be thorns in the side and gadflies, but we're not doing what - We couldn't help very many people. But then, of course - See, now here's another thing. You had the people, you know, the rank

and file, the ideologues, blah, blah, blah, right? But you also had the careerist factions. Now you take somebody, your typical proletarian revolutionary Marxist going into the working class, right? Graduate of Harvard or Cal or Chicago or whatever. You know, Daddy is, you know a business man. You know, Mama is whatever, you know, so, you know, if they ever want to, you know, bail out, they can become - What was Jerry Rubin or whatever? Stock broker or whatever.

KT: Bill Ayers.

BH: Huh?

KT: Bill Ayers.

BH: Bill Ayers. Yeah, right. Well they were Weather people, but same idea. You know, they have other options, right? But when you're out working on the line, right? And you have a high school education, and you're working on a brutal, miserable, back-breaking, low-pay, filthy job and you have a chance, and you get elected to be a union officer where you wear clean clothes. You work in an office. You get four times the pay you ever got on the line. You eat decent lunches. You blah, blah, blah. You have respect in the community. You can get a mortgage. You want to keep that motherfuckin job, and you don't want no revolutionary middle class punk, you know, taking your job, because that's the only hope you have for sending your kids to - You see what I'm saying?

KT: Sure. Oh yeah.

BH: So you had those people, and you know, I used to say, Oh these people are terrible. They're the enemy. No, I actually ended up with a certain amount of sympathy for people that this was the only way. This was how they, you know, bettered

themselves. And if it had been possible for the revolutionary radicals to actually make a difference in the way the union functioned and were able to provide significantly more, better defense and improved the lives of the members, I would say, All right. We have to throw these old guys out. You know, tough shit. But the radicals weren't able to do any - were totally - Actually they didn't - To the extent that they continued to try and carry out their ideology, they did worse because they couldn't get Sally or John back. They couldn't strike any deals. And yet, you know, they couldn't organize the masses to - You know, all right, the ideology says - Well, sure. Of course, we don't strike deals. We organize the proletariat. We seize the means of production. We have wildcat strikes. Right? But the people there in the proletariat, their consciousness is more as consumers than as proletarians. They want to keep their job. They want to send their kids to college. They're not interested in going through all of these fantasies that they know are going to just lead them into a disaster. But they can't win, and they'll just get fucked up. So -

KT: You touched on this briefly earlier, but I just wanted to get more explicit. What is it that you think held such a -? Why is it that so many turned, coming out of the 60s, that turned to Marxism/Leninism? What do you think the draw was? I mean it is interesting, isn't it, that it was so broadly appealing?

BH: Well, I think the first reason is no other alternative was really seriously put forward. The other alternative that could have been put forward was non-violent social reform change a la Dr. King. And I'm not quite sure, to this day, what happened with that. Obviously, Dr. King was killed and so forth, but it was already working. I think to some degree, there may have been some COINTELPRO kind of conscious effort on the part of forces for evil to discredit non-violent social reform, unity, compassion kind of

social reform movements. And I think that was one aspect. I think another reason is that - Vietnam came along. All right, you had the Civil Rights Movement. Then you had Vietnam, and then you had student radical - and out of the - The student radical movement - Much more came out of Vietnam than out of Civil Rights. There were very few of the people who were student activists who later became revolutionaries, blah, blah had any - Very few of them had ever had any participation in Civil Rights. So they did not - They had never had that experience. So they didn't know anything about it. And what was their experience? Their experience was academics. Their experience was intellectualization. Their experience was manipulation of abstract ideas, and you know, and particularly at the more marquee universities: Cal, Columbia, etc. So here - This is what they know how to do. You know, they really don't know how to organize or participate in a mass movement with ordinary people. They are profoundly alienated. They're horrified by the war. They're scared of the draft. They're completely alienated by Nixon and Watergate. They're looking for an answer. But what they know how to do is very complex, intellectual, abstract theoretical constructs, and there is only one, you know, out there. Hey! Hello! I'm a theory here! This is old Marxism/Leninism here! Hey, big theory! Lots of books! Explains everything! Intricate! You can have lots of discussions! You can write papers! You can argue how many Marxists can stand on the head of a slogan! It like fit, right? So you had, you know, the intellectual leaders of the movement - It was very seductive. It's what they knew how to do. They were good at it. They were trained all their lives to be this kind of person, right? So it was very seductive. It was seductive in the sense that - At that time - How old are you?

KT: Thirty-six.

