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Emily Orr

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Interview conducted by Jennifer Tilton.

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Bridges that Carried Us Over Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Emily Orr

Interviewer:

Jennifer Tilton

Interview Date:

February 2022

Interview Location:

Claremont, CA

Length:

01:23:06

Interview Summary completed by:

Makaley Montano, 2022.

Caroline Blanchard, 2024.

Description:

Emily Orr discusses her family's role during the Civil Rights Movement in San Bernardino. Emily met her ex-husband Clabe Hangan while she was a student at University of Redlands, and she shares memories of their experiences as an interracial couple in the 1950s. After getting married in 1955, they started a family and moved to San Bernardino. They became very active in the Civil Rights movement and folk music scene in San Bernardino. Clabe Hangan served as principal of the Freedom Schools, and Emily was a teacher for the freedom schools and hosted classes at their house. Clabe Hangan grew up in Second Baptist Church where he was an original member of the music group, the Mutonic Four. During the 1960s, he became active in the folk music scene and built a career as a musician. Emily Orr became a social worker, and in the early 1970s divorced Clabe Hangan. From music to protests and raising a family during a time of civic unrest and desegregation, Emily shares key insights and figures about life in San Bernardino and Redlands during the 50s and 60s.

Subject Topic:

- San Bernardino (Calif.)
- Westside
- Housing
- Segregation
- Frances Grice

- Caesar Hangan

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Clabe's Fathers House	Pearl Street (house is no longer there) where Trader Joe's is located now
Unitarian Church	Riverside, CA (active in Civil Rights)
Penny University	Mount Vernon

Temporal Coverage:

1950s - 1970s

Key Events:

- Civil Rights Movement

Key Organizations:

- Mutonic Four
- University of Redlands
- Penny University
- Second Baptist Church

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Digital Video	00:11:00 – 00:19:20	Discusses the death of Cesar Hangan
Digital Video	00:19:20 – 00:22:56	Recalls memories of Second Baptist Church and the formation of the Mutonic 4
Digital Video	00:22:56 – 00:31:29	Description of Reverend Hopkins and his singing abilities

Digital Video	00:31:29 – 00:35:07	How Anne Shirelles influenced them to get involved with the community
Digital Video	00:35:07 – 00:37:48	Clabe Hangan's experience at the UofR
Digital Video	00:37:48 – 00:43:52	Civil Rights Involvement - Freedom Schools and desegregation
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Digital Video	00:46:06 – 00:47:49	Lists names of community leaders and provides small stories on them
Digital Video	00:47:49 – 00:49:28	Writing in the newspaper under a pseudonym
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Digital Video	01:14:40 – 01:16:55	How being an activist was stressful
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Related Materials:

Additional oral history interviews are available from the Wilmer Amina Carter Foundation's "Bridges that Carries Us Over Project" on CSUSB ScholarWorks, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/bridges/>.

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

Jennifer Tilton [00:00:03] Clap your hands one time.

Emily Orr [00:00:05] Clap my hands one now.

Jennifer Tilton [00:00:08] Great.

Jennifer Tilton [00:00:09] So we're here today with Emily Orr to do an interview for the Bridges that Carried Us Over project. And we're here to talk about some of her memories of going to the University of Redlands in the 50s and her late ex-husband Clabe Hangan and memories of the African-American community and the civil rights movement in the '50s and '60s. So thank you so much for talking to us today. I guess the first question is just to maybe tell us a little bit about where you grew up and how your family came to the Inland Empire in the first place. How did you end up in the Inland Empire and ultimately at the university?

Emily Orr [00:00:45] My family. I moved to California from Kansas when I was about 10 years old. My family was advised by doctors to move to this area because my brother and I both had asthma. And so there is. They were advised by doctors to relocate to Phoenix, Arizona or Southern California, and they settled outside of Hemet, an area that was known to them by some friends that kind of knew where to come. So that's what brought me to Southern California. Yeah. And my family remained there around Hemet and Idyllwild and went to a high school in Hemet. And in terms of the university, how I got to the University of Redlands. Well, my mother wanted me to go to either Redlands or Pomona College because she knew about because we went to the congregational church. And in those days, Pomona was considered to be congregational and Redlands Baptist. So I think in turn, with my senior class, you know, visiting colleges I visited, came over and visited Redlands and just immediately decided that's where I was going to go. I think I read Sue Barton social work books and decided I was going to be a social worker. I didn't really research it at all. It was no research. Just OK. That's where I'm going to go.

Jennifer Tilton [00:02:27] And what attracted you about the idea of becoming a social worker?

Emily Orr [00:02:31] The only thing that attracted me about being a social worker was reading Sue Barton's social workbooks. I don't you? That was that was a group of books at the time about Sue Barton, who was a social worker, and I like that. So that attracted me without really much logic, but I was a sociology major.

Jennifer Tilton [00:02:53] Hmm.

Emily Orr [00:02:54] And that's how that's what got me to Redlands.

Jennifer Tilton [00:02:57] Very cool. So growing up in Hemet, before you got to University of Redlands, do you have any memories of kind of what race relations were like in that area?

Emily Orr [00:03:07] Absolutely not. As far as I knew, I never knew of any minorities well, other than the Latino minorities in Hemet. In fact there was the old kind of saying, and I don't know whether that was true or not, that black people were told not to let the Sun set on night at sunset on and if they were still in the town. I don't know if that's true or not. But no, I I had no knowledge of race relations when I was in that area. In Hemet, no.

Jennifer Tilton [00:03:45] So tell me a little bit about your first couple of years at University of Redlands. What what was it like back in? So this is in you came in what year? 50..?

Emily Orr [00:03:52] 50s yeah. You know, I was really a misfit. It wasn't the right school for me. It was conservative. I was not really raised in the conservative Baptist tradition, let's put it that way. And so it really was a misfit. I, you know, I didn't I didn't engage in this sorority and fraternity kind of activities. You know, we had chapel twice a week. One one was religious, religious and the other, you know. And so a good friend of mine and I kind of bonded there, Jane Rogers Dale, we were we kind of bonded there and did things together and we'd get off. We'd go off campus down to the local drugstore, which had a calendar and hang out and meet some of the local people. I just my whole center of my life just wasn't on campus like a lot of people were. Hmm. So we as a sociology major, the two of us got together, Jane and I, and we were doing a research project and our research project was on the migration of the Negro from the south to the north. And I kind of laugh about that now to my head. That's what our research project was. So I think that started me reaching out into the community of Redlands to try to do some interviews of Afro-American people. And I think that's what kind of got me kind of going out into the community. But my experience of Redland at university wasn't, wasn't that great. I got through it. But and, you know, did so there were some interesting parts of it that

Jennifer Tilton [00:05:58] tell me more about that research that you did. So who'd you talked to and how did you do it?

Emily Orr [00:06:03] Well you know, I don't remember. Yeah, I don't remember who I talked to. I know the two of it. She and I worked together on it. And I don't know. I don't remember. I don't even have a I don't know whatever happened to it. The project itself, I don't know what happened to it, but I do. I do know that that got me started going out into the community. Yeah. And I I don't know specifically who I interviewed about that particular project. But I know my first memories of going out into the community where there was, well, two things. There was an inter-racial fellowship group in Redlands that met they. I think they would meet at one of the churches, and I think I found out about it.

And when I started going to that, you know, at least once or twice, I remember going. And I think that the older couple that was there, it might have been the Burtons. I just really feel that it was, I don't know for sure, right? And I don't remember too much about it other than they had some kind of speaker and so forth, some kind of art of artificial fellowship. Right. And that's about all I remember about that. The other thing was that in Redlands, there was what they would call a community house or a settlement house. And I don't know who. I don't know if it was sponsored by a church or not. I do remember the woman. Her name was Evangeline, who was kind of the director, and they had act. It was in the neighborhood. It was in a neighborhood there, and she had activities for neighborhood children and it was kind of a meeting place. And I went down there for something, and that's where I first met Clabe. I guess we went down for some social thing or or some maybe, and he and some of the fellows from the from the church were there. And that's I remember that's when I first first met him, was there and I went to some activities there in that settlement house and that's about all I remember about that.

