LEXINGTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS, INC.

Interview
Edgar Smith
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Interview conducted by Bonnie Jones
Videotape length 54 minutes

ES: My name is Edgar Smith. I think we moved to Lexington in January of 1964. Actually, my wife and our four children—our first night in Lexington was, I think, New Year's Eve. We spent New Year's Eve moving into Lexington. We had lived in Boston. We came from Dorchester. We lived in Dorchester, lived in Roxbury, and moved into Lexington. We were looking for a place where we could have some wide-open space to raise the kids. We both are native southerners from Mississippi, and are accustomed to living in wide-open space. That's why we came to Lexington. I didn't know anything about suburbia per se. To me this was a country town where I had some space. I didn't like the concrete; still don't like the concrete. I like the dirt. And the school system of course. But the primary purpose was to get out here where I could breathe and the kids could play. So, we came to Lexington.

INT: Did you know other people here when you moved here?

ES: No, we had worked with a couple of people through the Fair Housing Committee, Eileen Turchinetz who was working with the Fair Housing Commission at that time, and some other people. They were assisting us in looking for housing, because as you know at that time it wasn't easy to get housing in Lexington for black people. We knew Eileen and Bill—that's her husband Bill Turchinetz. Those were the only people that we knew. Lexington was a foreign country to us.

INT: What was the search for housing like for you?

ES: It was interesting. That's an over-used term, but it was interesting. Because, as I said, I'm a native Mississippian, okay, so at that stage in my

life I was accustomed to a certain way of life in terms of dealing with people. But I had this vision about coming to New England, and perhaps there were things that would be a little bit different. When I started looking for a house I said, "Well, it won't be an amazing problem—big deal." It was, and we ran into some interesting things. For instance, one person had scheduled an appointment with us by phone—when he saw us drive up, drove off, disappeared. That's interesting. I started this whole thing with one frame of mind, but as I entered into it, I became a little bit hardened, you know. I began to expect crap whether it came down or not. Those instances when they would happen, I would be prepared for it. I was pleasantly surprised in one instance. The person who showed us this house was very, very nice. There were others who were not; some who were fairly direct in their racism, others were not. But it was a learning experience. That whole process of looking for a house in Lexington helped introduce us to what Lexington was going to be about. So in a sense it was an educational experience. I don't regret it, because I believe in learning something with everything that you do. And that was an interesting, interesting time.

If I may tell you one particular story that stands [out] in my mind—we were looking at a house in Lexington, and the owners felt very good about showing it to us, no problem. We went over and looked at the house, and it was pretty nice. I had four sons, by the way. We looked at the house, went back into Boston, and we liked that house pretty good. Decided to come back and look at it again. When we went back the second time, the owner said, "Edgar, I've got an interesting story to tell you." He said, "After you left yesterday my next door neighbor came over and said, "I see you're showing your house to some—in those times you used the term "colored people"—and the person said, "Yes, I am." And he said, "Well, you know, I'm not really prejudiced," and so forth. He said, "But I notice he has four

sons, and I have daughters." At that time my oldest son—and that was 1964, Don was born in 1957 so he was about six or seven years old. So I told this guy to tell him, I said, "Well, my son is not dating too heavily right now at age six, but when he gets a little older—I can't promise anything. If he's like his father, he's in trouble." So that was interesting.

INT: What were you doing for a living at the time?

ES: In 1964 I was at Beth Israel Hospital, Harvard Medical School. I had finished a post doc in biochemistry; I'm a biochemist. I was doing cancer research, and I had my laboratory at Beth Israel Hospital. My appointment was at Harvard. I was doing research, strictly doing research in 1964. I wasn't doing any teaching there. I wasn't on the faculty; I was on the research faculty at Harvard. But I was dong all research, no teaching.

INT: How did you find Lexington, in general, as a place to live at that time?