BH: OK. All right, so I'm talking ancient history. I'm talking Byzantium to you. In Byzantium, at that period - You know, and I'm talking way late 60s and during the 70s - so much shit was going on. Everybody felt lost. All right, strike that. Everybody in the - who had been active in the political community felt lost. I think ordinary people probably didn't, but we all felt lost. I mean, were profoundly alienated. Were scared. You know, there's this like police attacking, you know, shit. People are getting killed. People are getting arrested. You know, every institution we see is corrupt, and they really are corrupt. You know, the universities, the corporations, the government. Everything is fucked. And people felt really lost. How can we make sense of this? Everything is, you know - Everything we were ever taught is a lie. Where is the truth? Hello, I'm the truth! Hey! Oo-hoo! Over here! Marxist/Leninism! We're the truth! We got it! Look, we got all the shit! Everything makes sense! You can understand everything! Everything can be put into a context! Any question we can answer! Step right up! You know? And until you really got into it, and for most people even after they got into it, you can't see that - I mean it does sound like it - Like when I was in the Party, hey, anything anybody asked, I could run down a brilliant analysis of that made sense or seemed to make sense because it was internally coherent and had no internal contradictions at all. Everything fit. Of course, it fit in the way of a hallucinogen. It had no relationship to reality, but it all fit. So that was very seductive, and there was no other alternative. The other thing is, there was - You have no idea of the visceral hatred we had of what - of this system that we just hated: the system of segregation, the system of the Vietnam War, the system of Nixon, the system of the police, the system. We hated it, right? And who does that system hold up as their arch enemies that they fear and hate the most? Communists. Well, if we hate

these guys, and these guys hate those guys, maybe those guys are pretty good. You know? The enemy of my enemy is my friend shit, right? Now of course, had we had any, you know, sophistication, we would have said, Well, now let's see. The enemy of my enemy is my friend is a slogan that comes out of the Middle East. And for three thousand years the Middle East has been a cesspool of violent war and poverty. Maybe we shouldn't look to them for political leadership. But no, we were not quite that sophisticated. So, you know, it was sort of an emotional thing. It wasn't really intellect - It wasn't conscious. Well, for some people it may have been, but there was this kind of sense that if our enemies, you know Nixon, Helms, whatever, they are so down on this Communist shit, well we should be - They must - They're the ones fighting it. Of course, we didn't understand it that they didn't really give a fuck about Communists. It was just being used. It was a trick, and we didn't see through it. We were suckered. But there really wasn't anything else that was - And see this is where I would say people like me really fucked up. We who had experienced the Civil Rights Movement and seen the power of non-violent compassionate social reform grounded in the American experience, we should have been putting that forward as the alternative. Instead, we got sucked into this. And see in this business - See, and this is - And I absolutely agree with Gitlin on this. The Civil Rights Movement absolutely grounded itself in American values. The anti-imperialist revolutionary left that evolved into the Marxist/Leninist Party Building Left hated America, hated everything America stood for. America was the enemy. And they handed to the Right patriotism, the flag, America. They gave it to them. And then the only thing they could be is against. They had nothing they could be for, because they had nothing to be grounded in to be for. They couldn't say, as we said in Selma, you know,

We are defending American values. The right of the people to vote. What could they say? They had nothing. They had nothing. And that was the alienation. And I think a lot of it - These were basically middle class people who were very alienated from their middle class backgrounds. So alienation -

KT: Played a big part.

BH: Played a big part. And to this day, this is one of my biggest criticisms of the Left. They've never gotten out of that. You know? [laughing] I don't know if you attend demonstrations or stuff like that.

KT: Oh yeah.

BH: OK. When was the last time you attended a demonstration carrying an American flag?

KT: I've never carried an American flag.

BH: No shit! Duh! What would happen? What was the last demonstration you went on?

KT: It was organized by a group of Jews in Chapel Hill, North Carolina protesting the Middle East, policies in the Middle East. So it was a pro-Arab -

BH: Pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel. What would have happened if you'd carried an American flag to that demonstration in Chapel Hill, North Carolina?

KT: I understand what you're getting at, but actually, among this group, it's small enough and democratic enough that it would've been - But I understand.

BH: All right. You would've gotten - All right, in most places -

KT: I've seen it happen.

BH: You would be hit with an enormous amount of social negation.

KT: Uh-huh.