Jennifer Tilton [00:08:31] So what do you remember about first meeting Clabe Hangan?

Emily Orr [00:08:33] Well, we just kind of joked around and flirted and you know, and then he was he was very he was very outgoing. So he was very easily. But he made friends wherever when he was very outgoing person. And I don't remember too much about that, and we just sort of started seeing each other. He would come up or come over to the college and there was a park there. I don't if it's still there, kind of right by the campus, Sylvan Park.

Jennifer Tilton [00:09:06] Uh-Huh.

Emily Orr [00:09:07] Yeah. Well, a small, small park. I don't know. But we would go over there, now we weren't too obvious on campus, but we would go over there and spend time together and see each other. And I started and when I when I that was just about most of our, he was going to, he was just starting his San Bernardino Valley College. Then he had graduated. Now he was a very popular guy at Redlands High School. But then he started going. When I met him, he had just started going to Valley College. And when I graduated, so we just it was just more of a casual relationship, I guess, when I graduated. I immediately went down to. My first job was in Imperial County as a worked in juvenile hall and as a probation officer, that was my first job when I got out of school and I would come back to Redlands on the weekends and to visit him. And that's how I really we really started going together and being together.

Emily Orr [00:10:32] Yeah, it was kind of it on that time.

Jennifer Tilton [00:10:35] Yeah, so. So he eventually himself went to University of Redlands, right?

Emily Orr [00:10:40] He did. But that was after we were married.

Jennifer Tilton [00:10:42] Oh, it was after you were married? Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:10:44] All right. Now you sort of mentioned obviously there, not a ton of interracial couples back in the mid-fifties in Redlands.

Emily Orr [00:10:52] There weren't any

Jennifer Tilton [00:10:53] that where that were visible

Emily Orr [00:10:55] that were visible.

Jennifer Tilton [00:10:56] And so what was that like for you and him?

Emily Orr [00:11:00] Well, you know, we were young. I don't think we really realized the significance of it or the consequences of it or the reaction to it. Not really. And during that time, it was a way I think we did later. But not not really at that time. So we were just two kids and, you know, having a good time together that was more or less what it was. I think we were drawn together. You know, his brother, I don't know if Caesar had just died. I never met Caesar. Caesar had just died. Like you do, you know the

Jennifer Tilton [00:11:37] a little bit, but you can tell me, Yeah, tell us.

Emily Orr [00:11:39] Well, he was playing football and as a college in Washington, they're not sure which college it was. He shouldn't have been playing football. He was a football star. Both he and Clabe were football stars in high school, and Cesar got a scholarship to this college in Washington. Now he had been injured in football. I had a he had been the doctors had been informed his family and him that he should not play, he should not be playing football,

Emily Orr [00:12:13] but he got the scholarship. I don't think his family were aware enough to realize that he shouldn't play or to keep him from playing. So. The story is that he, after a football game and he went into the locker room and lay down and died. He had massive concussion, but he'd already had some concussions that really shouldn't have been played. Hmm, that's the story that I got. And so when I met Clabe, it was right after Cesar had died. And so I think, you know, he was really in grief in a lot of ways about about that. And I was a misfit at Redlands, you know, so that just kind of drew us together, really? Yeah, yeah. And so when after I so so really, there wasn't a tremendous amount of reaction. I mean, I didn't had really met his family yet. I may have met his father. His mother and dad were divorced when I met him, and his mother lived in Riverside and his dad lived in Redlands. So I don't think that I had met his mother. I might have met his father. He might have taken me over to his house. I'm not sure at that early time, but I know when when I went back, I got the job in Imperial County. I would come back, I would come back to Redlands and we got married. In 55, and we kept it a secret. I mean, we didn't we didn't really tell anybody because of the situation. I was down there. He was up here and, you know, it was kind of a foolish thing to do. We

just, you know, it was pretty immature on our part to do it that way. But that's what we did.

Jennifer Tilton [00:14:25] Well, what do you I mean, thinking back on it, how do you why did you do that and where did you get married?

Emily Orr [00:14:30] Well, we got married in the Unitarian church in Los Angeles. We had some friends who were members of that church. And so I guess they helped us figure out that's the thing to do. So we did, and we did that. And the church was open to getting that to marry us, that we just did the ministers study and we got married with our with our friends, with us. And that's when we got married. Yeah, but we didn't. We didn't really advertise it. We didn't. We didn't let it be. Really, anybody know, except maybe the, you know, just real his probably real close people my family didn't know. And until I got pregnant, of course. That will do it every time until I got pregnant, and that was in the 50s. Well, that would have been fifty six. So then we really I really had to, you know, I had to tell my family and it was out. You know that we were together and then we we started and we got a little apartment in. Was it Redlands or a San Bernardino? San Bernardino

Jennifer Tilton [00:15:57] So what was it like when you sort of told folks, what was the reaction?

Emily Orr [00:16:00] Well, it was a reaction to my family was pretty shock was pure shock and it was really terrible because I did. They had no warning. You know, the way it was done, you know? And yeah, it was, you know, very insensitive, really. But that's the way we did it. You were young. Yeah, we did. We did. So of course, when I was pregnant, I had to tell them right.

Jennifer Tilton [00:16:25] I skipped a couple of steps, but here we go. Yeah.

Emily Orr [00:16:28] And they were in shock. Yeah, really. I mean, they just, you know, but they came around and they really came. I have to give them. At first they were. But then I had came and they came around when the children were born. You know, there's nothing like children. And so I have to give them a lot of credit. My brother who lived out there was he had a lot of problem with it and he was very up and he thought that was it was the the stigma of the interracial marriage was going to reflect in the community on his family, which of course, didn't happen. That was his fear and his anxiety. That didn't happen. So we were really I was really alienated from him and my his children for a while until they we reconciled at the time of my fiftieth, my parents' 50th wedding anniversary party and my brother and I reconciled for the benefit of that party. And then, of course, after that, his children and my children got along just fine. Well, no problem at all. Right. But that was his anxiety. Yeah. You know, and I don't know whether I don't think my parents had any anxiety about that, particularly

Emily Orr [00:17:49] I think that my mother actually became very good friends with my husband, with Clabe. She loved our lives. She loved our lifestyle, the idea of it, you

know, and all other kinds of things that we were engaged in. Oh, she just loved it, you know, kind of lived through it vicariously, I think, you know, it's interesting. They kind of thought as we were bohemian kind of hippie kind of people, you know, all that. She loved it. My father, not so much. I don't think

Jennifer Tilton [00:18:19] So. I definitely want to get into all those stories. But before we get there, tell me a little bit about your experiences in the black community in Redlands, like going to Second Baptist Church. When did you sort of get to know that community through Clabe and his father?

Emily Orr [00:18:32] Well, Clabe.. Clabe and I used when I first, I think I was in college, we used to go to parties. That's what people did. I mean, especially in the black community or everybody. They had house parties where we get together and dance and music and, you know? And he would bring me and that's and they were all black. His black kids in the neighborhood and in. And that's when I first was introduced or knew and they were all open friendly. You know, there was, you know, I'm sure they had, I don't know, but they just accepted it and just accepted it. You know, I was this college white college girl, grew up quite different, you know, but they accepted it. You know, it was of it. And then we didn't. I didn't go to the church until after after we settled in and I, we had our first child and all. He was very active in the church because Reverend Hopkins, who was the minister, was the one who trained them, the Mutonic 4, the quartet. And I, you know about that. So he was a very influential person in Clabe's life during his like high school years younger years. Reverend Hopkins, he was a very powerful man, outgoing man, and he trained these guys and the Mutonic Four and taught them a lot of things he taught them. He taught them how to act, how to manners in it. You know, he really was a real educational figure for them at the church. In the church, the church was pretty much the center of their life. And then I start, we started going to the Baptist Church to Second Baptist pretty much after after we moved to San Bernardino and Clabe was the director of the choir. And that's how we were at the Second Baptist. He was the choir director for a while. And that's when I would go to church with him, I mean, we went to church and it was all right, it was very different for me. And they were all very warm, very accepting. I got into problems with the minister because I didn't see the need to be baptized because I had already been baptized as a baby in the Congregational Church. And then, of course, their baptism was by immersion and they thought that I should do that and I didn't want to do that.

Emily Orr [00:21:18] So we kind of had a little conflict about that when nothing terribly serious but we had a little conflict about that. So we went to the church, we went to the church and after church Clabe and I would be invited over to the to Reverend Hopkins House for dinner. So they really took us under their umbrella. Yeah. And until Clabe sort of got to the point where I think he let's put it this way he outgrew the church. He was exposed to different, different kinds of thinking. And so he decided that he wanted to withdraw from the church. And that was very difficult for the Minister for Reverend Hopkins. Yeah, I think he kind of blamed it on my influence, really. Probably. I kind of think he did. I mean, I was an influence in that. But I, you know, I think I kind of blamed it on me, really. And he was very hurt. Yeah. But we had met other people. Then we had

another life, and we started going to the Unitarian Unitarian church. So we withdrew from Second Baptist. And that and that was kind of the end of our time with with Second Baptist. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:22:41] Can you tell me a little? So Reverend Hopkins is obviously a really important figure in the history of that church and the Mutonic Four. I know a little bit about both him and the Mutonic four, but can you tell us any stories that, like, make him come to life for us? Like what was he like as a person?

Emily Orr [00:22:55] Reverend Hopkins.

Jennifer Tilton [00:22:56] Yeah.

Emily Orr [00:22:56] Well, I kind of what I kind of knew him was through the church. He was a big man, big, heavy man. He was a really loud, outgoing, but he trained these boys in the quartet. He trained them. And that's about all. I remember too much about him. I mean, I'd have to sit through his sermons and I don't remember too much about them, ?

Jennifer Tilton [00:23:18] Was he a singer himself?

Emily Orr [00:23:20] Oh, yeah, he was. He had a gorgeous voice, oh yeah, he was a singer. And I remember at least one time, and I think it happened a lot after church. Then everybody would gather outside and start, and the Mutonic four would start singing and then he would come out and start singing. So they were all there is all this big singing thing going on. I remember that at least once or twice, you know, we'd walk out the door and out the front door and they'd start singing and the Mutonic Four were very dramatic. When they walked up to sing, they're the four of them or walk out, and they were very and they would start humming as they were walking up to the front to sing, you know? Oh, yeah, they they they really had it down pat in the drama. Now I noticed, I noticed the the people who were they mentioned somebody else as a member of the Mutonic four, but Clabe was one of the originals. And after and then later, it kept going. I think there was somebody else that was in there, another another name that I didn't recognize.

Jennifer Tilton [00:24:29] Hmm.

Jennifer Tilton [00:24:29] Yeah, I think Clarence said there was the first generation. Yeah, that was the second generation,

Emily Orr [00:24:34] and Clabe was the one in the four Clarence, Joe Townsend and Clarence. And I can't remember. Oh, Kenny Pruitt. Yeah. Kenny Pruitt was.

Emily Orr [00:24:41] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Emily Orr [00:24:44] And they sang out in the community to a mostly church. Churches went to other churches.

Jennifer Tilton [00:24:50] Yeah. black and white churches or mostly black churches?

Emily Orr [00:24:53] No, black churches. Yeah, they did. And they were recorded later. We've got recordings of them.

Jennifer Tilton [00:24:59] We have a record, it's gorgeous.

Emily Orr [00:25:01] I know that. Yeah, I was really surprised to hear on that. Yeah, it was wonderful. So beautiful, yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:25:07] Yeah. Do you know much about how Clabe Hangan's parents ended up in Redlands, where they came from before that? And yeah, they're from.

Emily Orr [00:25:15] They came from Forman, Arkansas. They were sharecroppers. Uh, they came to Redlands. Because they knew somebody in Redlands, and I don't think it was the Burton's, it was another family. I'm sorry, I don't know who it was, but that brought them to Redlands and they came. I know Clabe talking about them coming on the train. And he said they settled in Redlands and they lived in a house out there kind of outside, in an Orange Grove. Clabe said they lived. They moved into a house in an orange grove. That's what he said. So the two boys and that had to be in that must have been in the 40s. And then Clabe and Caesar started school. I know Clabe was talking about mentioned they were head there over they came, went to school and their overalls on, kind of these country boys, you know, and not too much about that until I don't really too much about their school experience. And then later on, they moved into Redlands and his father became a janitor at a business in Redlands. I don't remember what the business was small business in Redlands, and he was at his job where he was a janitor and now his father and mother divorced before I knew before I knew them. And so his mother moved to to Riverside and she remarried, and his dad and Clabe lived really with his dad. They lived on Pearl Street, which is no now there house. That house is no longer there. It was one of that group of buildings that was taken down is like where Trader Joe's is now, you know, it's that whole area. That's where they lived in that area there. I don't that's I don't think it's there. It's not really there anymore.

Jennifer Tilton [00:27:29] Yeah. Do you remember? So do you do you remember when they lived there? And when do you remember when they lived there?

Emily Orr [00:27:35] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:27:36] How did they what? What happened when that house was rezoned? Do you remember? Did they?

Emily Orr [00:27:41] Yeah, I was. Yeah. His father was relocated. They relocated him to a house which is still owned by the family, which my daughter owns now in Redlands. I can't remember the name of the street, but a little. Yeah, they they moved him. They relocated him to this house and turned up to a house. Yeah, which was much better than where they were living. Where they were living was, where he was living was, you know, not. We're very, very small. Yeah, no. Yeah, that's what happened. How that happened.

Jennifer Tilton [00:28:23] Interesting. Yeah, yeah. So he must have been quite a neighbor of the Burton of the of Clarence Butler's family, like just around the corner.

Emily Orr [00:28:31] Close. Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:28:33] Yeah, close. And do you remember other people from that neighborhood back in the 50s?

Emily Orr [00:28:39] No, I didn't know anybody in that there. Yeah, I guess it was a neighborhood. It was such I think it was more like an industrial area. I don't know. You remember about there being actually a neighborhood. I don't think of it as a neighborhood and where he relocated. No, I never really was. Yeah. No, I don't.

Jennifer Tilton [00:29:00] Yeah, I think I think kind of around the church leading down to that neighborhood.

Emily Orr [00:29:04] Yeah, that's where it was. It was close to the church.

Jennifer Tilton [00:29:07] To the church. Exactly. Yeah, yeah. I think a lot of like Clarence remembers growing up and knowing everybody in that little

Emily Orr [00:29:11] Yeah, I guess the church is still there.

Jennifer Tilton [00:29:13] Oh yeah, absolutely.

Emily Orr [00:29:15] I'll have to pass by it sometime.

Jennifer Tilton [00:29:17] Exactly the same. The church is gorgeous. Yeah.

Emily Orr [00:29:19] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:29:22] OK, great. And any stories he shared with you about his experiences early on in the Mutonic 4?

Emily Orr [00:29:29] Not in the Mutonic 4. I know Clabe took voice lessons and I don't know how that came about. I think it was in high school, and the man who taught him was Ernest Holmes, who. And I don't know how that happened. I never really got that. He was a minister. Ernest Holmes was a minister of a metaphysical church in Los

Angeles. He's really, really well known figure. And for I don't know how that happened or how about that about, but he came to Redlands and gave Clabe voice lessons. Somebody must have set that up.

Jennifer Tilton [00:30:12] Interesting.

Emily Orr [00:30:12] Because Clyde had a magnificent voice. Yeah. And if you ever want to hear him, you can hear him. Is on YouTube. So you can. You can. You can find it. Yeah. If you wanted to hear him. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:30:26] So you guys moved to San Bernardino as a young, married couple with a brand new kid. Where did you guys move and what are your early memories of that time?

Emily Orr [00:30:33] Well, we moved to San Bernardino this little little apartment. Our first memories of my first memory of that, well, he got a job.

Emily Orr [00:30:42] First of all, he had to drop school. He got a job. For some kind of company delivering furniture that ready for his job. Then he got a job as he trained as a psych tech and worked out at Patton State Hospital. That's was what he was doing when we've at that at that time.

Emily Orr [00:31:12] We lived in a little. We were close to Anne Shirelles, you do you have you seen I saw her name on something. Anne Shirelles was the I think she went to Redlands. I don't know if she graduated.

Jennifer Tilton [00:31:27] I'm not sure. It's a good question. Yeah.

Emily Orr [00:31:29] Oh, because I remember seeing her at Redlands when I didn't know who she was, right? Because she was this older woman, she kind of stood out this older woman driving this old car, coming over there and going some classes. And I realized later that that was that was Mrs. Shirelles. She kind of took us under her wing. She was. She had the senior community or the community house there, and she was the director and a lot of community meetings there. And NAACP met their kids were, you know, recreation in that kind of thing. And she, Clabe had known her, I guess the boys used to go over there. And so she kind of took us under her wing wing and was real supportive, you know?

Emily Orr [00:32:28] And so I wasn't working because I, you know, I had really had this one, my oldest child, Elizabeth. And let me see, I'm trying to remember, uh, I how long we lived in that little apartment.

Emily Orr [00:32:51] We then we moved. We moved probably after a year or two because Elizabeth was in preschool starting. I was trying to get child care for her, so we moved into a house on Muscott in San Bernardino, and we're two doors down from Harry Rheubottom, my daughter. So I guess I'd mention Harry Rheubottom or Harry

Rheubottom's wife, Jeanette provided child care for our daughter. Well, and I went back to work when I started, or I went to work at the welfare department in what we call it, then the welfare department in Sam, in San Bernardino. And so she, Jeanette was our babysitter, or Elizabeth went to her house. It was just across the lawn, two doors down. And so we lived there and I I went back to or started, started working at the there. And then Clabe was working at Patton. And there was some kind of situation where he could work at Patton and go to university and go to school. I don't remember exactly how that worked, but then he started at U of R, I think as a junior.

Jennifer Tilton [00:34:22] So that would have been what year like?

Emily Orr [00:34:25] Well, Elizabeth was born in fifty seven. About fifty eight. Fifty nine sometime. Somewhere in there.

Emily Orr [00:34:33] Yeah, somewhere in there.

Jennifer Tilton [00:34:35] And did he also do sociology or something else?

Emily Orr [00:34:39] I think he majored in sociology. Come to think of it.

Jennifer Tilton [00:34:41] Yeah. And did he graduate from you, ever?

Emily Orr [00:34:45] I yeah, he did. Yeah, he did. Yeah, he graduated. And then he went. He graduated his first job. He went to work for the probation department. He was a probation officer in San Bernardino.

Emily Orr [00:35:02] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:35:03] Did he ever say what was his time at U of R was like for him?

Emily Orr [00:35:07] He never said because he was a working. He was involved in the life. Yeah, yeah. I remember one night a bunch of guys came over from the U of R I guess they were. It was a sorority, fraternity. They came over. It's kind of a surprise visit, you know, the kind of thing, you know, and I don't know that he went into it for, you know, he didn't go into a fraternity. I don't think so, but they kind of came over and it was kind of a rush for. Yeah, and that's about all I know. He really didn't become a part of life, you know? He mentioned that as a kid he used to play up to the president of U of R was President Armacost at the time, and he used to say as a kid, he used to play up at their house, at the president's house, where he went to school with one of the president's son. So he was talking to we talked about going up there to play when he was a kid.

Jennifer Tilton [00:36:11] Interesting. So you mentioned two important people from the history of the West Side Anne Shirrells and the Rhuebottom's. Yeah. Do you kind of remember any stories about the two of them when you were living there?

Jennifer Tilton [00:36:26] No it's OK.

Emily Orr [00:36:27] I didn't really know here, Harry I mean, I knew Jeannette. Yeah. I didn't know much about Harry, though he was well known figure because he was on the radio. And I don't know what he did otherwise he probably worked at Norton. Everybody, all black people worked at Norton Air Force Base. That was the primary source of it, you know, for a lot of black people at that time. He probably worked at Norton and Jeanette. Jeanette took care, you know, took care of children, and that's what she did.

Jennifer Tilton [00:36:59] So not just your kid, other kids in the other.

Emily Orr [00:37:01] Yeah, there were there a couple. You always had a couple of other kids. Okay, that's that's all I can tell you about them. Yeah. Mrs. Shirelles. Not really. Other than other than she was, you know, that was her job. the running the the the center there. And I don't know. You know, I kind of lost track of her in later years.

Jennifer Tilton [00:37:27] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:37:29] So how did you and your husband get involved in civil rights stuff in San Bernardino?

Emily Orr [00:37:37] Well, I was a little hazy about that. I was interested to see about what Frances had said.

Emily Orr [00:37:46] What happened that I remember is that there was some kind of study and I don't know whether Frances group started that or who started it or got it initiated it. But there was a study on a state level about de facto segregation in San Bernardino. And I think Clabe was asked to be on a committee. And so that's what I believe. He was invited to be on a committee. And I don't know how that came about. I don't think it was with Frances at the time, but that's how he became involved. And then there was it. Yeah, there was a study. And so there was determined that there was de facto segregation in in San Bernardino. I don't know exactly when we connected with Frances, and then they called the Mothers. Mm-Hmm. Yeah, somewhere in there, I know I'm not sure, we connected and the decision was made to boycott the schools, take the kids out of school and start the freedom schools. And Clabe was considered to be the principal of the freedom school. I, we took, we took Elizabeth out of school.

Emily Orr [00:39:23] We had one of the cla- and I was a teacher for a small, a small, younger group at our house, and Clabe was considered to be the principal. And a friend of ours, Jim Thomas, was was taught some high school kids. We oh, there was a center that was opened on Mount Vernon Avenue, which was kind of the center for some of the class, some classes. So a high school, some of the high school classes and I I know we had one group at our house. I noticed that Frances, dear Frances, we could be very dramatic and over talk thing because I know that, Francis said. There were thousands, there were not thousands. I would say there might have been a hundred. But the thing was, it got the publicity. A lot of the black people were reluctant to take their kids out of school. They just, you know, we tried to talk them into it and they just they were

reluctant to do it because of, you know, repercussions. So those of us who did take our kids out of school, I know we bussed and we we didn't have any trans means of transportation. So we used up our money. I remember that I we used our our money and our gas in transporting kids around. And that's in fact what we were used up so much of our own money that we couldn't pay our rent and our the landlord who owned the house came and gave us quite quite, I remember, gave us quite the lecture because we had all our money had gone to the transp, you know, we didn't have money to pay the rent. I don't know how we must have worked that out somehow or another. But anyway, I remember that.

Jennifer Tilton [00:41:35] Wow.

Emily Orr [00:41:36] And so that's what we did.

Jennifer Tilton [00:41:41] Tell me a little more about the schools this. This is an important moment and you are the only person who has ever told me some details of this.

Emily Orr [00:41:49] Oh, well, I don't have a lot of details. We didn't, you know, I didn't know I had taught. I had. When I worked in the Imperial Valley and Juvenile Hall, I did a little stale of teaching, so I'd had had a little background in teaching, you know, education. But I didn't really know curricula. Very. So I kind of made up my own curriculum. It really wasn't too wasn't too good, you know, we just kind of did what we could in terms of curriculum and and.

Jennifer Tilton [00:42:20] And so who were the kids who? So you maybe had, well,

Emily Orr [00:42:24] They were they were some of the kids in our neighborhood. And then there was a group of kids who came down from Muscoy, which is kind of, do you know my school a little bit? Yeah, they lived up in Muscoy and it was quite a family, a large, large family, a bunch of kids. They came down, they all went, were in for it. They came down. And I tell you truth, I don't remember. In terms of the elementary, the kids, we kind of had school up and up and down the street kind of, and that's how we did it.

Jennifer Tilton [00:42:58] And so you said so one of them, I actually have the addresses of the different freedom schools and from the newspapers. So one was at your house, one was at Jim Thomas's house, or no?

Emily Orr [00:43:10] He might have had it at his house. OK. I know he taught. He taught the kids. I thought he taught at the center on Mount Vernon, but it could have been in his house. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:43:20] And do you remember there were a couple other houses that you remember anyone else's house they were at?

Emily Orr [00:43:24] No, no, I don't. All right. I would be interested to know what addresses you had.

Jennifer Tilton [00:43:27] I will. I will give you the addresses and you can tell me, Yeah,

Emily Orr [00:43:30] that might trigger might trigger.

Jennifer Tilton [00:43:32] Yeah, it might. And so at this time, sort of what's your first memory of meeting Francis Grace or any of the other community mothers who were involved in this campaign?

Emily Orr [00:43:45] Well, I remember how I don't remember how I first met Frances.

Jennifer Tilton [00:43:49] Well maybe just first memory

Emily Orr [00:43:52] Well, Frances and I kind of hit it off. I don't remember when we first met, but Frances used to. This is funny because Frances used to call me her white girlfriend. I was Frances' white girlfriend, but we became very good friends and I don't know exactly when I first met her. I remember going to her house for some kind of meeting or something, you know? And I guess when she realized that I was really involved and going to be involved in it, I think she pretty much accepted me. And we just went, it kind of went on from there. Yeah. Late later, much later, after all that was over, we we continue to be good friends. We visited each other back and forth.

Emily Orr [00:44:40] But. She was a really strong I remember, you know, she was a really strong figure. And I think it was really tragic about her children. You know, that was a horrible, tragic thing. They really paid the price for that. All of that, really.

Jennifer Tilton [00:44:59] Yeah. Other people have said that, too. I mean, why or how did they pay the price?

Emily Orr [00:45:06] Well, Francis Frances was so involved in the activity, you know, outside the home and the kids were just there. I mean, they I don't think she spent much time mothering, let's put it that way. But let's put it that way the kids both died. Yeah, you know, our daughter became very, very obese.

Emily Orr [00:45:28] And yeah, yeah. You know,

Emily Orr [00:45:32] I was just sad.

Jennifer Tilton [00:45:33] Yeah, yeah, definitely. Do you remember kind of early community meetings as people were planning that kind of freedom schools? Like, where did those meetings happen?

Emily Orr [00:45:44] No, no, I don't. I don't remember.

Jennifer Tilton [00:45:46] Right?

Emily Orr [00:45:47] I don't remember anything. I don't remember any meetings about it.

Jennifer Tilton [00:45:51] Yeah, OK. You just remember it happening. Somehow you were teaching

Emily Orr [00:45:54] I don't remember. I don't remember any meetings about it, you know,

Jennifer Tilton [00:45:58] because there must have been planning meetings and trying to get folks organized and

Emily Orr [00:46:03] Well, I don't know. Some of it was pretty haphazard,.

Jennifer Tilton [00:46:05] Right?

Jennifer Tilton [00:46:06] Yeah. Yeah. And who are any of the other kind of, you know, obviously there is Bonnie Johnson and Valerie Pope, who people always talk about as part of the league community mothers. But who are the other? Do you remember any of the other kind of community leaders of those?

Emily Orr [00:46:22] No, actually. Well, the Cole brothers, Richard, you've mentioned their name or the.

Jennifer Tilton [00:46:30] I have definitely heard their names, but I'd love more stories

Emily Orr [00:46:33] Well they've passed on now.

Jennifer Tilton [00:46:34] Yes, I know

Emily Orr [00:46:34] They were more involved with CORE. Richard was. But they were. They were all altogether with that. You know, the Cole brothers.

Jennifer Tilton [00:46:46] Can you tell me more about CORE and San Bernardino? Because we've definitely seen that core begins in like this in '63, and it's a multiracial church initiative, as it was many places.

Emily Orr [00:46:57] I don't remember much about CORE. I know somebody came to San Bernardino. I know CORE sponsored Dick Gregory, Dick Gregory, came. Do you know who that is? He came to San Bernardino and give a big thing over at downtown in their community, and then he afterwards he came to our house. So I remember I remember all our people were gathering at our house and all back in the corner with Dick Gregory talking and all that. I know, CORE sponsored that. And then there was a representative of CORE who came and but I don't really know what they did. I don't. I

don't. I don't know what they were doing, really. They were just kind of all. Everybody was kind of all together. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:47:44] And do you remember anything about Art Townsend and the role he played in all that?

Emily Orr [00:47:49] Well, I didn't know. I mean, I know Art Townsend. I didn't really know Art Townsend. He the precinct reporter now, Sam Martin, was the the editor really of the editor of the Precinct Reporter, which was Art's paper, you know. And I wrote some articles for the Precinct Reporter under an assumed name, and I don't know whatever happened to those. I would think I don't have them. Maybe it was the name. Maybe I don't really remember.

Jennifer Tilton [00:48:28] What did you write about?

Emily Orr [00:48:29] I wrote about what it was like. I did it several times about as a person whose child was going to, you know, in de facto segregated school. I wrote like that as in kind of a first person, and they put them, Yeah, I did. I did two or three of those, but not under my own name, and I don't know whatever happened to them. But yeah, the printed reporter was kind of those, you know, everybody read it. It was kind of the center of things. Yeah, yeah, Sam Martin was. I knew the mark. I knew him. I knew his daughter. I think she babysat for us.

Jennifer Tilton [00:49:14] Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:49:16] So what was it like going to sending your kid to de facto segregated schools? What did you notice about the schools that they were going to and how? What was it like navigating as a parent the kind of desegregation struggle?

Emily Orr [00:49:28] Well, the only child that I had that went to desegregated school was my oldest, and when muscott school was in our neighborhood. It was like two blocks over from the house that we lived in. What happened there, of course, she. She was probably the head of her class. I mean, she was really young, then she was like first grade, second grade. But because what was the term that they called cultural deprivation? What is that term that they used? They used to say that term, that is a term they used in this. Was it called something like that?

Jennifer Tilton [00:50:10] They definitely said that.

Emily Orr [00:50:11] Are deprived. And I remember one time a teacher told me, Oh, Mrs. Hangan, your daughter is not culturally deprived. I remember her told me that. And of course, she wasn't because, you know, she had access to books we read to her. And, you know, she was because of her, our life experiences as a family. She had a lot more wider background than her classmates, so it was true that she did. And even though, you know, she was Afro-American, and that's about all I remember, but I think a teacher was really a little uncomfortable with me. But I think I talked to one time about pulling

her out and putting her in a private school and teaching. I think I mentioned that and that kind of upset her teacher a lot, which is understandable now. You know, it was like sort of the impression that I thought we were better. You know? And. But that was that was about it. But what it really showed up because she was bussed, you see, we bussed her to Parkside School on the north end of San Bernardino and where she was at the top of her class at Muscott School. She boom was at the bottom of her class when she was bused to Parkside. There it was. I mean, it just seemed very obvious, but it was because of a lot of factors. Right? You know, and it was pretty traumatic for her because, you know, she she was no longer Ms. Star. you know, and yeah,

Emily Orr [00:52:14] it was traumatic for her. I remember the bussing. I remember first, always following that bus by car to Parkside. I guess we decided I didn't know why I did it. I was worried about something that would happen or what. But I always for a while there, I, I, you know, put her on that we'd put her on the bus, but then I'd follow the bus in car. Her -experience at Parkside. Well, of course, then we left San Bernardino, but it was. It was OK. Yeah. You know it was all right, Margaret, my other daughter, started kindergarten there. And it was good because her her kindergarten teacher was Afro American at Parkside.

Jennifer Tilton [00:53:09] Do you know who that was? No.

Emily Orr [00:53:10] OK. Oh, I think it was the Mrs. Sally was Sally or something like that. OK, hold on. I'm going to cough.

Emily Orr [00:53:23] But the experience of Parkside was not relaxed. I mean, we went up there for some activities. It was not really relaxed. I remember her. I remember Elizabeth talking on the phone to one of her friends and kind of misrepresenting over the phone to her friend about her living situation of our living situation, which was fine. But I don't know. She felt like she needed to do that, right?

Jennifer Tilton [00:53:53] Yeah.

Emily Orr [00:53:54] So then, you know, we moved to moved out here (Montclair).

Emily Orr [00:53:57] So yeah,

Emily Orr [00:53:59] I can't remember much about that.

Jennifer Tilton [00:54:01] Just a couple of years. But you saw in the sort of area from the top to the lower part of the class, the difference in the education that was being offered.

Emily Orr [00:54:09] I definitely saw the difference. Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:54:12] Now what kind of going back to the freedom schools in the boycott, what led to the end of the boycott? It lasted two or three months, right of the schools. What led to the end of the boycott in your memory?

Emily Orr [00:54:22] Oh, I think it was because of the the bussing, you know, they set that up and on the bus to the north side. OK. And that pretty much ended it.

Jennifer Tilton [00:54:35] So they sort of they won a concession.

Emily Orr [00:54:37] In a sense. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:54:39] Yeah. I see. Now, of course, it took years for the school desegregation to happen even more in the city, right? There was a lawsuit. I mean, sort of it took almost a decade.

Emily Orr [00:54:51] Well, yeah, because because then it was because of neighborhoods, because black people were not living in white communities that when that started, you know, black people started moving into white communities. And then that, yeah, that's when it slowly evolved.

Jennifer Tilton [00:55:07] When you were looking for housing in San Bernardino, did you wonder where to live or was it obvious you were just going to live on the west side?

Emily Orr [00:55:13] Oh, it was obvious we live in the West. I don't think we ever considered moving outside out of the West Side. Yeah.

Emily Orr [00:55:19] Oh yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [00:55:21] So tell me a little bit about the music scene. You became a part of in these years in San Bernardino because folk, the folk music scene became a big part of your world folk music.

Emily Orr [00:55:33] Well, that in the civil rights world too, they are all meshed in together.

Jennifer Tilton [00:55:36] Yeah, I'd love to know more about how, because that seems

Emily Orr [00:55:39] just kind of happened, you know? Well, I think the people that we became involved with and of course, that was Clabe. I was not the musician. I was kind of along all along for the ride, you know, on that. But.

Emily Orr [00:55:55] I have to go back a little bit because it's kind of interesting when we were at Redlands or when I was at the Redlands Clabe and I got became involved with a group, a Quaker group in Redlands, Dr Baez. He was a professor at Redlands in Physics. And his daughter was Joan Baez, the folk singer. Do you know? Are you familiar with her? Yes. OK. So we would go we would go over to their house and have

meetings and potlucks, and they just took a small, close, small group of them in college and Clabe and I were involved, became involved with that much. With that, I started going to Quaker groups that then they had it as to why he didn't. But I did. And but he became a part of this social group. But that's when he started learning. He learned to play guitar and sang with Joan Baez because they did their first what they call gig together for some, some group. He and Joan Baez. And that's how he got started with with the music and played the guitar and all that. And of course, we moved away from there. And of course, Joan went on to become,

Jennifer Tilton [00:57:22] was she just in high school?

Emily Orr [00:57:23] Then she was just in high school. She was just in high school. But singing her songs and much to the chagrin of her father and

Emily Orr [00:57:30] mother, I think, well, yes.

Emily Orr [00:57:33] But anyway, I just had regrets. Regrets all

Jennifer Tilton [00:57:36] that. That's helpful. So because he had been singing in the church and singing this kind of church music, but this was sort of how he entered the folk scene.

Emily Orr [00:57:42] That's how he entered the folk scene. And of course, the folk scene evolved then to, you know. So how we got started, I guess there was what they called a folk music society in San Bernardino. And that's how we met some of these other people. That's how well we knew the Thomases. Jim Thomas. But Jim Thomas's wife, Sally Thomas, was a musician, very accomplished singer and musician. And so we would, and we started becoming very close family, friends with the Thomases. They had three children and four children. So we are our two families, became very close friends and did a lot of things together. And of course, there was the music we'd get together and sing and do that. So that was one family. There was another family that we became close to the McNeill's. They lived in Riverside and he left his job as an executive, I think, for Edison. It was during the 60s when everybody was evolving. He left his job at Edison and went into music full time. Clabe left his job as a probation department to go into music full time, supported by his wife, of course. And so these two two families and their children are always the respective children became very close.

Emily Orr [00:59:19] Hmm.

Emily Orr [00:59:19] And let's see who else?

Jennifer Tilton [00:59:25] Can you tell me a little bit. So Jim Thomas also was working in the freedom school. So you were already connected to these folks.

Emily Orr [00:59:31] We were already connected. We already connected to the Thomases.

Jennifer Tilton [00:59:34] And who were they? Where did they live? They were from San Bernardino too, right?

Emily Orr [00:59:37] Yeah, they live in San Bernardino. Yeah, they lived in San Bernardino. Jim worked at Norton and then left Norton. Jim became worked for the city of San Bernardino. He became what was his title, Human Relations. They they set up a title for Jim for San Bernardino.

Jennifer Tilton [00:59:59] He was on the Human Relations Commission. He was the staff person.

Emily Orr [01:00:02] Yeah, he was.

Emily Orr [01:00:03] Oh yeah, that's who that is.

Emily Orr [01:00:05] He was. He was. And then he also taught some kids high school. Get it, got it. Got ready for GED's. Some of those Afro-American kids, a couple of them in particular, I remember. And then, of course, Sally was a singer and homemaker at that time. And then there was John Ingro, who was an attorney in town. We became close to relatively close to the Ingros, not as close, but that close to the Ingros John and Olaya Ingro and the Thomas' and the McNeill's.

Jennifer Tilton [01:00:50] And those are all those folks are white families, right?

Emily Orr [01:00:53] Yep.

Jennifer Tilton [01:00:53] Right. Was the. Music scene, mostly white, it was, yeah, except for Clabe and the Mutonic 4 which sort of kind of part of that scene.

Emily Orr [01:01:02] Yeah, Mutonic 4 really weren't that much. Yeah, yeah, it was. And that's sort of that became our group. That was kind of our support group. And it became our primary social group, even though, you know, we lived in a black community. We had black friends, but they weren't. We just didn't have that as much in common with them, you know? And so our whole life revolved around that. We went to the Unitarian church and in Riverside, which was great for the kids because there a lot of activities for kids. And the philosophy of the Unitarian philosophy, you know, was just perfect for us. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:01:43] And and they were pretty civil rights active too.

Emily Orr [01:01:47] Yeah, they were. So all of that just involved in a nice, evolved thing around around us gave us support and we were totally accepted and they were all a bunch of liberals as well as us, right? Yeah. So that's that's how that all that evolved. And then everybody Clabe and the McNeill's Thomas is it. This is how they made their primary living for a while, and McNeil's went on to really be able to do it. They did. They

turned it into an educational kind of thing. And Clabe turned it into pretty much teaching teaching guitar, and then he turned it into an educational thing to do with schools later. So, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:02:44] And so what was that early folk scene like in the late sixties? I mean, this is a time of counterculture world and civil rights.

Emily Orr [01:02:53] Well, it was all blended in there together. Yeah. You know, it was all in blended in together for us. You know, we just had big parties,

Emily Orr [01:03:03] You know, at our house, everybody bring the kids put the kids to bed and and it was all music. It was all singing, you know? And then, of course, those who were doing it for a living went out. And then, of course, you'd heard about the Penny University, which was a local coffee house.

Jennifer Tilton [01:03:25] And what was that scene like at the Penny university? You must have gone there often as the.

Emily Orr [01:03:30] Well, you know, it was just a little place where John and John Ingro. It was John Ingro's and it was a little place where they had people come folk musicians and came. And yeah, um, did there did programs, you know? Yeah, a little coffeehouse. That's what it was right there on Mount Vernon to start there. It started on Mount Vernon and later it moved up. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:03:57] And what about the messengers? So how did that group? I mean, obviously, that's a lot of the same social group coming together. But how did the messengers come together and then start performing all around?

Emily Orr [01:04:05] Well, I'm not sure how they decide to come together, but they started before that was, yeah, let me see who was it. It was Sally and the McNeill's.

Emily Orr [01:04:16] I think McNeil's and Clabe.

Jennifer Tilton [01:04:18] And then the Mutonic Four . And then I think he brought in the Mutonic 4 right sort of into that.

Emily Orr [01:04:22] Well, for some things.

Jennifer Tilton [01:04:24] Yeah, for like Clarence.

Emily Orr [01:04:25] Yeah, I remember they all made a trip down over to Phoenix, Arizona, to the Unitarian Church in Phoenix. And I didn't go. But the Mutonic 4 went, or some of them went. Yeah, yeah. And Mutonic 4 really didn't come to all of our folk music stuff, but they were part, you know, they they did. They were involved in some of their programs and they did. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Well, the Messengers traveled around,

mostly in Southern California, singing their civil rights songs. Yeah, yeah, that's is what they did.

Jennifer Tilton [01:05:03] And did they go to protest? Did they go to churches? Did they go?

Emily Orr [01:05:06] They went mostly to churches and where there were meetings, they didn't really go to protest that I remember. Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:05:13] So right where there were? Yeah, where there were meetings and church, right and right? Yeah. And do you remember sort of like which churches were on their circuit of kind of like the liberal churches who were.

Emily Orr [01:05:23] They were all liberal churches?

Emily Orr [01:05:24] Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:05:25] Yeah, cool.

Jennifer Tilton [01:05:30] I guess I wonder as you sort of were involved in this folk music scene in the sort of connected civil rights movement through the sixties and seventies, one of the big changes you saw in in those spaces over over the years that you know and what kind of changes either in the civil rights movement or changes in the folk music scene. What what kind of are the big changes you have observed?

Emily Orr [01:05:54] Well in my personal life, I think I kind of withdrew from all of that. A lot of it just from circumstances because family and I moved to a different environment and the whole thing, you know, personally. I don't know that I saw so much changes through folk music, except that music was music, it was just a really big part of our life personally. And of course, when we came to when we moved at the Claremont, we became very associated and close to the Chase's who had the folk music center,.

Jennifer Tilton [01:06:36] Right.

Emily Orr [01:06:37] And that became we became very close to them. And there was still a lot of music. Yeah, and we would have for a while there, you know, we had music in our home, you know? And then it kind of changed. It kind of became more professional because it became a means of making a living for Clabe. He went on to start music where they called music Music Americana with his friend Joe Rael. The two of them together. And then they started doing high school assemblies all over California. I don't know if you have anything on that or not. Well, they did high school assemblies all over California, blending history, some civil rights, but mostly history and song. And they they they got that going. The McNeill's got an educational thing going where they were schools and curriculum. Yeah, yeah. So, you know, they they to with the folk music and what started just the folk music for pleasure into a means of making a living. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:07:55] And that meant a little bit less of just the hanging out playing music. And yeah,

Emily Orr [01:07:59] it became more. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I became more serious in terms of making a living. Yeah, it turned into something further. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:08:07] And you were a welfare worker this whole time also.

Emily Orr [01:08:11] And I have I work and I have a baby and stay home for a couple of years and then I'd work.

Jennifer Tilton [01:08:17] Yeah, yeah.

Emily Orr [01:08:20] I started in San Bernardino and then I well off and on for years. And then I when we moved out here to Claremont, I went back to work. I worked in the adoption agency and yeah, off and on through the years. That's what I worked as a social worker. Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:08:44] And what was it like to move here?

Emily Orr [01:08:47] Well, it was different. We were fortunate in that we moved right out here. We moved to Montclair and we, the person who owned the house where we moved was moving. She knew us. I guess we knew her somehow, probably through the folk music center. And so she offered us to rent a house, which at that time, you know, we might have had a hard time finding a place to live because we were Claremont was more liberal, but it wasn't totally integrated.

Jennifer Tilton [01:09:22] No.

Emily Orr [01:09:23] So we moved into that neighborhood and it was fine. You know, the kids immediately made friends in the neighborhood and you know, it was fine. You know, it was it was quite it was different. I had a I had a hard time adjusting because I had never really lived in suburbia before, right? And it was a little difficult. I mean, I, you know, I I was still back and kind of back in the civil rights stuff and and probably relatively angry, and it took me some time to really make an adjustment to living out here. It really did. It really did. Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:10:01] Tell me a little bit more about that. I mean, what do you mean that you were sort of still in the civil rights stuff and still angry?

Emily Orr [01:10:06] Well, we were. It was still going on, you know, but I we weren't so actively involved, but it was just kind of hard for me to kind of quietly blend in with the mothers having coffee out here. And yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Emily Orr [01:10:22] You know, we we were we were OK a couple of times. I remember gotten stopped by the police with the kids in the car, you know, make and they make an excuse to stop us. Stop me.

Jennifer Tilton [01:10:36] Yeah.

Emily Orr [01:10:37] And you know, a couple of things like that. But really, other than that, you know, we didn't, it was pretty relaxed out here. I think the I was much more liberal in the college camp, you know, the colleges that it was a much more, much more liberal.

Jennifer Tilton [01:10:50] Part of the reason I think I asked that question is a lot of young people today are living through a new civil rights movement of sorts.

Emily Orr [01:11:01] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:11:02] A new awakening. And I think it's hard for us who didn't live through that earlier moment to know really what it felt like to live through the fifties and sixties and all that rising movement. Yeah. And so I don't know, it's you kind of like live through this moment and look back at that moment. What are you thinking and feeling about both the past and the present?

Emily Orr [01:11:29] Well, I am not I don't know that I I think. Of course, I personally am pretty much removed from all of that. But because of my circumstances, because I am who I am, my color of my skin and all of that kind of thing, you know? But I, my head is still in it, you know, pretty much. Although I, I realize that is at the present time is really not my personal reality. But it is the reality of my children. You know, so that kind of keeps me still in it and my grandchildren. So that kind of keeps me still still in it. So I'm very much aware of it. I think it's just I think I can say is maybe from a distance, I'm pretty much aware of it. I can see the changes that are involved. And it's all that's all positive.

Emily Orr [01:12:30] You know? Yeah, Hard won. Very difficult. You know, hard won changes. And I and I'm aware of it just from social media and you know, those kinds of things.

Jennifer Tilton [01:12:43] Yeah.

Emily Orr [01:12:44] But uh.

Jennifer Tilton [01:12:47] Having lived through that earlier era, having been more involved in things in the sixties, what are the lessons you sort of take from that moment that you might give as advice to people living through this one who were young as you were then?

Emily Orr [01:13:03] Well, you know, the only advice that I would have is what, you know, I truly believe that what I was doing and marrying, you know, in terms of my marriage and you know what was right? I it was an internal feeling on my part that it was right and it was that was opposed to the attitudes of many of those around me. But it was mine. And then I believe that, and I guess that was the only thing that I could have in part. Oh, it's just so is so different. It's hard to it's hard to really feel that in a way because it's so different now. Yeah, it's really it's different now. I'm much more relaxed, but at the time, and I guess that's what I would say that that would be might say, you know you, you just follow your direction. People have to follow that direction, sometimes to the detriment, even though it is to the detriment. And that's where it becomes really, as is it to the detriment of your livelihood is a detriment to the mental health of you and your family. That that is another question.

Emily Orr [01:14:20] Hmm.

Emily Orr [01:14:20] And you know, the way we live through in some ways probably was extremely stressful. I know it was,

Jennifer Tilton [01:14:30] yeah,

Emily Orr [01:14:31] I I wouldn't have missed it for the world. But on the other hand, it was extremely stressful.

Jennifer Tilton [01:14:38] Can you? So why was it stressful? What was stressful?

Emily Orr [01:14:40] Well, it's stressful living in a community where you're you're not you're not one of them. That in itself is stressful. And where you know that there is a lot of, well, you know that people around you have really negative feelings or if you go out three miles from your house and people see you in your situation and they react in a very negative way and you may you still maintain your sense of balance. That's that's stressful. Yeah. And I mean, I had an understanding. I began to understand a little bit, not a lot of what black people go through when they are the only one. I mean, I can't totally say that. I, you know, there's no way I would even try to say, I understand that, but I could. I could get a feeling for what that's like.

Jennifer Tilton [01:15:36] Yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:15:37] And because when you were sort of so that was a family, there were places, say, three miles away that you would not necessarily be welcomed or

Emily Orr [01:15:45] well, you'd just be observed in a negative way, in a negative way. Yeah. When you know that, when you know that and you have main train, try to maintain a positive atmosphere for your children and your family. Yeah, it is stressful.

Jennifer Tilton [01:16:04] Yeah. Yeah.

Emily Orr [01:16:06] You know, it takes its stress. Yeah. And so I would, you know, I yeah. But if you if you know in your heart or you feel that it was the right thing. Well, that's what you do. That's what you well, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:16:22] Yeah, because you knew Frances Grice fairly well and she was so deeply involved in a lot of the civil rights movement in San Bernardino. I wonder if you have any sort of. Last things you would tell me about her and the role you saw her play or any stories about her that capture because she was, I think, quite a character and quite a powerful leader, any kind of memories or ways you think she should be remembered for the role she played in leading a lot of activity?

Emily Orr [01:16:55] Oh, she should remember. Yeah. Well, she was very great. She was a very creative woman, a very bright, intelligent woman, obviously very creative. And she was she. I think she was. I think she was driven. You know, she was really, really driven, especially in the early days by what she felt was the thing to do what she was doing, you know? Yeah, I don't think basically, I don't think she had a hatred or of white people or that she didn't have a really deep. She didn't have that wasn't really in her mind, but it was, you know, she had this challenge and she was going for it kind of thing. Now later, you know, she I think she changed a lot in later years. But at that time, you know,.

Jennifer Tilton [01:17:57] She was ready for the fight.

Emily Orr [01:17:58] She was ready for the fight and she was fighting it. She yeah. Yeah, yeah, she was.

Jennifer Tilton [01:18:04] And do you remember much about kind of her relationships with other people in the community like, say, the Rue-Bottoms or Sheryll's like this older establishment?

Emily Orr [01:18:12] No, I don't. I don't remember her having a relationship with them. Maybe she did. Maybe she didn't. Yeah, she kind of, you know, she was a newcomer in the community. And I don't know exactly what why she came to San Bernardino. I know she told me one time that her husband in the back east was some kind of well-known mafia figure, not mafia, but in the world, in that criminal world. And he was in prison, but he was. She said he was tortured. She talked about him holding court in prison. And I don't know. I mean, I just don't know. But anyway, what brought her to set the San Bernardino know Valerie was here. Yeah, yeah.

Emily Orr [01:19:02] And uh, but uh. She later years mellowed a lot. You know, in fact, I think she yeah, but and I don't know what happened. I knew something happened where she lost the agency. Yeah,.

Jennifer Tilton [01:19:23] Yeah, I. And that was hard on her, I imagine. Do you remember her going through that because her?

Emily Orr [01:19:29] I remember her telling me about it. Something about it? Yeah, that was kind of after we left. Yeah, I got the impression that she had trusted somebody. There was somebody that she had trusted a lot. I think she got tired. Yeah. And someone she had trusted and they had to really take her to the cleaners. This is what I impression that I got. Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:19:57] Well, thank you so much. I don't know if there's any last words of wisdom.

Emily Orr [01:19:59] He (Amos Isaac) was a volunteer as what they call a discrimination checker. The FEPC and Amos was looking for a place to live in San Bernardino in a I guess there was an apartment that he wanted was trying to rent and they turned him down. So he was a little suspicious. So he asked me to go to see if I could rent the apartment. And they rent it, were willing to rent it to me. Yeah. So then Amos was, you know, we had them.

Jennifer Tilton [01:20:33] Right, right.

Emily Orr [01:20:36] And I did that two or three times.

Jennifer Tilton [01:20:38] How did you get hooked up with the FEPC?

Emily Orr [01:20:42] I really don't know the other thing that we did. It wasn't the FEPC. I don't know. I'm not sure if it were CORE or what. There was a period of time where a family, a black family try moved into a house. I think it was in Rialto it was close to San Bernardino, not right in San Bernardino, and the neighborhood was just having a fit. I mean, they were going up and down the streets at night and yelling and cussing and throwing rocks at the house and everything. And this woman had a baby, and I think it was a doctor. I think is a doctors family. I don't remember who the doctor was, but he worked at night and she was there alone with the baby. And one time a rock went through the window and just missed. Just barely missed the baby's crib. So we took turns a group of us and I don't know if it was organized through core or who organized that, but we would go out there at night and stay with her while these people were running up and down the street having to fit, you know? And we did that for a while. It finally, I think it died down. Yeah, but I don't know who else was involved with that.

Jennifer Tilton [01:22:02] I think Burnett Greer tells that story.

Emily Orr [01:22:05] Yeah, I think that McNeil's were.

Jennifer Tilton [01:22:07] Yeah. Yeah. involved in that.

Emily Orr [01:22:10] I think they were. A bunch of us did that. It was pretty scary. Yeah, it really kind of was.

Jennifer Tilton [01:22:16] I imagine. Yeah. So you were saying you knew Amos Isaac pretty well?

Emily Orr [01:22:20] Yeah, he was. Well, yeah, I don't know how we'd met him. But he and Clabe, were friends. Yeah, he spent time over at our house. I didn't kind of lost track of Amos, and I was really pleasantly surprised to see that he had gotten his Ph.D..

Emily Orr [01:22:35] Yeah, yeah. And I I thought that was wonderful. I, you know, he was always very serious, very academically inclined. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jennifer Tilton [01:22:46] Well, great. Thank you for that additional detail. Oh, we can have for us. But I think we've talked for quite a while.

Emily Orr [01:22:53] We talked about what you need to cover?

Jennifer Tilton [01:22:55] I think so. Yeah. Yeah, so thank you so much. I think this has been really, really helpful.

Emily Orr [01:23:00] OK, well, good. It's interesting. I'll be interesting to see you play it back.

End of Interview:
[01:23:06]