ES: When we first moved into Lexington—as I said, I had learned a lot in the search process—I sort of prepared myself to deal with this community, whatever came forth, I thought I was going to be prepared for. Our neighbors turned out to be very good. We had no problems with the neighbors, because our attitude was that we're here because we want to be in a town that has what Lexington has to offer. We didn't move here because we wanted to be in suburbia, if you understand what I'm saying. We were country people. I like the wide-open spaces. I like those woods back there. I'm accustomed to seeing the rabbits and all those type of things. This is like home to me. I came in with the impression that I'm here because I want to be here, and I deserve to be here. If you don't bother me, I don't bother you. It turns out our neighbors were quite friendly. They had children the same age as ours—many of them were. Some were babysitters. So our kids had a very comfortable setting because, as it turned out, we had the largest

backyard in the community. All the kids wound up coming here to our backyard, so our kids didn't have to worry about going anyplace. Besides that we had enough kids so they would be company for each other—four boys—and they played very well together.

I think they had a good experience in school. My kids ran into some interesting situations. My oldest son's first year in school, he came to me one day and he said, "Dad, I was standing in line today and a kid called me 'chocolate drop.'" Now his brother who was younger, said, "Call him 'vanilla.'" It was his younger brother. I told my oldest son, I said, "Now don't be concerned about that," I said, "If somebody calls you a name, that person is a coward," and so forth. And then I was talking with him; I said, "So long as he doesn't touch you," and blah, blah, blah. My son said, he looked at me and he said, "Well, what happens, Dad, if he hits me, if he touches me?" I said, "Son, if he hits you, you hit him as hard as you can. You don't touch him. If you hit him so he remembers it, he won't hit you again." I said, "Let me see how hard you can hit something." I put my hand up like this. And he hit my hand—pow! I said, "Now, if you hit him like that, he's not going to hit you again." He just walked away. He felt good about himself.

I told him to protect himself. Don't start anything, but if someone wants to deal with it, you be prepared to deal. And don't play. Because that's how I operate. He felt good. I could see that he was feeling good. I said to myself, hmm, that's the way to do it. You learn, you know, each time.

So that was one incident. There have been other minor things, but no major ones. My kids, I think they were pretty satisfied with Lexington. We were comfortable with Lexington. We'd been here since 1964. I'm not thinking about going any place else. Interesting town, Lexington. Lexington is a conservative town. I almost said very—not very—but it's a

conservative town, but you have to know that. I think one has to know what you're dealing with, and don't have any illusions about it, and deal with it, so as you can make that system work for you. I made Lexington work for us, for me and my family.

INT: You'd lived in Dorchester?

ES: Yes, I lived in Dorchester.

INT: And had you lived in other communities in the north prior to…?

ES: Yes, I was in graduate school at Perdue in Lafayette, Indiana. I was there from 1955 to 1959. Indiana is the Midwest, it's not like the northeast. Indiana's what we call "up south," really. There wasn't a whole heck of a lot different between Mississippi and Indiana in terms of the people; the college campus was different. So, that's where we had lived. Interesting things happened at Purdue, too, around the whole race thing.

INT: You said you were involved in the Fair Housing movement prior to coming to Lexington, or was it as part of…when you were coming into Lexington?

ES: Actually, as part of the way of coming into Lexington, we made it known that we were interested in Lexington, and we were advised to get in contact with the Fair Housing Commission. That's how we got involved.

INT: Did you remain active with the Civil Rights group?

ES: Yes. As a matter of fact my wife and I became active members of the Lexington Civil Rights Committee. Shortly after being here, I became Chairman of the Education Commission of the Lexington Civil Rights Committee. Shortly after that I became Chairman of the Lexington Civil Rights Committee. I don't know how many years I served in either one of those posts. But we were very actively involved in what was happening in terms of the civil rights activities in Lexington and in Boston and where everybody else could be involved.

INT: Could you tell us about how the town changed from the time you arrived in 1964 until 1971 when this arrest took place?

ES: You're taxing my memory now, lady. That's over a seven-year period. It's difficult to measure change when you're actually involved in it. If I were sitting back and sort of looking at things happening from year-to-year... But it evolved, and that was part of the evolution of it. I really never thought about how Lexington changed, because I guess I was looking at Lexington as sort of the microcosm of what was happening beyond Lexington. Even though I was in Lexington and most of my activities were there, they were not limited to Lexington, so I was really concerned about what was happening more on a scale beyond Lexington than what was happening in Lexington. I began to, after a while, not pay too much attention to Lexington—do you understand what I'm saying? My interests went beyond that. As a matter of fact, that's what has happened now. I can't tell you a lot about what's happening in the town. That began to change when I began to see that some people were really interested in what was happening in Lexington, and not what was happening beyond Lexington.

Part of the Civil Rights Movement was when we were doing some things; I remember I was teaching in Hancock Church, I was teaching Sunday School, and we were talking about the Elliott Congregational Church, which is in Roxbury. I decided I would take my Sunday School class into Roxbury. All hell broke loose when the kids went home and told their parents that I'd taken them to Roxbury. That really surprised me. And I began to think, wow, wait a minute here, what is this all about?

INT: What were their concerns?

ES: They were concerned that their kids had gone into Roxbury. I don't know the details of their concern. I can imagine it, but I don't know the details of their concern. They wanted to do some very liberal type things in

Lexington, so long as you were in the bounds of Lexington. But when you really get into the real world—well, wait a minute, I'm not quite ready for that. I was interested in what was happening in the real world, you know, where the action was.

We had made attempts to do a number of things in Lexington. A former secretary of the Civil Rights Committee, Jean Christensen, and I had put together a brochure, a self-help brochure—the copies of which I have now, I ran across a copy—which indicated what the folk in Boston were doing to help themselves. And how people in Lexington could help them to help themselves. We had done a summer camp, an exchange camp, between Lexington and Roxbury, but we had done it in such a way where… My idea was I wasn't going to have Lexington planning a summer program for Roxbury. We put together a joint committee consisting of Ellen Jackson, whom people might know as the founder of Operation Exodus, and a number of other people in Roxbury together with folks from Lexington to plan a summer program, which would involve not only Lexington students going into Roxbury, but Roxbury students coming out to the kids, coming out to Lexington for the summer, to take advantage of their facilities out here. So, that worked fairly well. And it's interesting, some of the individuals who were involved in that program—there's some interesting things around the 1971 arrest, which we'll talk about later.

INT: That brings me to the Vietnam War protest movement. At what point did you get interested in that?

ES: Wow! I really don't remember at what point I became interested. I'm trying very hard to remember that.

INT: Did you get involved in any protest prior to the…?

ES: I had been involved in Civil Rights protests, yes. Marches around Lexington. And things along those lines, some things in Boston. But, that was about it.

INT: Do you remember how you got involved in the Memorial Day events of 1971, when you first heard about it?

ES: Oh, yes. I was concerned as an individual about what was happening in the War. I just thought it was an unjust thing, and we were just doing the wrong thing at the time. On the day of the event, the arrest actually, I had been in town with my two oldest sons—they had music lessons. And my wife Inez had actually been in the march with our two younger sons on that day, the day they had the march. Even though I had been very much concerned about what was happening, and I knew that the veterans were planning a long march, and they were going to stop in Lexington, I didn't realize what was going on until I came home that there was some resistance to what they wanted to do. That really didn't make sense to me.

I really became angry, to be honest with you. So much so until at the general meeting that was held at Cary Hall—I think there was a meeting at Cary Hall in the afternoon prior to the arrest at which time people were trying to get the Board of Selectman to change their minds—I was so upset about what one of the Selectmen was saying, I called him a damned liar from the balcony. I remember that very well. Folk in Lexington had known me as a fairly mild-mannered individual. And they were shocked. They said, "Edgar, that's not you!" And I said, "Yes it is. It is Edgar." He was lying through his teeth about what had happened and I was so angry until I yelled from the balcony, and walked down stairs and went behind him and told him he was a liar. This was one of the persons who had been involved in our setting up the summer program with Roxbury, which led me to think

that [there are] people who operate in a certain level when they're safe, so long as it doesn't go too far. But, he just turned around so much to me, that I became so upset. Because I had worked with the person and I was upset with him. You know, when someone turns… And I was really angry, and I just knew I was going to do something that night, because I was just upset.

I came back home and I told my family about what was going on. I said, "We're going to go to the Green, and we might just get arrested." And my number two son, Tony, wanted to go with me.

INT: How old was he at the time?

ES: This was 1971, Tony was born in 1958, so he was thirteen. But the point is, he was serious. "You know," he had said, "Dad, I want to go down with you." I just thought he wanted to be adventurous. When I was about to leave I noticed that he was seriously concerned about what was going on. He understood it, and he understood why I was going down there, and he wanted to go with me. But I just didn't want to risk his going, because I didn't know what was going to happen. I've seen protests in the Civil Rights Movement, and I just didn't want to subject him to that. I've had second thoughts about that since then because I know he really wanted to do it.

But, we went on down. I got the necessary equipment that I needed, something to sleep on and so forth, and went down to the Green. And we stayed there. That was a good group of individuals because people were serious; they were committed individuals, committed folk. A number of my friends were there. And I made some friends with people whom I had heard about and hadn't met before; one of whom was Noam Chomsky. As the night went on there was a feeling of revelry there, people were having fun, and so forth. But as the night grew, and into the morning, it was obvious that we were going to be arrested. So we began to prepare ourselves for that.

We were jovial. We said we're going to spend the night in jail, because we believed in this. But, it's okay to do it. However, the buses rolled up and along with the buses came cars of state troopers who came and stood besides those buses. They looked like they were about nine feet tall.

INT: Were they armed?

ES: They were armed, and they had the largest billy clubs I've ever seen in my life. I play baseball, used to play baseball, but to me they looked as long as a baseball bat. And they were standing by those buses hitting their hands with a club, just like that, expressionless, you know. I had visions of a Gestapo, I really did. I was frightened. I said, my God, hey, this is serious business. For the first time throughout that whole process I was afraid, I was frightened. As I thought about it, I was very happy I didn't bring my son. Because I really didn't know what was going to happen, because those guys looked as if they were ready to smash our heads in. And we had not…

INT: …been involved in a protest which did become violent?

ES: No, I haven't. One of the reasons that I haven't was I knew I've got a short fuse on things like that, I really do. If I were marching, or if someone were to push me, I'm not too sure that I could be non-violent. I think it's important to understand that when you're going to those things. Now, I know if I were in something where my family was involved, and if someone had pushed one of them, then I would have gone off. I knew that. So what I tried to do was to limit myself to those situations where I thought that violence would not occur.

INT: What was the atmosphere on the Green during the evening before the arrests?

ES: I'd say it was friendly, jovial—people were talking and singing, just having fun. It was not a tense time. People had been doing some talking and speaking. But after that it was just a gathering of people who

felt concerned about what was going on. In my mind there was a sense of camaraderie there. I met a fellow scientist from Brandeis. We kept in contact after that. He's gone to Israel now. He was doing some research, some research that my brother-in-law was doing—my wife's brother. And I got to know him quite well. It was just a good feeling. We felt we were doing the right thing.

INT: Did you talk to any of the veterans?

ES: Yes, I got to know [now U. S. Senator] John Kerry. I got to know John Kerry very well; I talked with John. His sense of commitment was impressive at that time. I remember that quite well. I've talked with him many times since then. And he's a Senator. As a matter of fact, I ran across him not too long ago in Legal Seafood. That's when my office was downtown, when my office was at the University of Massachusetts office downtown. It was right across from the Plaza Hotel. I was in Legal Seafood and he was in there. I just thought I'd mention it, and we started talking about it. He said, "Yes, those were some rough days," and so forth. We had an interesting conversation going on. So, I met John. I'm sure I've talked with some others but wow—he sticks out.

INT: Were you surprised that it was such a peaceful event after your impressions of the state troopers?

ES: Pleasantly surprised. Yes, but you see, it was the type of thing where people were not… First of all, we were not marching. We had come to the Green prepared to be arrested, so we weren't resisting arrest. See? Violence many times develops when there's some type of resistance and so forth. Sometimes the cops might initiate the violence. That has happened many times. But we came there prepared. So we were surprised that they had brought out such a large cadre of state troopers, as if they were prepared for the most violent event. It was quite clear [that] we had come to the

Green to say, "Okay, we're going to stick with the Vietnam veterans because we believe in what they're doing. If it means being arrested, so be it. We'll walk right…" They might have needed one policeman to direct us into the buses. You understand this? We weren't about to resist that.

INT: Do you remember what happened after you were arrested?

ES: Oh yes. They took us to the heavy equipment barn, the Public Works barn. Lexington didn't have a facility large enough to house all of us, so they took us down to the barn. Those of us who had been wise enough to bring sleeping bags were prepared. And so we slept. Then again, even though it was like three o'clock in the morning, after we had gotten off the buses and rid ourselves of the state troopers, there was this feeling of camaraderie. I even let someone else use my sleeping bag. I think Noam Chomsky did not come with a sleeping bag, as I recall, and he was using my bag, and some other people, other friends…it was a good feeling. Not comfortable, sleeping on a concrete floor, but it was for the right thing. It was a good time.

INT: Do you remember what happened the next day? Did you go to court?

ES: We went to court the following day. I think we went to Concord court. We were brought before the judge, and we were guilty and so forth. We were let go.

INT: Were you involved in any of the meetings after this arrest?

ES: I'm sure I was. I can't remember the details of them, except one local lawyer had advised to appeal the decision, and tried to get pardon and so forth, but I don't believe I did.

INT: Going back to something which was the METCO[1] Program—I know you were involved to some extent in Lexington.

[1] METCO is a program that bused inner city children to suburban metropolitan-area schools.

ES: The METCO experience, we'd been involved in it from the very beginning, actually. Because one of the individuals who was really a major player in the development of METCO, Ruth Batson, has been a friend of ours for a long time. Known Ruth for a long time. We were involved sort of in an advisory capacity. We were never a METCO [host] family, but I advised the person who was directing METCO in Lexington. I can remember getting calls early in the morning when things would happen and I'd have to rush down to the high school and assist the individual. Shortly after METCO developed in Lexington, however, we set up the METCO Scholarship Fund, and I was a member of the founding board of trustees of the METCO Scholarship Fund. It was set up to provide scholarship monies for METCO toward college education. We raised a considerable amount of money, primarily through solicitation or through fund-raising events, and we were able to give each METCO student that applied—if we felt that that person needed the money—we would give that person a substantial amount of money. I retired from METCO a few years ago, but at the time we were giving scholarships that ranged from $100 to $2,000 a year, and we would follow the student throughout his or her four years, or five years, whatever was necessary in college. That proved to be a very, very good program.

INT: So you were one of the people who would say that the METCO Program was a successful program.

ES: Yes, I would say that METCO was indeed a successful program for what it was designed to do. I think that it did it, and it did it well. However, I think, a time has come for us to really begin to focus more attention than has been focused on improving the schools for the kids who are left behind. See, you can only take a small fraction of kids out of that. That's why I said METCO was good, and is still good for what it does. But there are a large number of students left behind who are under-served, the larger number of

students are under-served. They need to be in a system where they can have the same type of educational opportunity as those students who are in the METCO Program.

INT: Getting back to the events of Memorial Day, do you have any thoughts about why the Selectmen did what they did?

ES: You know, that puzzled me. That puzzled me for a long time. And I'm trying to remember now, but I think some of it had to do with the sanctity of the Lexington Green. They didn't want the Green violated for something that they thought that the town, as a whole, was not behind. This was such a controversial issue, and people had taken such strong sides in this thing. As I said, Lexington is a conservative town, and the majority of the folk who were in power at that time were conservative in their political outlook. They would go only so far. One thing that I can remember of concern had to do with the sanctity of the Green. If one thinks about this, I think it sort of falls in line with conservative thinking of the town government at that time. But that's the only point that I can make about how or why the Selectmen did what they did. As I can remember the composition of the Board, that philosophy jibes with that concept, yes.

INT: You mentioned that one of the Selectmen had been involved in helping with getting the Roxbury Summer Program going. Was that unusual for a Selectman to be involved in that?

ES: That's the first time that Lexington had done anything like that. And this was something that looked good for Lexington because Lexington was getting some good publicity out of this. And it was not costing the town of Lexington anything. But we were going to use some facilities which were essentially private facilities.

So there were some individuals involved. There were a couple of Selectmen who were involved with Lexington Civil Rights Committee. Two

of these individuals were part of that combined group that put together the summer program because they felt that that was a good thing to do for white and black kids to get to know each other on that their own turf, on the various turfs. So they felt that this was a good thing to do. And this is the first time Lexington had done anything like this. There were a number of towns that were doing this type of thing; this was not unique to Lexington at that time. It was being done in different ways. Lexington was the first one to do it in the manner in which I described, namely, having a joint committee. The other towns had decided they wanted to have some type of a summer event with the inner city. They planned it and presented it as a package, "Here's what we're going to do." We learned from that. I looked at that and I had been working individually with some people in the inner city already, and we talked about that, and that just really wasn't the way to do it.

These two Selectmen were part of that. I can remember vividly their coming into Boston and meeting in the Operation Exodus office. That's where we had those meetings in Boston, the Operation Exodus office. The other meetings were out here mostly, at this house. They had been very cooperative. There were certain things that we needed. I can't remember the details, but in order to do this, we needed the town's blessings to do some things, and we got that through these two Selectmen.

INT: Do you remember what year that was?

ES: 1966, 1967, in that time frame.

INT: Do you remember any more specifically what it was that happened that night at Cary Hall that got you so angry? What was it the Selectman said?

ES: I wish I could remember the details of what he said. I don't remember the details, but it was clearly an untruth. And I just exploded, but I don't remember.

INT: Was it about the veterans or…?

ES: I can't remember the details of what he said; I wish I could. As a matter of fact, I was not the only one who was responding that way. Other people were moaning and groaning about what he was saying. I just was a little bit more direct.

INT: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your impressions during that evening or the following day?

ES: I guess for me that was the first time that I had been in a setting with a large number of individuals, most of whom were strangers to me, but we were all committed to the same ideal. In the past I've been in meetings with individuals whom I had known, who believed in what I believe in, and we were working together for something. But here we had a large number of individuals, most of whom I did not know. I knew some of them, but most of them I did not know. And we were willing to go the limit for something that we believed in. As I said before, I saw a camaraderie develop there before and during the arrest. I kept contact with some individuals afterwards.

So to me that was an impressionable moment, a learning experience, one that I will never forget. And one in which I learned a lot about commitment, really about commitment. The limit for us then was going to jail, being arrested. I think whatever the limit might have been that evening, we would have gone that limit because we were committed to do that. When that decision was made, we believed in whatever is necessary to demonstrate we're going to do, and we did it.

INT: Do you think this event had a lasting impact on the town?

ES: I'm not sure it did. I think it might have had an immediate one where people talked about it and thought about it for a while. But, just like the war itself, people were concerned, but in the minds of a lot of individuals that's something in the past, that people really don't think about and talk about. I personally don't think it was as lasting as it could have been. Then again, as I stated earlier, I really have not operated in the town as much after that as I did before.

Well, after the Lexington Civil Rights Committee, there was a Lexington Committee for Suburban Responsibility that was supposed to be involving a broader mix of individuals in the town of Lexington. I served on that until I lost my patience. It wasn't about reality. It was about going through the motions and having meetings and talking. It really wasn't about doing anything. I shortly began to focus my activities outside of the town. So, I really don't think it has made as much [of an impact] as I would like for it to have.

INT: Can you tell us a little bit about where you developed your ideas about social justice or the whole civil rights, civil liberties kinds of issues?

ES: I think it comes from my background growing up in the segregated south. I'm a native Mississippian. I spent the first twenty years of my life in Mississippi where I dealt with what people were talking about. To me segregation wasn't something that we sit down and discussed—I lived it. I was born in a small town in the Mississippi Delta, surrounded by cotton fields and so forth. I don't mean to make this more dramatic, romantic, than it should be, but that's how it was. And we had no rights in those days. People could do whatever they wanted to do to us. I grew up in a segregated school system. We couldn't have new textbooks. We used the used books that were passed down from the white schools.

But there were people in those communities that helped us as individuals keep ourselves together. There were very strong people in our community. I feel a very strong obligation to the community in which I grew up, in which I was born in the Mississippi Delta, because the churches, the schools, the ministers, the teachers were strong, and they convinced you that you were in a system that wouldn't let you move. But you were capable of it. In that system, because we were poor, we were people-related; we weren't things-related, because we didn't have anything. We were poor but we weren't unhappy. We didn't know we were poor because we had food, we had clothing. You might wear the same clothes, but you had them. And you had shelter, and you had people who cared. In that environment one develops a feeling towards people, toward human beings. And that—if that becomes a part of what you are—then that extends itself through all your activities. I think the foundation for that was laid in this small community in the Mississippi Delta where I learned that people cared about each other. People spoke to each other. If they'd pass you twenty times a day, they'd speak to you. If you had a garden and someone else had a garden, you know [you could] go in somebody's garden and get you some greens, get you some beans. You didn't starve. Need some eggs? Go in the hen house and get an egg. Need some peaches? Go and get some peaches off the tree. Things like that.

And there was this whole thing about a community raising a child. I couldn't do something on one side of the town that my folk didn't know about on the other side. Because the people on the other side were licensed to [grab] my tail if they wanted to, or they'd tell my grandmother about it. There was a feeling of community. Those type of things, I think, laid the foundation for whatever sense of social justice or feeling about humanity, or people, that I have laid right there.

INT: Do you have anything else you want to add at this point?

ES: No, except that I'm really glad to see that this is being done.

INT: Any thoughts abut that that you want to pass on?

ES: No, I think it's an excellent idea. Are you planning to finish up in 1996—twenty-five years? I think it's long overdue. You asked me earlier, "Had it made an impact on the town?" The town hasn't said anything about it, and that was a major event. Four hundred and some people arrested and, I think, it's worthy of note. I appreciate this project. If there's anything else that I can do, I'd be certainly happy to do it—get involved.

INT2: You referred to earlier when you said you would have something to tell us about that person…the arrest story.

ES: I think that was the Selectman, wasn't it? Wasn't it making reference to the Selectman? I didn't call any names, deliberately. The story I was going to tell was what he did.

INT2: And then the other one that I'm interested in: While you were down at the Battle Green with the other people, knowing that there was a confrontation, and you made all the kids stay home, and your wife—what was going on here at home?

ES: Yes, well, home was very concerned about what was going on. As a matter of fact, as I indicated earlier, my wife, Inez, had marched with our two younger sons early in the day. So, they knew that something was happening, the young ones knew that something was happening. As it turned out when the older ones and I returned from their music lessons—they were taking music lessons; one was taking guitar and one was taking drums, both at Berkeley—what I would do is I would drop them off and then I would go to my lab. My lab was at B.U. then. Do a little research, and come back and pick them up and we'd go shoot some pool or something like that.

We came home, and we came home just as their mother and their two younger brothers were finishing up the march. So they also knew that something was happening, and they saw all the activity in Lexington, and they heard us talking about it and they saw that I was upset. That's why my son, my number two son Tony, wanted to go down. I knew something was happening. When I left the house, I left with their blessings, but with their concern. I'm certainly glad that they did not see those patrolmen down at the Green. My wife, Inez, was so concerned that she went to the Board, the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen at the time that we were arrested and said, "Hey, you got to do something about this." Nothing was done, but at least she made her position known.

INT: Do you think all the Selectmen were of one mind?

ES: I'm trying to remember. I think they might have been of one mind, but at different degrees of satisfaction with that. I can think of one Selectman that I think might have been concerned a little bit about what happened, but others were rather strong. I think they were of one mind in terms of what this meant to Lexington, but I think some of them were having trouble in their own minds as to whether or not it was the right thing to do, to deny some veterans. You see, we were talking about denying veterans. And this is Lexington, the Revolutionary War, fighting on the Green, and so forth. Some people had trouble with those positions, but they came down on the side…I don't remember the vote. Was it unanimous?

INT: I think it was. One Selectman was away that weekend.

ES: Yes, Natalie [Riffin] wasn't there.

INT: One other kind of question I have from not having been here at the time. You heard about this conflict happening between Selectmen and the veterans before the day that the march happened, or not?

ES: I don't remember that, but I knew about the conflict of the day. I might have known, but I just don't know.

INT: Or did you possibly hear it from your wife when she came back from the march?

ES: I don't know.

INT: As far as your awareness, was there a tight-knit sort of organization around this march?

ES: Oh, I think there was. Oh yes. There was an organization. Resist[2] was involved. I was not a member of Resist, but I knew some members through they're being also on the Lexington Civil Rights Committee. So this was a well-organized effort, the march was. I was not part of that organization, part of that effort, but it was indeed well organized.

INT: How do you account for getting so many people to come? That is kind of mysterious to me. Where so many people arrived on the Green and stayed on the Green…that's a large number, more than the members of those…

ES: That's true. You know, that's an interesting question. I don't know how that came about, because a number of those individuals, as I think about it, were not citizens of the town of Lexington.

INT: Thank you again for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW

[2] Resist was a national organization established in 1967 to support Vietnam War draft resisters. According to leaders of the VVAW, this march was a VVAW-organized and originated effort.