BH: And maybe gotten the shit beat out of you, depending on how volatile the situation is, right? Hello? What's the point of a demonstration if not to win adherence to your cause? Hello? If you can't carry - You know, all over the world, people look to America - There's this kind of schizophrenic duality to the way people see America. On the one hand, they see America the Conqueror, America the Controller, America the Manipulator. But on the other hand, they see the America of Jefferson, Lincoln, the Declaration of Independence, Independent Trade Unions, Freedom of Speech. You know? And we haven't made any use of that. You know, because I traveled all over Asia and stuff, and at that point I was anti-American with the best of them. And you know, people who were against the Vietnam War and stuff could not make any - You know, they just - What is wrong with this dude? You know? We love - Hey, you know, America is what we - I mean fucking Ho Chi Minh copied the Declaration of Independence, you know, for the Vietnamese Declaration. Hello! You know? So I don't know. It pisses me off.

KT: So what you're saying is that well the left has - Say more about your critique of the contemporary left and your -

BH: Well, there is no left. There is no left.

KT: To start, yeah.

BH: When I use the term left, I'm very consciously not including small groups of people in various parts doing stuff to try and improve their lives, because they're not part of some larger ideological or social or political agenda. They're just trying to get a

stop sign or clean up the waste dump or improve the schools or get the lead paint out of whatever. Other than that, there is no left. And again, now I'm going to talk Byzantium here to you, but there was a time in the 60s when there was a left. When each year, the Movement - and by this I mean both the Civil Rights and the emerging, initial, early parts of the anti-war movement and the student movement - each year it got stronger. We noticed it got stronger. It had more people, and the press and other people paid attention to what we did and what we thought. And when people who were leaders of the Movement - and I'm not talking about just Dr. King. I'm talking about Mario Savio. I'm talking about - When they had something to say, people listened, and it was important, and people paid attention, and it was getting bigger and bigger and stronger and - And then around 1968, -69, all of that turned around, and it went straight fucking down. So by the mid-70s, the left was totally irrelevant. It had no influence in public life. Nobody paid attention to what the left did. You could get the same number of people at every demonstration, and it hasn't changed. It has stayed down there at utter insignificance since the mid-70s. Now, the leftists like to think of themselves as the leaders of the people, of the revolution, of the war for freedom, of revolution. Well, OK. If you're a general, and every year you make no progress, and every year you don't win any battles, and every year your army is no stronger than it was the year before, don't you think that at some point, somebody will either say, Maybe we ought to figure out what were doing wrong? Or Let's get rid of that general. It hasn't happened. Among the people who still consider themselves the left, they have never - Well, if you say, Well what happened? Repression. The right wing repression. Whatever. The American working people were bought off by the imperialist colonial wealth stolen from the poor people. Bought them

off. Total bullshit, but it makes sense. I mean, it makes sense if you're on a hallucinogen, but it makes sense to them. It doesn't make sense in reality. Whatever. They have an excuse. And you know, year after year. You know, all right, now its been, let's say 75. You know, right? Twenty-six years? Hello? No change. There's no life. You know if you go to a lot of countries, the left matters. They may not be in power, but at least people listen, and they're respected. And what they say is, Oh, OK. We don't agree with it, but let's think about it. Or We have to fight it or something. Here, no. Absolutely not. Absolutely not. And you know I could give lots of what I think are the reasons, but those are just my opinions. The fact that there was a time when the movement, the left, the new left, was shaking society is incontrovertible. That happened. The fact that five years later it had no effect was completely - it was the chirping of a chipmunk in, you know, Montana for all the effect. And it hasn't changed. That is also - They don't see that. You know, and what I see is - They say, Oh wow, were getting - Young people are coming in all the time. That's true. Young people are coming in all the time and leaving six months to nine months later and not coming back. They don't see that part. They don't see that part. And I think part of it - The whole balkanization - You know, the whole Twilight of Common Dreams thing, absolutely agree with as a critique. The nationalism of all of its many - And the political correctness. God, you know, I know that one of the - I remember one of the things towards the end of my Party experience; I was talking with some of the people we were working with in the Rebel Worker Organization. And she said to me, You know, I really - You know, you people are really great. You're trying to do this, and you're trying to do that, and you really care about people. But you sure treat each other terrible. You sure treat each other bad. And she was right. Leftists treat each other like

shit. Or you say - you crinkle your eye out of political correctness, boy, they hound you like a ton of bricks. I mean, the - I don't know what the word is, but Were for freedom but as long as you are like as regl'mented in what you think- You know, its like some fucking robot, right? And people could see this. They ain't fools. I mean, Jesus. Anyway, so -

KT: Now in the Writers Union, you worked with your share of leftists.

BH: Oh yeah. Well, it was mostly formed by lefties of one form or another.

KT: And you presumably found a home for 20 years.

BH: Yeah, but you know, I was seen as the conservative. You know, I mean, because I wouldn't go along with the cockamamie theories and their crazy ideas a lot of the time. You know, they're like - A lot of them - And partly its because they're leftist and partly because they're intellectuals. You know, they just don't - They have no concept of things like money [laughing] and that if you're, you know - If you have a staff, you know, you have some responsibilities, legal and moral, to your employees. If you - I mean, it's just - So there was always a sort of a low-grade, you know, warfare. People, Well, why don't we overthrow Time Warner? Seize the-? I mean, not like that. That's really not fair. I can't give - you know, all right, for example, right now, we had a health plan, and the current leadership - Anyway, there were some big problems with it, partly the fault of the current leadership, partly the fault that health care plans are being destroyed everywhere. So one of these idiots - So they found an alternative plan, which is more expensive and poorer coverage, but at least we found a plan, they found a plan. I wasn't involved with it. So one of these intellectual leftie people who hasn't changed their fucking brain in 40 years, well since the 70s, Ah, you're a bunch of sell-outs. What

do you mean, we couldn't have found-? If we can't find a plan, let's self-insure ourselves! Let's form our own! Oh my God. No concept of what that would require. You know? So just -

KT: Well, you send that person off to do the research and come back with the blueprint.

BH: Oh, we tried that. With some of these people you see it doesn't matter, because they do the research and they read the reality through the lens of their hallucinogen, and they come back and say, Of course it's doable. It's obvious. But you know it's only obvious to somebody on psychedelics.

KT: Well, I would imagine too, just working with a union of writers is a challenge, just in terms of the personalities.

BH: Yeah, that's true.

KT: I mean, its got to be a little different -

BH: It was a lot different. I mean, it has – It's quite a bit different than your standard union, that's true. But on the other hand, theres a lot of similarities too.

KT: Did you get involved in UAW politics then?

BH: I didn't. Very little, actually.

KT: Because I know there's some spaces at the convention.

BH: Oh yeah, I went to a couple of those conventions. Oy! Stultifying boredom.

KT: Tedious, yeah.

BH: Because they have it all. It's all locked down. I mean, our conventions are real donnybrooks, you know. Oh God. Anything could happen and usually did. But

their conventions were as choreographed as the politburo, you know, I mean, there's nothing there. But the same dynamic, you know. I mean we now, you know our current president who started life as a labor rebel, you know, is now Mr. Entrenched, any ruthless tactic to peak his power, underhanded manipulations.

KT: Whos the president?

BH: [*Jonathan*] Tasini.

KT: Tasini.

BH: And I just couldn't stomach it. I just said, I'm not going to run again. I just can't stomach being in the same room with you anymore. So you know, he pulled this stunt. He had some real opposition this last election, so he -

KT: Yeah, I heard bits and pieces.

BH: Yeah, well he pulled some rotten shit. And then the election committee, which under our constitution runs things, said, Well, there was so much skullduggery in this election, we're voiding the results, and we call for a new election. And we'd always run under our own constitution and by-laws, so Tasini says, Oh wait a minute. We're a UAW Local. We have to follow the UAW rules. And under the UAW rules, the election committee cannot overturn an election. All they can do is recommend to the membership. And a membership meeting has to be called to vote on it. But of course, we can't have a membership meeting, because we're spread across the fucking planet. So I've talked with the UAW people, and they've said that instead of the membership meeting, we'll have the National Executive Board vote on whether to overturn the election. But of course the election was of the people elected to the National Executive Board. So oddly enough they

did not vote to overturn their own election. Can you imagine? What are the odds, right? You know, so shit like that.

KT: Wow, so is being president that important? Of the National Writers Union?

BH: Well, it's his prestige, and he's also now paid fifty grand. You know, when he was a writer, he probably made fifteen thousand in a good year. But mainly it's his prestige. You know, and it's his importance.

KT: Who ran against him?

BH: This guy from - Nice guy.

KT: Well, I'm sorry to hear that.

BH: Yeah, me too.

KT: I should be a member again, but I was a member for several years when I was working as a free-lance correspondent.

BH: Oh, going for the big bucks.

KT: In Gary, Indiana, working for the Knight-Ridder chain there.

BH: Look, if you're still doing writing, it's worth being in there. You got a grievance - You know, it can do some good things for you.

KT: Yeah, for the most part - I don't know why, just because I'm more supportive of the idea than anything else. I wasn't going to -

BH: But, you know, all right. I'm really pissed at Tasini, right, for what he did, but I'm not in any way surprised. I mean, this is the way unions are. You know, this is - And we was a good guy, but whatever. The power corrupts, you know, all that shit.

Look at Harry Bridges, right? I grew up. Harry Bridges was, you know, the great hero, and actually I still - I'm back to that, right? But the 71 strike, the big strike, right?

KT: That's right. You told me to get back to this.

BH: Well, this is a classic example. Here we had this - I don't know, it was like a six-month strike. It was the biggest dock strike since the 30s, right? And the whole Bay is covered with anchored ships that can't load or unload. Very dramatic, right? Problem was that Bridges did not support the strike. Bridges was against having the strike. Bridges wanted the members to sign the contract that the employers offered. Now I'm not sure why, because I was a casual at that time, so I was really on the periphery. But it may be that it was internal, that he was just angry at people, and this was, you know - Or it may be that his analysis was that there's no - That to really win what the workers wanted to win, that it would've taken a kind of a strike that could not be won in wartime because of the war cargo problem and that to try and do that would have hurt or destroyed the union. That's, you know, when I'm feeling sympathetic toward him I look at that side. When I'm, you know, he was just a mother fucker, you know, and he was a reactionary bastard, you know, depending on my mood. So he set up this strike so that the longshoremen were actually striking against themselves, and they didn't understand it because he was so smart. Oh God, he was smart. But this is the kind of thing when you're in power and you really know what you're doing, it's so easy to do this shit. So here's how it worked, right? We're on strike. However, because of the war, military cargo has to still be loaded. And if you don't load the military cargo, they will say, OK, we're no longer going to use the union for military cargo. We'll bring in non-union people, and the union will lose. This was his argument. The union will lose, permanently, all of those

jobs at the Oakland Army Terminal and the bases where they loaded the military cargo. So we have to load the military cargo, but we'll strike all the civilians. What the members didn't realize or they should have realized but didn't is that under American law, military cargo has to be carried in ships that are American flagships owned by American companies. Now we were on strike against American shipping companies and the wharf companies. OK. Military cargo is carried on a cost-plus basis, so here's an American ship. You know, its a quarter-filled with military cargo, but it's being carried cost-plus. So that quarter, the shipping rates, are now, you know, charged high enough so that shipping company doesn't lose any money, right? Because they're carrying a military cargo on cost-plus. Meanwhile, all the foreign flagged shipping companies who we were not on strike against and who are the competitors of the shipping companies we are on strike against cannot unload their civilian cargo and are stuck in the Bay going bankrupt. So the strike was driving out of business the competitors to the people we were striking, and they weren't making great profits, you know, but they weren't losing any money. And the war material was going, and meanwhile people are out there for six fucking months pounding the pavement. And of course, God, you know, gee, the Pacific Maritime Association, they must really be scared of the union. They haven't tried to bring in scabs. They haven't tried to break our picket line. No! Because why would they bring in scabs to unload the ships that are their competitors? Hello!

KT: No one called them on this.

BH: People did call them on this. That's how I learned about this. I didn't make up this. I didn't know enough about it to know. Until I, you know, people called this to my attention, and I looked into it and I researched it. But it's too abstract for most

people. This is an intellectual, you know - So then we had an opportunity. Somebody, you know, said, OK. There were some progressives, right? And they said, Well, look. The only way we're going to win this strike is we're going to have to stop the military cargo. Well, if we stopped loading the military cargo, they'll bring in non-union people to load it, and we'll lose those jobs. Unless, we can blockade the port, and unless we can blockade the access to the wharves so that they cannot physically bring in the cargo, right? Well, at that time there was, you know, four or five thousand longshoremen in the Bay Area in different ports. There's no way. They'll bring in cops. They'll bring in troops. Well, actually, it turns out, there may be a way that we could blockade those ports. We should call on the anti-war movement which at this point is 100,000 angry students who, if the longshoremen, the proletarians put out a call saying, Help! We would like to blockade the war material! Right? You would have had 20,000 people at the Oakland Army port. And whether they could have held it or not, I don't know, but it sure would've been fun to find out. But Bridges said - He scared the members. Oh no, we won't be able to hold it. We'll lose it permanently. And that's what happened. But that was one moment where if we'd been able to take that path, can you imagine what would have happened? If all across the West Coast, the labor - And the Teamsters were supporting us. They were supporting the strike.

KT: Oh, they were.

BH: Oh yeah. If labor and the whole anti-war left had gone out to stop the war ships? That would've been really heavy.

KT: Yeah.

BH: I don't know how it would've come out.

KT: On any number of fronts, you know.

BH: On all sorts of fronts. This was 71, so Nixon, you know, I mean, so - But, what was interesting is how he was able to arrange a strike where the members were striking against themselves, and they didn't understand that. So -

KT: How about any kind of final thoughts? Anything that you haven't touched on that you think is relevant to the kinds of things I'm going after?

BH: Well, I do know that when conscious leftists went into the working world to organize, they were always, you know - They were smart. They were dedicated. They were the hardest workers. And the workers were always happy to see them coming for that. They didn't pay much attention to the bullshit ideology, but they loved these people coming in doing all this great work, and going to all the meetings, and turning out the leaflet's. And that was good, and I guess it was good. I mean, they were happy doing something good there. It was always kind of amusing [laughing] to see some of that.

KT: A diversion at the very least.

BH: Well for me, you know, but no, people were happy to see them. They just didn't - They basically were very smart. The ordinary people were really very smart. Well, we'll take what they're willing to offer that's good, and we'll ignore the bullshit. [laughing] And the problem is that the left, you know, just wasn't able to see that and understand. Oh God, we used to say, Oh, power to the people! But when the people didn't agree with what we said, we'd just pay no attention to that whatsoever. You know, our own fucking ideology should've told us. Hey, you know, we're selling something and ain't nobody buying. Maybe we ought to look at what we're selling. Hello! You know,

Power to the people! The people aren't interested! Disconnect! But no, we never did. Or I mean, they never did. I mean, I don't do that anymore. So I guess my conclusion is that I don't think the influx of leftists really made much of a difference except to the effect that it influenced the leftists themselves, which it might have. And you know, some of them ended up having very good careers as union officers, but they didn't do it as leftists. They did it as former leftists. And maybe they did a better job. Maybe some of that social consciousness still lingers, I would hope. But I think that if some group could come in with a new concept of trade unionism - See where the left really made a difference was in the 30s where you had - Now I'm really - I'm not talking Byzantium. I'm talking about archeology now. You had the craft unionism of the AFL, and it was really the left that came in with the idea of industrial unionism. Now that idea had been around for a long time, the Wobblies, the Knights of Labor, and so forth, but they were the ones who came in and said, This is what we're going to do. We're going to do industrial unionism. We have a new concept of unionism, and we're going to put it into practice. And it was mostly the CP but also some of the Trotskyist group, and they did, and it really made a difference. Well, that concept of trade unionism, of industrial unionism, is now basically in a stagnant place where the AFL was back in the 30s. And if there was some group that had some new concept that had some grounding in reality, as opposed to our left, and could come in and say, All right. Here's a new idea, and here's lots of people willing to put their heart and soul into it, then they could make a difference. But nobody has come up with that idea yet. And they won't as long as they're still stuck in this unchanging mindset of the late 70s, of our left. So the role of the left really should be to be coming up with new ideas, and they're not. You know, the political dogma, political correctness, you

cannot question anything that's sacred text prevents any kind of new ideas from arising. I mean, there has to be some kind of new kind of trade unionism that first of all is based - See the advantage of CIO, if you want to take that as a model, right? The CIO said, We're going to step beyond the craft - the boilermaker, the machinist, the sheet metal - and we're going to take the whole factory as our- Well now, we have to step beyond a union that is just the people that work in a plant, and we're only going to be concerned with the people who work in this factory or this office or this hospital or this school to something bigger and somehow integrate that. And if somebody could come up with a way to do that that made sense and that could still meet the needs of all those different people, and then have people who would say, Yeah, I believe in that idea, let's go do it. But right now, the left is not open to new ideas, so ain't nobody gonna develop that. And it's so small and meaningless that it ain't got no troops to do it even if they did come up with the idea. But in theory, that is what a left is supposed to be doing. And the Civil Rights Movement was that way. The Civil Rights Movement - and by movement now I'm talking about the Direct Action Movement - said, OK, the NAACP has been doing their education for bring a few people into the middle class and court suits, which is fine. There's nothing wrong with that. But we're going to do something different. We have a new idea, mass movement. Mass movement connected with direct action. Montgomery, sit-in, Selma, Birmingham, Albany, voter registration. That was the new idea. It was a radical idea. There hasn't been a radical idea in the left since God knows when, and that's the trouble with the left. No new ideas.

KT: It's been awhile. [laughing]

BH: I mean, I'm so angry at the left over their attitude, you know, on the Palestinian/Israel thing. I mean, you and I probably disagree on this. You know, I think that they said, OK, well the only way we have to look at Israel/Palestine is through the paradigm of colonialism. That was a valid paradigm in 1960s, and we'll just fit everything into that paradigm, and it doesn't fit. But they don't care about that.

[END TAPE TWO, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE B]

BH: This is heresy. This is stone-cold heresy, right? I don't believe US imperialism exists anymore.

KT: How so?

BH: This is now the era of global. There is no American imperialism. There is no British imperialism. There is no Japanese imperialism. There is multi-national corporate something, but it's not America. It's not British.

KT: It's stateless.

BH: It's - well, the corporations are becoming their own state. It's transnational, meaning above, beyond national. And all of our lefties are still prattling about American imperialism. There's nothing - The oil companies, the power companies, the energy, whatever, they purchase government services in Washington. They purchase them in London. They purchase them in Nairobi. They purchase them in Beijing. They purchase them in Tierra del Fuego. And they don't care, you know? Oh, US companies- There is no such thing as - Yeah, my company. You know, me, Westwind Writers? Yeah, that's an American company, right? Standard Oil is not an American company. You know, Microsoft is not an American company. There is no such thing anymore as an American, French, whatever, company. It does not exist.

KT: It's not a particularly useful concept anymore.

BH: Well, it's anti-useful. It's - Because more and more, what we're seeing in reality is that the average Joe in Chicago has as much in common with the average Joe in Guadalajara, right? It doesn't matter, you know, I mean, the company that's fucking them, that's polluting their water, stealing their jobs, whatever, screwing them in their

stock trades, is a multi-national, transnational beyond national company. And yet our left, Oh American imperialism, American corporate, American- These corporations - Hey, the one thing you can say about America. We have a free market society, and we have the best government money can buy. And if you can buy your government, you get a good government, right? And these companies buy up government services everywhere, and there's no difference. And to say, This is America is to miss the fucking point. So I still pick up the publications by my old leftie friends, and they're still American imperialism. Yes, it is the US military that's used in lots of places, because it's the biggest military, right? But who controls it? Americans? No. Do you control it? Do I control it? No. No because we don't own any Congressmen. We don't own any Presidents, you know? People say to me, Bruce, you know, my mutual funds are going down, retirement, we're getting old. What are we going to do? Where should we invest? Everything is losing money. I say, Do you want to know where to invest? Invest in Congress. Right? Enron, our friend Enron, before they went bankrupt, invested I think in the year 2000, I think they invested something like - I think it was \$10 million or something in campaign contributions. In the Bush tax relief bill, they got - No, they invested \$2 million in contributions and got a \$500 million tax benefit in Bush's tax bill. Now you and me, we do a -

KT: [...] rate of return. [laughing]

BH: It was like a thousand percent. And these people, Ahh! I made 15% in the stock market! Oh, you pussy. You wuss. You know? You want to make money? Invest in Congress. But anyway, to get back - I don't believe, you know - The whole concept - See there once was a time when you could say British imperialism in East Africa, South Asia.

American imperialism in Vietnam, in the Philippines. You know, etc. People say, Oh, American culture imperialism, right? Half of the American culture, right? Is controlled by Bertelsmann, headquarters in Hanover, or Vivendi, headquarters in Paris, right?

American? Hello! You know, what does that mean? It means nothing. But, so then they say, Well, American imperialism. Well, the people out on the street hear that. See, when you say American - If I was to go out - You know, see those people out there? You know, if I was to go out and say America, right, they would think I was talking about them. And so if I say America sucks, American imperialism is the enemy of the world -

KT: It's you suck.

BH: You suck. You're the enemy. You're a bad guy. You're a fuckhead. I'm sorry to use these technical terms. So - And yet these fucking - you know these idiots who haven't had a new thought since 1969, right? American imperialism. Well, it might have made sense to some degree back then, but life marches on.

KT: It raises questions for me as to what the purpose of political action is for a number of people. At its worst, I'm fairly sympathetic with what you're putting out there, and I've had this notion that a lot of what passes for dissident political activity these days is probably more into therapy.

BH: [laughing] I'm not even sure its therapy anymore. I mean, it probably was at one point, you know, working out their rebellion against their parents. But now it's just - They're just totally bound up in their self identity of who they are. We're whatever, however, whatever label they would use. We're crusading to make the world better. And you know, they're just - I mean, they're just spinning their wheels, but they only spin their wheels among each other so they never really have any other reference. It was the

problem with the Party. You know, I mean once you're totally in this encapsulated environment and you're not really impact - You know, and everything you do is mediated through it, it's really hard to have any validity check on what you're doing. And I think a lot of the leftists are still there.

KT: The outside engagement, I think, is just so critical for any kind of activity.

BH: Here's another criticism I'll make of the left. The American left talks an awful lot, a hell of a lot about freedom and democracy. And this is what they're for: freedom and democracy. Yet on the international stage, inevitably they will be supporting the most reactionary, dictatorial, thuggish, undemocratic, authoritarian governments you can find. And that's going all the way back to Stalin. You know, Maoism. But you know, today, you know, the Arab countries. You know, We're for democracy, and yet you know, people we admire or support or agree with, if they wave the little red flag of anti-Americanism why we're in their corner. You know, it doesn't matter that they, you know, they stone women for, you know, holding somebody's hand. You know, it doesn't matter that there hasn't been a free trade union in human history in any of - you know, I mean they talk democracy, but they idolize these dictatorships. Why? Not because they're - They don't do it because they're dictatorships, but because they're such fucking idiots that if anybody who says, Hey, I'm anti-American! why they'll just flock.

KT: Well, it's the enemy of my enemy again.

BH: Yeah, yeah. And then they wonder why people don't take them seriously. You know? God I remember during the Party building. Oh, it was so hysterical. Each group - All right, so PL had sort of gotten the Mao franchise, right? So RU couldn't -

They tried to get the Mao franchise. They couldn't do that, because it was already taken. So then, let's see. Who did they-? I forget which one, but one of them, OK. Enver Hoxha of Albania. He's the man. And then someone else came up with the thought of Comrade Kim Il Sung. Right? The brilliant, the [...] leader. You know, of course the fucking people are starving to death by the millions, but you know, Oh the brilliant leadership of Comrade Kim Il Sung, you know, because all the good countries were already franchised. I think the RU, the last time I looked, had abandoned whoever they had and were following the wisdom of the Shining Path of Peru, these murderous drug thugs who even their own peasants hate.

KT: Chairman Gonzalo

BH: Whatever. And yet at the same time, they say, We are the champions of freedom and democracy. Right? And We believe in the thought of Comrade Kim Il Sung. And then Why don't people follow us?

KT: Did the DWP ever have an international-? What was their take?

BH: World Systems Analysis.

KT: Ahh!

BH: Edward Said, among others, who actually was somewhat associated at one point. So they didn't follow a particular country, but they followed a system, World Systems Analysis, which basically was the muddled thinking of Marlene. It was another name for it. Well and Edward Said and a couple other people. What was his name?

KT: I know [them]. It's a historian.

BH: Yeah. No, it was a guy whose name began with a G. Not Gallston, but anyway, something like that. You know, and these things they had some little kernels of

truth in all of them somewhere, but you know, international stuff really wasn't big on the DWPs hit list. So there wasn't a - Oh no, I do remember. We had a film showing of some propaganda film from North Korea, which I wrote. I wrote a paean of praise to the brilliance of Comrade Kim Il Sung, so when I was being sarcastic I wasn't talking about other people. [laughing] And how, you know, the workers are mobilized and participating in the control of the means of production, and that's why their steel production is so great. You know, so [laughing] so when I'm criticizing, hey, I was one of them. I was one of the people, you know, as an anti-imperialist revolutionary, I was up there. I wasn't carrying the American flag. I was waving the NLF flag. And I was wrong.

KT: I was wondering if you have any kind of - You kept your Civil Rights papers. Did you keep any stuff from your-?

BH: Oh not from the DWP.

KT: But maybe ILWU stuff.

BH: Oh yeah, a lot of that stuff. I think I do. I'd have to go look.

KT: Well next time you come across it.

BH: Well, I don't have as much, because the places where I would have paper was when I was part of an organization. And I had to turn in all my Party papers. So I don't have that much. I probably do have some somewhere.

KT: If you come across stuff that you think might be of interest, that'd be great.

BH: Well, you would have to go to that filing cabinet, and you'd have to look through, just like you did for the Civil Rights stuff. I really don't know, and I'm not

going to go look. [laughing] If you want to come over some time, I can point you to them and you can prowl through and see if there's anything there. So, I don't know.

KT: Thanks. Well, this has been terrific.

BH: I don't know if this helped you in where you want to go or just totally discouraged you, but -

KT: No, not at all. I mean, I've talked to enough people who have just - a whole range of experiences. The many people that did this, I think you've got the whole range of people who went in and figured out that the revolution wasn't going to happen but that they better figure out what they were going to do. And people who are still, you know, became legitimate trade unionists.

BH: Which really was a fairly valid choice. You know, I mean, you end up having to do stuff that probably you would have criticized vehemently, but that's life, you know? You've got to deal with the real world, unfortunately. Well, not everybody. There's still lots of leftists who don't get contaminated by that.

KT: Well, thanks.

BH: Sure, my pleasure.

KT: It was great.

[END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE B - END OF TRANSCRIPT]