

Larry Rankin  
8/27/16

Samuel (S): I didn't even know you existed until yesterday. Two days ago. I'm so excited this is happening.

Larry (L): That's sort of my nonprofessional retirement card.

S: So you were a professor or you were just a...

L: No I earned my PhD in transformative education or education for transformation as a result of seven years of intensive immersions in Latin America in the '80s.

S: Okay. Where were you?

L: We were based in Costa Rica. When we went down there I had no inkling of starting another project, starting another academic project but the upshot of all that was that I learned so much, we learned so much. We lived with my family in Costa Rica for a bit, '84-87. We learned so much about the base Christian communities, about how to develop a grassroots theology, better known as liberation theology, I'd rather call it praxis theology or whatever because it's adaptable in any community in anywhere in the world. Doesn't have to be with poor people. It could be right here.

S: Interesting. So the Methodists are interested in liberation theology.

L: Some are. It's controversial. Some people are stuck on the possibility that the use of Marxian analysis makes it communist, which it doesn't. Some people don't know how to separate between Marxist analysis and Marxist Leninism, which is totally rejected.

S: I'm going to turn off my cell phone. I forgot to do that.

L: So anyway. I don't want to get into all that.

S: Well actually that's very interesting given your family background and some of the letters your father was writing.

L: So the main thing is we learned how poor people learned. And not only how poor people learned how to read and write but how poor people learned to discover their own reality of their poverty and the tools to make positive changes in their poverty to overcome dependency, the myth of being poor- "Well it's God's will." That kind of thing. The program, the NGO we were with, was very much involved in that process so it was like "Wow. I'm learning all this stuff." And from Latin American... you know, we were there not as the missionaries, we were there as the promoters and sharing, telling the story of the ministry with North American churches. So when we came back after three years, this professor down at Miami-Dade College convinced me that I had to put it down and told me about the Unionists through the university

program, which is a college masters and PhD program all over the world. They're a non-campus institution using tenured professors including Ed Niesman and my main anchor professor is Bill Benjamin. Bill was in the education department at USF and he was doubly tenured at USF and with Unionists... UI. And to get this faculty book and see all this incredible faculty tenured in their landed schools as well as being approved to work with graduates in any field necessary. You can invent your field. It was very interesting that I learned about alternate education in Latin America only to find out there is a whole university of alternate education here. So all approved, all whatever, recognized, whatever. Started in '88, finished in '91.

S: And your dissertation was specifically about...?

L: Education for transformation. How can we transfer that pedagogical process and apply it with middle class North Americans. And to measure if... well the premise of transformation education is that unless you change what you've learned, and if learning doesn't change you, you haven't learned it. You've just put it in a reservoir. That's not me saying that. That's one of the icons of popular education in Latin America, Paulo Freire. And he developed... basically I used his pedagogy and developed a curriculum around it. I did ten immersion trips, which nearly killed me. Too much information. And I tried to use the same curriculum every time and do the measurements pre and post. Trudy is a certified Myers-Briggs test scorer. We tried to use the Myers-Briggs to see if there were any tendencies of receptivity/un-receptivity, you know, the scale. Are people willing to absorb or experience the Latin American experience and then bring it back. So I tried to measure what changes people chose to make after they got back. Simpler lifestyles, getting rid of a car, join an action reflection group for justice issues, whatever. And that was the toughest part. I ran out of money and after six months I couldn't continue. But they accepted the concept. All they're trying to prove here is that you've added another little piece of information. And at the time, the literature search was easy. There was only one dissertation that was in my field, anywhere and he was just graduating from University of Massachusetts. We talked some. He sent me his dissertation and I loved his bibliography. So that was it except he used a different information gathering... his was easy. He was Cuernavaca, Mexico and Americans would come and be exposed to a local village situation and they experience several things and he did a curriculum with them and then they would go home. I went to ten countries.

S: Right. That's exhausting. Oh man. Paulo Freire has actually been really instrumental in my dissertation as well.

L: Really?

S: Yeah. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. That changed my whole outlook.

L: Well one of the requirements is basically you design your own courses leading up to your dissertation. And you have a learning agreement. You map out all the things you're going to do leading up to the dissertation and graduation and I had to write six or seven mastery papers that you break down the question, or you design six or

seven major areas of research that you have to do, of reading and all that pre stuff you do for your courses. That's how I did it. I didn't go to a classroom. I did workshop... I could select from many, many opportunities. I would fly somewhere and do a weekend intensive workshop in a certain area and my committee would recommend that I do and so forth. I did an internship in Tampa applying some of the methodology. It was absolutely thorough and the summary document was over half of the dissertation. All of the material that you use. And the graphics.

S: Your folks must've been excited.

L: I was dead.

S: I can imagine. Wow.

L: So how did you get started? Or why?

S: Why did I get started? I've always been interested in U.S. foreign policy. My parents are both educators, similar to yours. My mom actually has worked with Paulo Freire in the past, like she met him.

L: Really? Was she in the Brazilian literacy movement in the '60s? That's how he got on the map.

S: Right. This was when he was secretary of education or something. He was in Brazil for a minute. And she graduated from the ed school at CUNY... sorry Columbia, TC.

L: Columbia University?

S: Yeah and he was there workshopping something and they were on a panel.

L: He did come. I did read stuff, which I used, how do we apply his pedagogy with North Americans and he talked about the poverty of North Americans in their ideology and their lack of comprehending a global world and their materialism. Remember that?

S: Yeah. So that's sort of where my mom fit into that. But for me I was always fascinated by Cuba, just generally, because it's this spot on the map that... how is it so close to us while we have no relationship and this makes no sense to me.

L: That's a wonderful phrase you used. Because that's how I remember people interpreting why we were in Cuba in the '50s. Not the words spot on, but it's like what? It's only 90 miles and they had no idea where it was.

S: I've always been interested in U.S. foreign policy generally. I tried to learn Arabic and that turned out to be impossible. Yeah. I studied abroad in Cairo and that didn't work out well for me. But I was applying to grad schools in history and I knew I wanted to do history and I got into UNC and I study under Dr. Louis Perez. I don't know if that's a name that you know?

L: No. Ed mentioned a professor you're working with...

S: He was a colleague of his. He taught at South Florida before he went to UNC. And so... I'm sorry go ahead. And then I started reading Ruby Hart Phillips. Do you know that name? She was somebody who was a part of the American community in Cuba in the '30s through the '50s. She was a New York Times reporter.

L: Imbedded.

S: Yeah. She lived there and her husband had been a New York Times reporter and he passed away and then she took over the mantel.

L: Did she get after the revolution?

S: Until '61. Yeah.

L: Wow.

S: Or maybe she left or wrote a book in '61, which was very different from the book she wrote in '60 concerning what was going on because I think the opinions shifted.

L: Yeah the shift... yeah we can get into some of that. The shift of the revolution from being a social democratic revolution or at least promoting post, you know, victory democracy begins to shift to a communist ideology by October of 1959 and I can tell you why later, but a very specific moment that begins to shift.

S: It was around the Chorse Convention. I mean, cause that's actually a date that I found actually very useful.

L: What date is it?

S: October. When you have Camillo, you have the tourist convention...

L: We were there.

S: You were there?

L: Yeah. In Camagüey when it happened. Not that we were there there.

S: When Matos was arrested...?

L: Matos was arrested, Camillo disappears, several theories of his death abound. One a plain shot over the ocean, the other one a forced landing in Santa Clara, Raul Castro confronting him and shooting him in the back. That's theory number two. And theory number three is that we never found him. The plane in the water. We never found him.

S: Yeah. Do you have your own theory?

L: Nope. Not enough information. But my own theory as to why he was killed or eliminated... remember... did you read the part about the eighth day Fidel arrived in

Havana? There was this huge assembly or maybe a day or two later there were several and Camillo was always at his side. Cowboy hat, big guy.

S: Yeah. How am I doing Camillo?

L: Huh?

S: How am I doing Camillo?

L: But Cubans are very superstitious. Well I shouldn't say everybody but somebody released a dove or a number of doves, I forget, and one landed on Camillo's shoulder. Remember that story? For Fidel, that was the death nail. He was too close to the people. He was overshadowing Fidel. And the reason I say that is because he's eliminated others. Like Ochoa? General Ochoa much, much, much later. Who was the hero, or the head of the Angola war. A very faithful army guy, general and so forth. He was accused of drugs, bringing drugs in. And because, according to- I'm going to show you that book later- according to a guy who was very close to Fidel as a guard, a 24/7 guard among others, he says that Ochoa was in Angola and Fidel said, "Give us something this way." And Ochoa said, "No. Strategically it has to be this way." And he countermanded Fidel. That's it. And two years later he's dead. What I'm getting at is that he did that several times.

S: Can we start earlier?

L: Yeah yeah yeah. We can get there.

S: Right. I love this.

L: But just up front, I've lived in Cuba ever since I was two years old. So post and all that, I stayed with it.

S: So you weren't born in Cuba? You arrived when you were two?

L: No. My parents brought me when I was two. My brother David was six. We landed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January in Havana Harbor, King's Day.

S: You flew or you took a ferry?

L: No we took the boat because my parents brought their car with them for the work. Landed in Havana Harbor. I don't remember this but I'm told. And we spent the night at a pastor's house. The next morning the car is stolen. Within hours it was recovered but all of our stuff and domestics and stuff were stolen. But we drove all the way, 350 miles east to Camagüey and that's where we stayed. That was the only place we lived. That was the only church my dad served.

S: What year was that?

L: 1951. And we left in June of 1960.

S: Now was Pinson College a school before your father got there?

L: Yes. A little background. If you're going to talk about the history of the Methodist church, you must include how the church began but I'll give it to you real brief. In 1881 in Key West, two young men, Cubans who had fought in the 10 Year War and were exiled to Key West as were many others, came from their Catholic to the Methodist Christian faith at a Cuba mission, Methodist mission there. Shortly thereafter they decided that they wanted to go back to Cuba and expand Protestantism illegally under the noses of the Catholic Church in 1881. No I'm sorry, 1883. Correct that.

S: Is this Alberto Diaz?

L: **Cirianos Avada**. Write those names down. You'll find them. In fact I've got a history of the Methodist church that you're welcome to look at. I have a copy if you want. I did a lecture on that from 1893-1959. Isel, the woman that I'm going to tell you about is over there. She did a lecture right after me on the same place from about '59 to present. But anyway, the bibliography may interest you. A lot of that material had not been put together really. But the point being, they began in what we call a Wesleyan meeting, not as a church but as a bible study in the Saratoga Hotel. Have you been to Cuba?

S: Yeah.

L: When you go to the capital, the old capital... the capital is here, the plaza is here, all the 1950s cars are here. There's two hotels. The one on the right is the Saratoga Hotel. That's where the Methodist Church began. 1883. I don't think there is a plaque there but there should be. And they developed, the natives in the correct sense of the word, the native Cubans, began organizing chapels and ministries between 1883 until the Spanish American War ended in 1898. In 1898 or the beginning of 1899, the first American missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, churches were split then. They started sending missionaries under the direction of Bishop Candler. But in my paper, based on research, they treated the native Cuban pastors colonially. And the worst thing they read was that the U.S. missionaries took over the pulpits of the churches that they had started and made the local Cuban pastors there their assistants at much less pay and so forth. It was horrible. Now that wasn't going to last forever but initially it was a horrible... and my paper says, over time, things got better but the local pastors sent a letter to the Methodist board of missions in Nashville appealing their case. They were being mistreated, they were underpaid, this that and the other. And they were rebuffed. Colonial. I mean that arrogant American. I mean that's where my hackles get up about ugly Americans and U.S. policy and Iran contra and all that kind of stuff. So anyway. Anyhow, you're welcome to it. To look over it.

S: That lecture, or that paper that you wrote would be actually fantastic.

L: Yeah. I'll attach it to...

S: I'll just put some reminders just in case. Where does your brother live by the way?

L: He passed in 2006.

S: Oh sorry.

L: He was a radiologist. He married his wife after they met here at Florida Southern College. By the way my parents met here at Florida Southern College too.

S: Did they?

L: And Florida Southern has a repository of information that I mentioned in that little list that you might find interesting. That's where you can find Bishop Armando's transcripts of his oral history. And there's a lot of it. Probably too much for you. Then you may want to, depending on if you're going too broad, then you may want to interview these folks. His son and his daughter-in-law. And she works at the United Methodist Conference building here. And they live in Barta. They just moved. He's a pastor in Barta, which is ten minutes from here. Ten miles from here.

S: I'm staying at my girlfriend's father's house. I don't really know the area.

L: So, you know, these resources are available and her phone number is there. I don't have his.

S: Yeah that will be so helpful. I really appreciate this. Okay so met at Florida Southern.

L: Florida Southern is a Methodist college that began over 120 years ago and has been here about 110 of those years. No a little less. It has been on Lake Hollingsworth. Have you ever been there? Very close. We're about 12 minutes from here. The biggest thing about Florida Southern is that they have the largest collection of Frank Lloyd Wright buildings anywhere in the world. You know who Frank Lloyd Wright is?

S: I went to Wisconsin. I know who Frank Lloyd Wright is.

L: It's worth a visit. They just recently set up a nice little welcome center and they constructed a house that he designed, a little faculty house that never took off. He was quite eccentric.

S: I can imagine. So I went to the University of Wisconsin and I did a project on Frank Lloyd Wright for the historical center. I think he was either from Wisconsin or built some houses there.

L: We're proud of that. It was a handshake and a love affair between the president back in the mid-30s and Frank Lloyd Wright. They both have huge egos and one would be... