Interview with the Right Reverend Edward L. Lee Jr. by Clark Groome, Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania Oral History Project, Merion Station, Pennsylvania, March 8, 2016.

CLARK GROOME: Okay, here we go, and I will check it from time to time. Are you a lifelong Episcopalian?

EDWARD LEE: Yes.

CG: You grew up in—?

EL: Well, born and raised in Fort Washington, and then—which meant that my home parish at that time was Saint Thomas Whitemarsh.

CG: Whitemarsh.

EL: And that is where I was baptized, as I like to remember these days, on June 23rd, 1935, at about one year of age. So Saint Thomas was my home parish, and I was confirmed there by Bishop Hart in Advent of 1946, and ordained to the transitional diaconate, as we called it then, on May 9th, 1959.

CG: You've jumped way ahead here. When did you begin to think that you wanted to be a priest? How did your vocation develop?

EL: Developed? I can actually talk about the day where it began, put into my consciousness, again, at Saint Thomas Whitemarsh, and the rector in my lifetime there was Nathaniel B. Groton.

CG: Spelled Groton, G-R-O-T-O-N.

EL: Correct. And always known as Mr. Groton, even though I think he had an honorary doctorate somewhere, [which he never used being a] classic low church rector with comparable simple references and things of this sort, of name, and whatnot. While at Saint Thomas there were all the youth groups that were going on, and this would be

just after World War II, early ’50s. And my parents—as I have expressed it over the years: Mr. Groton was the fourth member of their Trinity.

CG: I see.

EL: He was absolutely beloved, for whom all clergy have been measured since, including their son. We might have gotten close, but—

CG: Not really.

EL: —not really close, in the end. With reason, with reason. He was a remarkable man. And so, there were these young, youth groups. Well, back in those days I didn’t have a car of my own, and so we were either picked up by clergy or other parents, taking us to these events. And one of them, which was very active at Saint Thomas, was the organization called the Junior Brotherhood of Saint Andrew, which was for young men [and] boys.

CG: Okay. Yeah.

EL: Because there was the Senior Brotherhood of Saint Andrew, which was a national church organization for men.

CG: For adults.

EL: For adults, but now they had this Junior [branch]. And Mr. Groton was very mindful of that, and attentive to that, so I think it was one of those occasions that he picked me up to go to a meeting, as he picked up others as well, because over the countryside Saint Thomas reached up into Ambler—

CG: Oh, yeah.

EL: —and into Chestnut Hill, and all around the countryside, because it was still something of a country church, coming, obviously, into the suburban era of post-World War II. Anyway, he picked me up, and

we had our meeting, and drove me home. Parked outside my house, our house, on Summit Avenue in Fort Washington. And I was ready to jump out of the car, and he said, "Edward." He called me Edward, in the family I was Ed, except for my mother, I was always Edward, and that wasn't just for discipline purposes, either.

CG: [Laughs] It wasn't just when you were a bad boy?

EL: Because her husband's name, my father's name, was—he was Ed and I was Edward. But I jumped out of the car, started to, and he said, "Edward, could you just wait a minute?" And, "Yes, sir." He said, "I just simply, and I won't say it again, but I'm asking you to think seriously about whether or not in your future you ought to think about going into," as they would refer to it then, "the ministry."

CG: The ministry, yeah.

EL: It had not in any way consciously crossed my mind, though we were very active in the church; everybody was in the family. And, well, "Yes, sir." And he just said, "I just think that maybe this might be what you are called to do." He didn't say much, just left it at that. So I jump out of the car and go in.

CG: Your brain is spinning.

EL: And I get into the house. [Laughs] Apparently my father was watching this, saw the car and saw it stop, and because of their reverence, really, for Mr. Groton, his first thing, "What did you do?" [Laughs]

CG: [Laughs]

EL: What is it? And I said, "What do you mean, what did I do? I didn't." And I told him the story, and my father said, "Oh, well if he asked you, you had better think about that seriously."

CG: Okay. So the trinity had spoken.

EL: So it got underscored by that. So that's where the—

CG: How old were you then, Edward?

EL: Oh, I don't think I was driving, so I might have been fifteen—fourteen, fifteen. So that's where it was registered. Shortly thereafter, in senior high, or I guess I was in Springfield [High School], in senior high by then, the first curate that Saint Thomas ever had, and Mr. Groton ever had, arrived at Saint Thomas, by the name of Donald Gardner.

CG: Oh, I remember that name.

EL: And Donald had just come out of Philadelphia Divinity School, and he began to do these activities with young people, and the teenagers.

CG: That's what curates did in those days, right?

EL: You got the youth group whether you were qualified or not, but you got the youth group. And he became a very special friend, very special friend. So at some point I told him what I had been asked [by Mr. Groton]. Again, no pressure, just, "well, if you want to talk about it, if I can help clarify anything. I'm recently out of seminary. What is church life going to be?" This is still the post-World War II [sighs] era of the suburbs, and the whole change of that time, and so the church was very successful and very much a part of people's lives.

Donald was very helpful. So I could talk to him about it, not in any great struggling way, just matter of fact, "Okay, this is how we do it these days. You go to seminaries," etcetera, etcetera. And on a sad note, because we all knew that Donald had a chronic, to be fatal, illness, and so he died at age 28. And he's buried right out the west door in the old cemetery there at Saint Thomas. If you look out,

there's a Celtic cross, and he was buried there. And that would have been my freshman year at Brown.

CG: So you went to Brown. What was your intention at Brown in terms of major? You must have had other things that you were thinking about doing. What was the priesthood an option for? What other options did you have?

EL: Yeah, it's a good point. I mean, at that time, Brown still is, but then primarily, liberal arts. And studied—my major [was] English and American Literature, honors program. And so I would say probably teaching was the other. I didn't bring it to Brown, that this was definitive yet. This would be—

CG: It was still, it was still—

EL: Oh, it was percolating, very definitely percolating. And it had registered, and my dorm at Brown was right next to old Saint Stephen's Church right there on the Brown campus. I mean, I literally could leave my dorm at two minutes of whatever the time of the service on Sunday was and be there.

CG: Be there on time.

EL: Yes, and Saint Stephen's was then, was the classic Anglo-Catholic parish, which was quite a contrast to Saint Thomas. So all right, I got to see this other side of the church. I knew about it, of course. We knew here in the Diocese of Pennsylvania, Saint Luke's Germantown, and Saint Clement's, and Saint Mark's, and the great Anglo-Catholic, Oxford movement parishes. But Saint Stephen's was that. So you got that contrast, sort of processing that. Only as I moved on into my junior and senior year—and again, it was another clergy person, who

at that time became the first Episcopal chaplain at Brown, sponsored by the diocese.

CG: Diocese of Rhode Island, yeah.

EL: Yeah, by the name of Sam Wylie, Samuel J. Wylie.

CG: W-Y-L-I-E.

EL: W-Y-L-I-E, yeah. And Sam became that other person that I could process these things with. And for your information, Clark, of course, one of his closest undergraduates was Hays Rockwell.

CG: Oh, for heaven's sakes.

EL: We were there at the same time, and Arthur Williams.

CG: Okay.

EL: All three of us, who eventually all would become bishops. And Arthur, of course, one of the first African American bishops, suffragan of Ohio.

CG: Working with our old friend Jim Moodey

EL: You've got it. You've got it. [Laughs]

CG: So did you go directly from Brown to seminary?

EL: Yes, yes.

CG: And where did you go?

EL: General Seminary, in New York.

CG: In New York.

EL: Yeah. [Laughs] Again, this journey has always had several levels of purpose. General had a good reputation among our seminaries. But it was also in Manhattan, which meant I could have three years living in Manhattan, in an economy that boggles the mind these days, because it wasn't that expensive. And you had everything provided for you at General, and you had Manhattan at your feet, particularly the theatre

and all of the cultural things, as well as the life of General Seminary. So I wasn't using it as an excuse; I just thought this was a benefit that came [with living in New York].

CG: It certainly is, with all of the good jazz places, and all of the orchestras, and everything else.

EL: Yeah, theater especially.

CG: Yes.

EL: Particularly, you would get the old, back then, the twofers, which was a show was coming to its end, and they would throw out these little stubs in colleges and seminaries. So it meant that's where I went for seminary, with—of course, only with the permission of Bishop Hart, who by now was, of course, the bishop of the diocese, and to whom I was responsible, so.

CG: And then when you graduated from seminary, I guess that must have been in '59?

EL: 1959, right.

CG: You were ordained to the diaconate?

EL: At Saint Thomas, yes.

CG: At Saint Thomas. And tell me a little bit about your career, just after that.

EL: Right after that? Well, I was—

CG: You were a priest, what, five months, six months later?

EL: Yes, November 14, 1959, by Bishop Armstrong of this diocese. And he was still—he was suffragan, he hadn't become coadjutor on his way to diocesan, Bishop Armstrong.

CG: Yeah.

EL: So 1959.

CG: And he died very quickly after that.

EL: Exactly. But the question was, all right, what's your first position to be? And this was very much under the direction of the bishop. I mean, could well have, almost with their authority, then, placed you, you will be. I know that X number of parishes are looking for, and in those days they often had multiple staff. So he apparently gave my name to Harry Longley, Dr. Harry Longley, who was rector of Church of Holy Trinity on Rittenhouse Square. And they were looking for a curate. And so during my senior year at General Seminary, why, Dr. Longley came over and interviewed me, and apparently told Bishop Hart that he'll take me, [laughs] or he wanted, or yes, that would be fine in placing.

And so I was ordained to the diaconate in May, and started at Holy Trinity that summer, ordained to the priesthood that fall. So my first position in the diocese was from 1959 to '64, as the curate of Holy Trinity Rittenhouse Square.

CG: I remember growing up and listening to, occasionally, the services from Holy Trinity on WIP, back in the days when it was a great radio station, which is another whole issue. But were you on the radio?

EL: Oh, yes. I might give you my most traumatic moment. Dr. Longley proved to be a superb radio preacher, not because he was—it just happened. And it was that you had 11 o'clock to noon on Sunday, live from WIP. And he tailored that hour. Actually, it was where Morning Prayer really worked, because you could package the whole service, including his sermon, which was, he had it blocked out by time so that it began, of course, right at 11 and ended at 12, and he made sure it just ended that way. And he proved to be one of the most

remarkable preachers—a very conservative man, but a superb preacher! So he would take his vacations in the summertime, because he had a summer place up in Nantucket, and the curate got to preach.

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CG: That being Edward Lee.

EL: So that first summer, nervous as I was, yes, and he just said, "You're on. I'm out of here; I'm off to my vacation." Going to Nantucket for him was a precursor to going to heaven, so that was it. And, "Don't call me unless," and he usually gave me a list of some members, if they died, please call him, otherwise you're on.

CG: Take care of it.

EL: Take care of it. So one of those first Sundays, the lesson I learned was, I had my manuscript. Oh, boy, yes I had it all marked out. And I had my white surplice over my black cassock, of course, with a long sleeve, and I moved my arm, and the whole manuscript fell into the floor of that big pulpit at Holy Trinity, which is built in memory of—in honor of Phillips Brooks.

CG: Oh, of course.

EL: And you're on the radio, and I looked down, and there's my manuscript, and the pages weren't numbered.

CG: Oh, dear God. [Laughs]

EL: So I reached down, and [laughs] quickly gathered them up, tried to get them in some semblance. And the lesson learned, among many that day, was: number your pages.

CG: Number your pages.

EL: And I've since then been known to number just about anything and everything! And I've often said to other clergy throughout the years when they've said, "Any tips?" I say, "Number the pages," because I remember it, and it was traumatic. So what they heard that day, I don't know, but it certainly was not in the same league or level of Dr. Longley.

CG: You were there until '64, and then you became the chaplain at Temple?

EL: Yeah, yeah.

CG: And tell me about that. That was an important ministry for you, as I understand it?

EL: Yeah.

CG: You were also, what, the assistant at the Church of the Annunciation?

EL: Right.

CG: Where was that? Where is that?

EL: It was at Twelfth and Diamond at that time. And again, it was, I think, historically a congregation started by Saint Clement's, so it was an old, really old, classic Anglo-Catholic parish. The diocese decided to really invest in campus ministry, which in the '60s, before all of the financial crunches of the next decade, diocese could do. So not only did we have a ministry at [University of] Penn[sylvania], but the diocese was able to place an additional clergy at Penn, a new one at Temple—that was me—here on the Main Line, with an English priest who was living in the States at that time, doing the campuses here.

CG: Bryn Mawr, Haverford, Swarthmore? [We also had a minister in West Chester].

EL: Exactly. Swarthmore had its own.

CG: Oh, okay.

EL: A woman. So there were five or six of us, and then we had a full-time director of campus ministry on the staff of the diocese. We were out on the campuses. So this was a big investment by the diocese at that time, and it's 1964, and I was the first person to be appointed at Temple, but sponsored by the diocese. And at Temple, it became very clear to me that given another very significant clergy person, not Episcopal, but who was the Protestant advisor at Temple, a man by the name of Bob James—again, had a remarkable influence on me—that this was going to be really ecumenical. It didn't go in the job description per se. It wasn't excluded, of course, but it became very clear that this was going to be a different type of working relationship with other denominational colleagues at Temple, for the purpose of what kind of Christian presence and witness were we to be, not competing denominations.

So it was called UCM United, University Christian Movement, UCM. And we didn't use the word chaplain, which had the connotation of, well, we're here to take care of the students *while* they go to college on behalf of either their own home churches or their home denomination. We were advisors. And this was where my first becoming aware of how do you go about doing church really emerged, and I was there nine years. Which is, to put the emphasis vocally, it was the while they were there that became the focus of our ministry. What is it that students, faculty, staff—and we administered all and were in relationship with all, in a common movement. What did that mean to be a Christian on a campus, being a student, being faculty?

And it wasn't this chaplaincy of "take care of." Certainly we did that, but the primary focus was to take seriously what it was to be in higher education, both from the faculty through the student body.

CG: And the period that you were there was also the period when the church, when the Episcopal Church, was beginning to make some significant changes in terms of looking at liturgy, looking at who could and could not be clergy. I mean, you got out of Temple within a year of the irregular ordinations—

EL: Correct.

CG: —at the Church of the Advocate, when the eleven, Philadelphia Eleven, were ordained. What was beginning—and there were also all of these racial things. When did [Bishop] Bob DeWitt come into the diocese? Because you were involved with a lot of—I understand you and your pal David Gracie were involved with a lot of the racial brouhaha in the diocese, and in the city?

EL: The whole period, a lot of the campus uprisings, Civil Rights being a major gathering, the war in Vietnam, and then all of the uprisings at Columbia and Berkeley. And so we had, within even higher education, was that the tumult of that time, and campus protests. And Temple had its fair share, as did Penn, as did the Philadelphia area. So just even campus life and purpose, to which you added, then, the larger issues of race, civil rights particularly, and then the war in Vietnam. I can remember it at Temple in the fall of 1964, the presidential race, that Lyndon Johnson actually went on a trip through the city and campaigned, stopped there on Broad Street outside Baptist Temple there, and quickly addressed. And he wasn't quite caught up in the war, but it was underway.

CG: It was beginning, yeah.

EL: It was beginning.

CG: ’64 was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, in August.

EL: It might be, yeah.

CG: Yeah, I know it was.

EL: So yeah, all of this was coming together. Then in the diocese, Bishop Armstrong succeeded Bishop Hart as the diocesan bishop. And in the meantime, we knew that Bishop Armstrong was at an age that he would be retiring in a few years, because he had been suffragan—

CG: Forever.

EL: —for twelve-plus years; ‘49 was when he was elected, so, yeah, for a long time. So in the meantime, the diocese elected a bishop coadjutor to succeed, who would work with Bishop Armstrong until Bishop Armstrong’s retirement. And that bishop was Bob DeWitt, Robert DeWitt.

CG: Who was already a bishop in Detroit.

EL: He had been a bishop suffragan.

CG: Suffragan, I think.

EL: Bishop suffragan in the Diocese of Michigan.

CG: Right.

EL: And he had been a rector of Christ Church Cranbrook. And he looked, with all of the credentials, sort of: yes, that’s a Philadelphia bishop.

CG: And he played hockey.

EL: Churchmanship, everything about it. And so Bishop DeWitt came. Well, it wasn’t within three months that Bishop Armstrong—I don’t know the exact dates, but Bishop Armstrong had a massive coronary

and died. And within a month or two, Bishop DeWitt was now the diocesan bishop. And on the day that Bishop Armstrong—don't hold me to the accuracy of day and days, but there was the uprising in Chester.

CG: Okay.

EL: And Bishop DeWitt was faced with the fact that three of his clergy—and that did not include David Gracie, because he brought David Gracie to the diocese [in 1967].

CG: Right, from Michigan.

EL: From Michigan. And these were other clergy, Clayton Hewitt—and I'm forgetting the others, but there were one or two, but certainly Clayton was one—had been arrested for protesting in Chester, and were being incarcerated in some temporary pen [laughs] because the police were rounding up, were gathering up all of the protestors.

CG: Was this an anti-war thing, or was it racial?

EL: This would have been civil rights.

CG: Civil rights?

EL: This would have been civil rights.

CG: Because they were both going on.

EL: Yes. And civil rights was—[sighs] and I remember Bishop DeWitt telling the story that he had to then call the governor of Pennsylvania, who was William Scranton, to say, "I think we have a problem in Chester."

CG: Scranton was an Episcopalian?

EL: No, he was Presbyterian.

CG: No. Oh, I thought he—okay.

EL: His wife, Mary, was the very, very active Episcopalian.

CG: Okay.

EL: And we would meet them later when we were out of the diocese, but that's for later on. But Bishop DeWitt called the governor and said that there were serious problems here and we'd better—exactly what he said, I don't know. And that was Bishop DeWitt's practically first day.

CG: On the job.

EL: On the job.

CG: As diocesan.

EL: And Bishop Armstrong I don't think had had his funeral and everything else.

CG: It was a hell of a time, wasn't it?

EL: So that was '64, and so I'm started, just started at Temple, and so this ushered in that period of time from in the mid-'60s through the early '70s for me, until 1973, when I was at Temple and all of these issues and all of these movements. And I will say it, and I've said it publicly, and I will say it here, that I can remember the day when I get the call from Bishop DeWitt's office that he would just like to come and tour Temple, having everything else that's happened, that he's suddenly thrust into being the bishop. And he came, and in his, what I would only call his modest, unassuming way, he just said, "Walk me through the campus. Just what is this place?"

Well, of course, the Church of the Advocate … Paul Washington . . . was six blocks away over at Eighteenth and Diamond, and so he probably was taking in the whole neighborhood. But he took in Temple, and so that is where he really became, for me, my bishop.

CG: Well, one of the things that I remember about, that I learned about DeWitt as I became more actively involved in learning about the history of the diocese and my own parish, is that regardless of whether or not you agreed or disagreed with Bishop DeWitt, most everybody liked him. They may have been mad as hell because he was doing things that they disagreed with, but he was a hard person to dislike. Is that an accurate?

EL: Almost. There were some—I mean, I knew—

CG: We don't have to get into any names.

EL: No, no, no. I'm not going to give names, but there were clergy at that time who really came to dislike him, because they—they were men-thought—there weren't many, but they were vocal.

CG: Yeah.

EL: And you're right, I'm not going to—

CG: No, I remember when we were doing the history of Saint Paul's Chestnut Hill, and I talked to a number of the people—the interviews that ended up being part of the book that David Contosta wrote, with those people who had served as Tom Edwards' assistants or curates. They all said that as much as Tom disagreed with their political positions, because the curates were always more liberal than the rector, often, because of the generational thing.

EL: Yeah.

CG: They all were—Tom and a lot of other clergy, in spite of their differences with Bishop DeWitt, liked him.

EL: Oh, yeah.

CG: Now, that may not have been a hundred percent, but that impressed me, because it doesn't work in Congress today.

EL: No, and I think that would be true for almost all, but there were—and I won't just say two or three—there would be a handful who, as those years unfolded, and particularly the impact of Civil Rights here in Philadelphia, the Vietnam War, those two in particular. And then when Bishop DeWitt brought people like David Gracie and Jim Woodruff to be on the staff of the diocese, it was seen as him really tipping his, what they would have called very liberal, progressive—

CG: Well, that was accurate.

EL: —agenda, as we would use it today, for Bishop DeWitt.

CG: Yeah.

EL: There's no question in my mind that this was just anchored in the gospel. And if this is the context, and the milieu, and the era that we have to manifest that, then so be it. But what he could do—and this is where his authentic friendship, and interpersonal capacity to be with you when he was with you—and again, in that period of time. And you knew what was happening, and you knew, at least to a degree, some of the stuff that he was facing with, and he would never disclose. It was always, "Tell me what's happening with you. What's at Temple?" Or, "What are students saying? What is the campus life?"

And then with the anti-war, there he proved to be the real supportive friend, because I got very active in the anti-war movement, along with a whole host of others here in the Philadelphia area, and was publicly associated with the protest and the demonstrations, and the Good Friday liturgies that we would take around Center City and thereabouts, using them, places, as stations of the cross that had some correlation to the government. And again, these were all ecumenical.

I mean, this wasn't just Episcopal—a lot of us Episcopal clergy, and laity, a whole host of laity as well.

CG: Yeah.

EL: This was not just totally clergy-dominated. Led, yes, because we were at the time—but a lot of lay people involved. And he clearly—I can remember—I don't know whether it's in your notes—in that era, three times, I was arrested.

CG: No, I didn't know that.

EL: Yeah.

CG: So I'm interviewing a felon?

EL: Yes, I have a government felon record. I was arrested three times, not only in terms of locally, but not here, not right in the city. The first two were with the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, and a lot of Quakers and others, twice arrested in the concourse of the Pentagon, where we had gone to have a prayer service. That's all, just a prayer in the concourse, and that's a very public—it's a little city of its own.

CG: Sure.

EL: And we had done all of the proper things of applying for an application to have the service, and they were all denied. And that's when you discover the great strength in Quaker ladies who have been through this so often. It fits them; they just know how to handle it. So, all right, you have removed all alternatives; we are still going to come and have our prayer service. And I did, on two occasions, and that's where we were arrested. And we were not detained. We were somehow prosecuted and whatnot, along with—with those two particular arrests is—we appealed them, and they were appealed on

our behalf by the Episcopal Peace Fellowship and American Friends Service Committee, or something like this.

CG: Right.

EL: And they finally got to one of the judges in the Fourth District, which is in Alexandria, Virginia, and whatnot, who had been one of President Nixon's nominees for the Supreme Court, Clement Haynsworth.

CG: Oh, right.

EL: Well, he was no benevolent pacifist.

CG: No.

EL: But he had, of course, not made it in his nomination, but he was the judge. So we thought, "Oh, boy! That's it. What's going to come down?" Well, the crux of our argument was, by our lawyer from those two counts, was that in both instances the General Service Authority, which gives permission, yeah or nay, to what you can do in the concourse of the Pentagon, had either the day before or the week before allowed for Billy Graham to have a prayer service in the concourse. And they provided him with the chairs. And so the whole thing was, he could do it.

CG: If it's good enough for him, it should have been good enough for you?

EL: And this was the argument. And Justice—well, he wasn't Justice, but he was His Honor—

CG: Judge.

EL: —caught this very clearly, and made it very clear the second time, because it was both times, that if the GSA kept bringing these cases to him—and he made it very clear he didn't agree with us—but he did make it clear; he said, "If you have granted it once, then you have to

grant it to all, whether you like it or not." And in fact, the second time, I'm told—I wasn't there when he rendered his decision—"If I get any more of these, I am going to," whatever he could do as a judge, to bring to bear on the GSA, because he was tired and he didn't like his calendar being—

CG: Filled with this stuff.

EL: —filled with this kind of thing.

CG: Yeah. Let's stop talking about that for a second. While you were at Temple—

EL: Mm-hm?

CG: —you were also a lecturer in homiletics, I read, in your biography.

EL: [Laughs]

CG: What was that? I mean, I know what homiletics is. That's preaching.

EL: Preaching. Well—

CG: You must have learned or done very well after you threw the papers on the floor at the Holy Trinity. [Laughs]

EL: Yeah, I learned how to number the pages. [Laughs] Guess what my first lesson was to all of them? [Laughs]

CG: Number your pages! [Laughs]

EL: Well, that was due to somebody who, you have, or Bill has, interviewed for this oral history, because it was at Philadelphia Divinity School, which was still here in Philadelphia.

CG: Dan Stevick.

EL: And so it was Dan Stevick, who was the homiletics professor.

CG: I'm pretty sure Bill did that, Bill Cutler.

EL: And Dan asked me if I would assist in senior homiletics. So it wasn't full-time. It essentially was working with students in the preparation

and deliverance, and yes, sometimes writing it out—well, yes, always writing it out, and then critiquing. So it was assisting him, and that was part-time.

CG: Do you enjoy teaching?

EL: Oh, yeah, sure, sure.

CG: Preaching and teaching are cousin professions, aren't they?

EL: Yeah, of course. They are. And in this case there's a—I did that for three or four years, until 1970, and then it was ended. But it was at Dan Stevick's invitation. And that started. Dan and I had become very good friends when I was at Holy Trinity, so when he tendered this offer to assist, I just thought, "Sure, fine." And then it brought me into a generation of students who I'm still in touch with, one of whom, who grew up in this diocese, at All Saints Norristown, Barry Howe, who was a student, and he and I later would be in the House of Bishops.

CG: Oh, for heaven's sakes. It's a small club.

EL: Small club. Barry is now retired, but he was one of the students in the class.

CG: Okay, so then all of a sudden you are in Florence, Italy? How did that happen?

EL: Interesting story, because it's related to my third arrest, which is where my—I have a felony record with the federal government. And David Gracie was also busted, among his many, but it was one of his occasions.

CG: Oh, he had tons of them.

EL: Yeah. Well, this was a protest over in Redbank, New Jersey, and we knew it was going to really be not just civil—it was civil

disobedience, but we knew that this one's going to—you're not going to win this one in court. And there were 50-plus of us, and it included nuns, and it included clergy, and it included faculty, some of whom were from Temple. John Raines, later to have the book that was recently published, the memoir—I'll think of it after we finish this, who, with Bill Davidson at Haverford College—there's a whole new book out. John was in the Religion Department.

CG: Right.

EL: And his brother was Bob Raines, who was—

CG: R-A-I-N-E-S?

EL: R-A-I-N-E-S, and Bob Raines was at the First Methodist Church in Germantown, was the pastor there.

CG: Oh, okay.

EL: All right? There's this motley group, all right, from students, nuns, clergy, faculty, and other protesters, and there were over 50 of us. We went onto the military reservation in Redbank, which was the area that—I'm forgetting the right word for it—anyway, where napalm was [taken] by railroad to the ocean, over to the sea, or the bay, or whatever, and from there it was shipped to Vietnam.

CG: Right.

EL: And so we went in and symbolically blocked that railroad track on the—I think it was Navy reservation. Well clearly, marines came, and we were all arrested, and off we went. Well, this was then going to be a trial in front of a federal magistrate in Newark, New Jersey, six weeks or so later. By the way, I have to say, when we were all arrested, we all agreed that we would wait to make sure everybody got released. There was no bail but just we were released, but we didn't

want to wait. No. No, no, sorry. It was when the trial occurred, Kathryn and I, and our daughter, decided we needed to get away. And that summer we decided, because Kathryn had lived in Florence, Italy, for an Italian publisher before we ever met or married.

CG: Which Kathryn is it? Spell it for me.

EL: K-A-T-H-R-Y-N.

CG: Okay.

EL: And so we made all of these plans, and we were going to leave from JFK—I guess that was the airport—to go—

CG: Probably JFK then.

EL: Yeah, and we were going to visit friends in France, and then do Italy—Venice, Florence, Rome.

CG: Pretty good trip.

EL: And the day before turned out to be the day I was to appear in court in Newark. We had all of the tickets; we had all of the traveler's checks, etcetera. So the apprehended, showed up, and the magistrate was not a happy camper with this crowd, believe me. But that's where we all agreed that yes, some of us might be able to pay—we were pretty well alerted it was going to be a fine, and that's what it proved to be. And we all said, though, that there were these nuns, there were these students, who didn't have any money. And so we all agreed that we would not leave if we could bail ourselves out, or pay our fine and get out, and leave them stranded.

CG: Everybody had to be out.

EL: Everybody had to be, so that's what we were doing. And I happened to have all of our traveler's checks. You had traveler's checks in those days. [Laughs] And I'm peeling these things off. Everybody's

saying, “Yes, we’ll send it to American Express, or wherever,” yeah, I guess that would be, “in Venice and in Rome and in Florence, to pay you back.” All right, fine. David Gracie was on the phone with Bishop DeWitt.

And guess what? The money was there to cover those few remaining cases to make sure. I think it was 200 dollars was the fine, in 1972. But we weren’t sure what was going to happen, so Kathryn and our daughter go to the airport, and I show up at, finally at 10 o’clock at night, and I said, “Yes, we’re going to have our trip.” So off we go, and all of these good protesters repaid, which we collected in various—

CG: American Express offices around the continent?

EL: —offices around in Italy. And one of our stops was Florence. And we get there, and Kathryn had lived in Florence twice on art fellowships from Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, as I said, before we ever met or married. And so she was fairly fluent in the language, and knew the city, and we were there on a Sunday, and we went to Saint James Church Florence. And of course, after the service there’s a coffee hour. And as my daughter years later would say, “There wasn’t a coffee hour that you’d ever attended that you weren’t the last one to leave.” [Laughs] Which was the case there.

And it happened to be they were in transition with their rectors. And the current then-rector was going off to Germany for a parish. And so I honestly didn’t give it a thought. We were on a vacation and really that was primary. But I did stay for the whole coffee hour, and probably was the last one to leave. And so she would roll her eyes and say, “Daddy, what do you”—and talked about being in campus

ministry, and etcetera, etcetera. Well, some of the folks there were taking us in, and I didn't give it a thought, finished the trip, we came home.

It's the summer of '72, and in August I get a letter from the then-bishop in the churches in Europe, which many Episcopalians don't know about, but we're there, been there a long time, called the Convocation. And the then-bishop of the Convocation was one Edmond Browning. [Laughs] And he writes a letter saying, "I understand that you were in Florence, and they were seeming, and they seemed interested. Would you be interested?"

And that was where the question of would we be interested in going abroad came up. And the long and the short of it is, we thought, well, all right, it's been nine or ten years at Temple. Let's see what that might look like. And with Kathryn's background of the language, and the city, indeed. So in November of that year I got invited over to be interviewed. And it actually was Thanksgiving Day. And came back from that and in two weeks got called to be the rector.

CG: And you were there until?

EL: So we arrived in Florence in 1973.

CG: Right.

EL: March 1st of '73. And then we were there 'til September of 1982 where I was the rector there. But, in the course of that, let me just—Bishop Browning didn't remain bishop there for that long, but long enough that in his capacity, and *à la* someone like Bishop DeWitt, wanted to visit—well you could call them either the draft dodgers or the war resistors, who had left and were in Sweden.

CG: Oh, okay.

EL: And so when Bishop Browning heard my anti-war background, and I said, "Well, I happen to know an Episcopal priest, Tom Hayes, who has been ministering," or had been; I don't think he was still there, but ministered as a full-time designated clergyperson to be with the deserters/resistors, depending on your point of view. So I got in touch with him, and who to get in touch with. And so I went with Bishop Browning to Sweden, and we spent three or four days there visiting the families of resistors. Some of them were still single; some had married Swedish women. So, a little carryover from my Temple protest days to there.

CG: Yeah. Then you were called back to a church in Washington?

EL: Right. We were there essentially ten years in Florence, and in 1982—I started looking at that point, at the end of nine years or so. And you think, okay, you're overseas, out of sight, out of mind, as we were always reminded, if you're going to go do those churches in faraway places. And so you start looking what's around and whatnot. And so in that year got interested in Saint John's Church in Georgetown, in Washington, D.C., Diocese of Washington. And I made it down on their short list, and was called to be their rector. Started there in September, 1982, so.

CG: And you were there until you were elected bishop of Western Michigan?

EL: That's right, until June of 1989.

CG: Okay, I want to move this along because I don't want to burden you with a lot of detail, but was there a period when you thought, "Gee, maybe I'd like to be a bishop," or did that come to you—?

EL: I have enough vanity in my life to think that had I thought about being bishop, but nothing driven, nothing—I sort of thought, it'll come.

CG: If it comes.

EL: The opportunity, it'll come, and then you have to see what happens.

CG: It's interesting to me, this whole business of the role of a bishop versus the role of a rector, and I did an oral history interview a month or so ago with Bishop Daniel. And one of the things that Danny said about his understanding when he was elected bishop of Eastern Carolina, was, "All of the sudden I realized that 80 percent of what I knew as a rector didn't matter. Twenty percent of what you know as a rector is applicable. Everything else is different."

EL: That's right.

CG: And, did you find that?

EL: Absolutely.

CG: Why do you think you were chosen to be the bishop of Western Michigan?

EL: Ah. Well, I had been to one campus ministry national conference, in Ann Arbor. That was the only time I'd ever been in Michigan. And I knew two clergy in the Diocese of Western Michigan, one of whom had been a colleague of a parish in Georgetown, and he'd gone to be rector of Saint Luke's Church, Kalamazoo. The other was a woman who was a deacon, not of my ordination then, but she'd been back in the States—from Florence days, come back, and they lived in Holland, Michigan. And in December of 1988, I got a call from this family that we had known since Florence days, and they said they are looking for a new bishop, and I didn't have a clue about Western Michigan at that point. They would like to submit my name.

And so I said, "Let me think about it. Tell me about the diocese." The diocese was in a real crisis. My predecessor had to resign because of sexual misconduct after only three years of being bishop, who succeeded a bishop whose name will be familiar in this diocese, the bishop for 24 years prior to that, by the name of Charles Bennison, Senior—yes, father of Charles Bennison, Junior—an episcopacy that was fully honorable and upright, but consistent in that era with a lot of the diocese in that part of the Midwest—Wisconsin, Illinois, Chicago. The Diocese of Chicago, for example, would have been out of that old, great Anglo-Catholic tradition of very authoritarian—

CG: Autocratic?

EL: —autocratic and authoritarian. And it was kind of assumed that that would be their role, and this was certainly true in the case of Bishop Bennison, Senior., and I want to emphasize that.

CG: Yeah, because I want to talk to you about that in a little bit.

EL: Right.

CG: His son.

EL: So you have this background. So I said, "All right, I'll let my name go in." And when you do that, you don't know what's going to happen. You get washed out first round of consideration, whatever. But it moved along.

CG: Clearly, it worked.

EL: And so, yes. Then in June of 1989 I was elected. But it was a fifth ballot and there were four candidates of us. But I will say, it was a great process, and that you could truly come away—I know it's sort of hard, if you're elected. How would you know? Well, that's a good

question, fair. But respected, treated well, appreciated for your willingness to do this job.

CG: Particularly after two bishops that had been controversial.

EL: Yes, both.

CG: One really controversial.

EL: One really—the most immediate one is they were—

CG: Who was that?

EL: The bishop? The one that I succeeded?

CG: Yeah.

EL: Howard Meeks.

CG: Okay. Good, and that's in the books somewhere.

EL: Irony: He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop DeWitt.

CG: [Laughs] Small club stuff again.

EL: So their immediate wound was betrayal. The Bishop Bennison era, and it was a long era, 24 years, but it started in 1960. You've got to keep it—

CG: It's a hell of a different period than now, when you went to be bishop.

EL: Exactly, and in terms of being bishop in the Episcopal Church. He wasn't making it up; he was just fulfilling a role that was consistent with that part of the country.

CG: Then.

EL: Then, then. It was a leadership style that clearly—

CG: When you were elected to the episcopate there were women in the priesthood.

EL: Oh, definitely. And in fact Barbara Harris was already a bishop.

CG: A bishop.

EL: So yeah. No, no, that was 1976, with the official—well, of course, it was ’74 here in Philadelphia.

CG: Yeah.

EL: But ’76 was official. So you had the presence of women clergy.

CG: I’m going to make an assumption that you were in favor of women being ordained?

EL: I was at that convention representing the Convocation in 1976, and voted for it, yes.

CG: Yeah, and my sense is if you had been still at a church in Philly, or in Washington, D.C., you probably would have shown up at the Advocate on July 29th, 1974.

EL: Yeah. I was in Florence.

CG: Yeah.

EL: And they couldn’t pay the airfare. [Laughs]

CG: [Laughs] All right, so you spent thirteen years as bishop of Western Michigan. You decided to retire. Why did you decide to come back to Philadelphia, other than the fact that it’s home? I mean, it really is.

EL: Yeah. I mean, it is. Kathryn was born and raised in Elkins Park. She went to Cheltenham High School.

CG: And Kathryn, your daughter, is here?

EL: Well, that was the key part. Yes, okay, we’re going to retire, and I was of that conviction that you get out of your successor’s way, hair, geography, turf. You know, you just get out. And so we weren’t going to stay in Michigan, though that part of Michigan, along Lake Michigan, gee, it’s lovely. And yes, we liked cold winters, and snow was not a problem. We sort of liked the—

CG: You didn’t leave it.

EL: No. [Laughs]

CG: [Laughs]

EL: No, we really loved it, really did. So, have to make a decision. Well, by that time our daughter, now married, and with two sons, two infant sons at that time. And her husband, who we love dearly, a physician, had taken a job with Penn, which meant they had come from Washington, where they were living, to Philadelphia. So there they were, so it just made sense that we would come full swing, and come back.

CG: Okay. All right, so let's talk about: here you were, an experienced bishop. You weren't doddering. You were going to come back here and you weren't probably going to sit still. In 2002 when you moved back here, it had not yet become a *public* crisis between the bishop and the Standing Committee, but from what I understand, and I pay pretty good attention to this stuff as a reporter back in the day, it wasn't obvious that Bennison, Charles E. Bennison, Junior—

EL: Junior.

CG: —and the Standing Committee, and some parishes and stuff, that there was contention and there had been almost from the beginning. What did you find in the diocese when you came back? What was the state of the diocese in 2002, leading up to 2006, when the Standing Committee called for his resignation?

EL: Yeah. Again, in the small world of our Episcopal Church, I come back, and here is the son of my predecessor.

CG: Right.

EL: Now he's the diocesan bishop here. And I must say, I think most literally: Charles, Junior. We'll just say now Bishop Bennison of Pennsylvania.

CG: Chuck.

EL: Well, I never knew him as Chuck.

CG: That's what everybody used then.

EL: I know that was his name in Kalamazoo, because he grew up at Saint Luke's Kalamazoo. So we had Western Michigan in common, and the legacy of his father, whom we could talk—I could talk about. And we did. And I laugh, because it's not unusual that when bishops retire, and whomever is the current diocesan, if it happens, to think, "Oh, yeah. We're good friends." Or, "We're friends." And I think Charles was at the doorstep here of the house three days after we moved in, wanting to say, "Now, can we begin to schedule you to do visitations?" [Laughs]

CG: Visitations?

EL: And this is not unusual in the church. I said to him, "Give me six months." And I told him why. I said, "I'm still grieving." I said, "Western Michigan, those thirteen years were wonderful. Not without their problems, but, hey, that goes with the territory."

CG: Comes with the territory.

EL: So what else is new in life? I said, "They were wonderful, and I miss it, and I just need some time to unpack." And he understood completely.

CG: And he also had Frank Turner still healthy, and able to help.

EL: Yes. Oh sure, no, they weren't lacking in—I mean, I don't know who was doing other assisting. But he didn't press. He said, "When

you're ready, if you're willing, I would welcome your assistance in doing that." Which I didn't start—which I did start in, oh, June of 2003, and since then have been regularly scheduled on the visitation calendar, 20, 25 times a year, and I love it. I love it. Or as those of us who are retired said, we get to do the fun stuff and we don't have to show up in the office on Monday morning—

CG: Meetings.

EL: —with six telephone pink slips: "Please call because ..."

CG: Yeah.

EL: Hey, this is the good part! Secondly is, yeah, I like it. I mean, it's not just like it, it's vocational, it's gratifying, and Charles made this very possible. He'd have to; he's the bishop. And never was there any need of being, "Well, tell me what's going on in any of those parishes." Nope, just said, "If there are things you think I should know, please tell me. If you don't, don't." So I wanted to be fair what the ground rules were when I started this.

Then he asked me, of course, [sighs] because they wanted to make campus ministry revitalized. And he thought, "Oh, gee, you've got the history." And so we did, back when there was the Four Cs program—congregations, Campus Ministry, and I forget what the other two are, that was part of the diocesan program that he was putting out before the diocese camp. And of course, we know what that would become.

CG: That would become Camp Wapiti.

EL That would be Camp Wapiti. And so Campus Ministry, and so I thought, "Well, if I can help and facilitate it." And yes we did; we reestablished a ministry at Temple. It doesn't continue; it continues

indirectly through the Advocate. But I was able to make contacts with campuses and things of this sort, and so that was added into—but he asked. It wasn't assigned.

CG: Were you aware of the tension in the diocese?

EL: Oh, yeah, yeah, you could. You knew it was growing, and you knew it was—and I always understood. I said, "Do not get triangulated into this." Where I heard severe criticism, I said, "You're going to have to deal directly—

CG: With him.

EL: —with him." But for some of them it was, "We've tried, and it's impossible." All right?

CG: What do you think in terms of his style, and in terms of the relationship in this diocese between the Standing Committee and the bishop, which is different than it is in many of the diocese of the church, I gather? What do you think the problem was? Was he a bit of an autocrat, like his father?

EL: People would make that connection, but as I said, I talked to him—example. When I agreed to do visitations, I said, "You need to know that while I was bishop of Western Michigan, I had to make a very clear understanding to the diocese outwardly that my leadership style would not be that of your father," which was authoritarian, top-down, hierarchical.

CG: Which is why you liked people calling you Edward instead of Bishop?

EL: Yeah, but then—

CG: No, that's another—

EL: I wished more of them did, but they didn't. You lose your baptismal name when you become a bishop. You're a bishop forever, it seems.

CG: Well, you told me a story about somebody, the day before you were consecrated it was Edward, and the next day it was Bishop.

EL: It was Bishop, because it was a priest who later was part-time on my staff, and he finally learned to call me Edward. But again, it was part of that old Anglo-Catholic ethos of the Midwest province, Province V. But with Charles, I just said, "You need to know that in terms of leadership style," and this will get to the question, the answer to your other question.

CG: Right.

EL: "I had to distinguish myself between you and your father." And by the way, his father moved to California when he retired [as bishop of Western Michigan] in '84.

CG: Right, I know, and that's where he died.

EL: But he never, ever, would ever interfere in the life of the diocese. In fact, Charles Bennison, Senior, when they lived in California, they occasionally came east and would visit friends in Kalamazoo and in Michigan.

CG: They had a summer place there, didn't they?

EL: Oh, yeah, in Leland. And he would always write me ahead of time, and did I have—did he have—he just wanted me to know; it wasn't permission. That's the wrong word. He wanted me to know that he would be there, and what the purpose of it was, and everything else. Okay, that's polite, that's courteous, that's professional. But he kept doing it. And I finally said some days, "Dear Bishop Bennison"—he was always Bishop Bennison. I never called him Charles. [Laughs] And I said, "Bishop Bennison, please, you're welcome to come, and you're just visiting family and friends. He had been in the diocese

since 1952, until ‘84. Anyway, so that was the kind of thing. So he honored boundaries. And believe me, that’s not always easy for clergy, and even bishops.

CG: No, I know that.

EL: So I had to make this clear to Charles, that his leadership style was not my style, and I had to use his style as a way to say, “This is how I see it differently.” And it’s collegial, it’s consensual. It’s collaborative. The era of the princely prelate is, if it ever was the operating model it should have been—you can argue that—but that era is over, and the life of the church is beginning to evolve in how it does leadership. So we come to Charles Junior. And I heard, in varying degrees, lots of opinion, not all of it negative.

CG: No.

EL: By no means was it all negative, and there was a good deal of appreciation that I think needs for the record to be stated, because you would get the impression from some of his critics that everybody disliked him, everybody thought he was misguided, and everybody thought he was untrustworthy, unreliable and what not. And so as I said, I’d get very mixed [reactions]”—I could go to a visitation, meet with the vestry. If the topic of Bishop Bennison and Wapiti came up, I said, it wasn’t by any means uniformly, “Oh, how awful, terrible,” and everything. So I would identify in his brightness, both intellectual, which it was, which it is, in his passion to get on with where he thought the church should be. He believed he was touching base. [End of Part One / Begin Part Two]

CG: We’re talking about Charles Bennison.

EL: Yeah. But he was confident in what he thought was the right thing would be; he was very confident. And therefore I would observe that he had a leadership style that proved at times—how to put this—characteristics of which would be an inconsistency and follow-up communication. So that ideas that were put out, whether to individuals, or to parishes, or vestries, or Standing Committee, or Diocesan Council, might seem to most people, okay, that's where he is, and then discover a week, or two, or month later, that he had revisited it, changed it, redirected.

CG: Without communicating?

EL: And was not good about going back to the people he had started with, to then bring them on. And they felt this inconsistency, and not being kept in the information loop—we've never talked about it, and I don't know whether he would agree with that. I suspect maybe not. And he could argue, he can argue it his way. I'm observing, and I'm using the word observation first, not critiquing, but observing that it's—to myself, I'd say, "Did you go back and tell the vestry that, gee, you had some second thoughts, and what did they think?" And it struck me that that piece was lacking.

CG: Was missing? Yeah.

EL: In his relationships.

CG: It was also always the concern that he would do what he wanted to do, regardless of what the other—

EL: Well, whoever.

CG: Well, with the Standing Committee or whatever. So that there were some rules made that kept his hands off the money, because he was spending it for things that maybe the diocese didn't want to. Do you

have the feeling that when it got to the point where they said, where the Standing Committee said, in 2006, "It's time for you to pack it in, sir," that, did he dig his heels in, or was he just so committed to what he was doing? Or was it pride? What was it that made him—? Because clearly, everybody—and I think here everybody would agree—that the length of time, and it was [six] years between then and when he actually retired, was not good for the diocese. What could have made that work? Or was there no way?

EL: By that time, I wonder. Stepping out to the sideline, looking at it ecclesiastically, and this has to do with the Standing Committee, which you're right, this diocese has a long history of, and I don't mean just Bishop DeWitt, I mean you can go back to the 19th century.

CG: Yeah, Bishop Onderdonk.

EL: Exactly, and others, that the Standing Committee enjoys, historically, maybe canonically, has enjoyed a kind of autonomy, and not collaboration that you would find in other diocese historically through the church.

CG: That's what Bishop Daniel said, yeah.

EL: And my time in Western Michigan which was—no time did the Standing Committee—well, that was our style. We were collaborative, and I kept them in the loop, and there was no tension at all. There might be disagreement, but no.

CG: Yeah.

EL: So, unique to this diocese is when the Standing Committee twice canonically tried to bring him to trial, and filed this, and to my knowledge—now I'd have to check my memory and record—both

never, they got started but they never got off the ground. I mean, the two that were initiated by this Standing Committee—

CG: And the ones that were primarily about financial issues, yes?

EL: Yes. And I can remember, again, it was about—I was always invited as a guest at diocesan conventions, and well received by Charles and by the diocese. And I can remember hearing the arguments, and the public requests that you resign and step down, by a couple of clergy, and they would say it's because you have—particularly with regards to Wapiti. And I'm sitting there thinking, "But last year they passed the budget in which all of that was somehow included, that he was totally behind the scenes manipulating it." I'm sure people are going to argue, "Wait a minute. You don't have the whole picture," but it seemed to me that just canonically, procedurally, the Standing Committee did not do their homework in terms of: so how do we get a case about him, and proceed to see if we can get him removed?

CG: And there weren't national canons at that point.

EL: Oh, there were. There were some. There was a procedure, maybe not as explicit now—or, then.

CG: Because there was what's called the Bennison Rule that was passed in, what, 2009.

EL: Yeah. Yeah, and that to me was indicative—and that's a bad way to do canon law.

CG: Oh, absolutely, [unclear].

EL: I mean, we have this unpleasant case over here. We'll craft a canon, get into the national canon, and then we'll come back and we'll get him. Now, that's to me—

CG: This was actually 2012.

EL: Yes, I would fault that. Yes, 2012 Convention, right.

CG: Yeah, yeah.

EL: So that's just parenthetical, but I would say the church made a mistake. You don't craft canon law on case-specific situations. And yet, well, they did. But the point that I would make here is that I'm sure all the people—and again, it was percolating before I arrived, but really bubbled up when I was here, had been here. They would argue that, "Well, you just don't know how frustrating it was." You don't know how—and often then matters of personality and personal treatment came in. And I can't argue whether Charles did those things or not. All I could ever remember saying is, "You're going to have to deal with it directly."

Then if they felt they had tried and they hadn't, then it brought them to this frustrating point that they would go the canonical route to try to get him removed. Those two cases, it doesn't even take a canon expert to realize they're not going to—it's not going to happen. You could see that the basis of it was just not going to. And they didn't! And they failed, which only—

CG: With two different presiding bishops.

EL: With two different presiding bishops—I mean, it got into the process, got to Clay Matthews, it got to—no, no, they appointed a committee and it had a bishop on it. It was Dorsey Henderson from Upper South Carolina, himself a lawyer before he was a bishop. And he was in charge of that. They get the request; they process it, yea or nay. And in both cases, early on, there is not a canonical basis to proceed with this.

CG: One to Bishop Griswold and one to Bishop Jefferts Schori.

EL: That's right.

CG: Then the business was brought up about his brother. I'm not going to get into all of that.

EL: Yeah.

CG: And he was tried for that, inhibited, found guilty, and then as Bishop Dan explained, because he was the chairman, and he was the president of the Court of Appeals, that was overturned, and so Bishop Bennison was reinstated, or got his job back. I have always thought, and a number of people have always said, that when he came back in August of whatever year it was—

EL: '10, I think it was 2010.

CG: '10, I think it was '10.

EL: Yeah.

CG: If he had said, "Okay, I'm back. I'll be here until the end of the year, and then we will go into a transitional period," everything would have been fine. But he stayed on and he refused to move, and that's why the bad canon that you're talking about was—do you think he was just blind to what was going on in the diocese, or do you think that he just really believed in what he was doing?

EL: Yes [especially the latter].

CG: And I think they're two different things.

EL: Yes.

CG: But neither one of them is evil.

EL: No. I think he believed in what he was doing. And he maybe felt that he was vindicated when the statute of limitations, which—

CG: Was used here.

EL: It was what was used. And people would say, "Well, why would he want to come back to such a negative environment, and all of the uncertainty? Wouldn't the gracious thing be to do—?" A fair observation; I'm not arguing that. What I'm just saying is that I think he was kind of playing it strict to what was the outcome. And the outcome was—

CG: People in power—as you said, you had some thoughts about advancement and what not. There's ego involved to a degree, and at some point it gets out of control. Maybe that's what happened.

EL: Or pride, that I don't want my record, my legacy would be this. No.

CG: Be this. And one of the reasons that he stated he wanted to stay on is he wanted to get the history published, and that was not going to happen with the Standing Committee. Okay, so he is now gone.

EL: Mm-hm.

CG: And first we have Rodney Michel come in, who was really a [temporary administrator] in the administration of the diocese.

EL: Yeah, during the inhibition.

CG: During the inhibition, because the Standing Committee, as we heard an infinite number of times, was the ecclesiastical authority in the diocese.

EL: Yes, by canon law.

CG: Right, which is true. But I mean, we were beaten over the head with that a lot, people thought. But Rodney came in, and then when Charles came back, he stayed. You were around.

EL: And Rodney remained around.

CG: Right, Rodney remained around.

EL: As assisting bishop.

CG: As assisting bishop. What is it that Rodney Michel, and Edward Lee, and Dan Daniel have done? What have they done, and what has the diocese—how has the diocese moved forward since Charles Bennison retired? And you were a part of that.

EL: Yeah, yeah. Certainly, Rodney and Dan, we were in the House of Bishops. Rodney retired, and I retired, but we knew each other and what not. Didn't know each other well. I just think that, to the degree I could, with a very limited responsibility, very prescribed responsibilities—visitations, yes, the campus ministry—during the inhibition I oversaw, at the Standing Committee's request, the ordination process.

CG: Right.

EL: Which the canons require you have to have a bishop overlooking it, so they had to find somebody, and I did, and I enjoyed it. I more than enjoyed it—happy to do it. I think we just said, "We're going to give you the style of leadership we think is, one, our own authentic style, and two, appropriate for this time and era, and that you can see a diocese where Episcopal leadership is—" again, I come back to my collection of C-words: collective, collaborative, consensual, cooperative.

CG: Yeah, which was what a lot of people felt it wasn't during the Bennison era.

EL: That's right. That's true, and that might have been their experience individually, and maybe as a parish. I know of one parish that really felt frustrated when it came to dealing with, oh, property matters. They would talk, and Charles would say, "Well, maybe we can just build a whole new plant on a different piece of land in the area." And

it was not in the Philadelphia area, but it was outside. And so that's when they went, "Oh, all right." And then hear later that, "Well, no, I've dropped off all that." Again, it was the consistency and the communication, that I would lift up as, again, two C-words, right? [Laughs] Would lift up as being where the problem was located.

I can't ever talk about anything personal with Bishop Bennison. And obviously, because we thought about the serendipity of, he grew up in Kalamazoo, in the Diocese of Western Michigan, where I become bishop, and I come back to my home diocese, as you've been recording, and he's the bishop. And there's that certain serendipitous sort of—and of course, that colors the relationship. But I can understand, but I would not let myself be triangulated into: "Could you remind him?" And I can remember a couple of occasions when clergy would say, "Can't you tell him?" And I said, "I could tell him, but I'm not going to tell him. You're going to tell him." "Well, I've tried, and it doesn't work." "Well, maybe there's another way to make it work." And, but I was not going to—

CG: You were not going to get caught in the middle?

EL: No.

CG: The three years since Bishop Daniel has been here have been Bennison-less. Bennison and Bishop Michel worked together, but Michel was here during the inhibition.

EL: Yeah.

CG: Where do you think the diocese is now? How much healing, which is an onerous word after a while, but how much healing has been done?

EL: I think a lot has been done

CG: And Bishop Daniel deserves a lot of credit for that?

EL: He certainly does, in terms of they've experienced a style of leadership that is consistent and communicative. He flipped it in that sense. And, oh, there is a way that you can work, but not in the sense that he just rolled over and wouldn't make decisions. He has made very direct decisions. And even at some point, what's interesting since we're on the eve of the election of a new diocesan, he and I were talking one day, and I said that for me, is the diocese ready to elect a new diocesan, is that there will be no: "I don't care who it is as long as it isn't Bishop Bennison." And I said, "If they haven't gotten beyond that, then they're not ready to have a bishop."

CG: Yeah.

EL: And I can say I think they're beyond it. There are individuals that Bishop Daniel and I can both say a phrase that—well, I'll say it's my phrase, "Friend, you're going to have to get over it." And that would be to an individual, and what not.

CG: Yeah. As an Episcopalian, I concur with you, and I'll tell you, I've known Frank Griswold since he was a kid, and he was a presiding bishop, and so occasionally we've talked about his period of time, which was a contentious one. He was very much a conciliator. He tried to bring the—and finally about a year before he stepped down, and his term ended, he basically told me, "You know, I've done all I can. If they want to leave, let them go."

EL: That's right.

CG: He said, "I've done everything I possibly can. To hell with it. It just doesn't work. You can't fight this forever." And I think that that's where the diocese is now, and whoever the new diocesan is should

come in and say, “Okay, we’re healed now. We’re moving forward, and if you don’t want to be on board, I’m sorry.”

EL: The test of that will be if somebody, an individual, whether clergy or lay, and I suspect there’s still a remnant—will try to get to the new bishop to say, “Now, I’ve got to tell you about—”, and I hope the new bishop will say, “That chapter’s closed. You’re going to have to work it out. You’re going to have to work it out with Charles Bennison.”

CG: Or yourself.

EL: “Or yourself. I will not spend time or energy revisiting. That chapter is ended. The book isn’t finished, but the chapter is ended, and I’m on a new chapter.” And okay, yes, well, scenarios, chapters have continuity, but I just hope the new bishop will be able to say, “This is what I believe has been worked out, and you’ve processed it. I will in no way try to dissuade you that your convictions, and your feelings, deep, are wrong, but it is not on my agenda to continue to reopen and revisit.”

CG: Pulling scabs off of wounds.

EL: Yeah, yeah. Now, there will be some individuals, and that’s inevitable in any type—

CG: There are people that aren’t over DeWitt yet.

EL: No, oh [laughs] or Lyman Ogilby. Bob DeWitt gave him the problem of what to do in August 1974, when your predecessor is—

CG: One of the guys.

EL: One of the bishops uncanonically ordaining. If I suspect this, probably Bishop DeWitt informed him well in advance, or sufficiently in advance, to say—and I suspect, and it’s only my writing the scenario, don’t know a thing about it—which is that bishop, as I knew

Lyman, who, parenthetically, was the interim bishop in Western Michigan between my immediate predecessor and my election. So there is Lyman weaving in. And he gave them, that diocese their first taste, like, I think Rodney and Dan Daniel, and hopefully myself, have given in this transition: oh, there's a way of doing, of being a bishop that—I'll just wrap this up.

My father would say, who just adored Mr. Groton, harkening way, way back then, when he was the fourth member of their Trinity, my parents' Trinity, "Oh, if the church would only do it the way Mr. Groton did it!" And I can remember saying, you know, "Dad. Well, so the conversation isn't going to go anywhere, so we'll talk about the Phillies, all right?"

CG: [Laughs] Which right now could be a little bit difficult. All right, I'm going to turn this off.

[End of Interview]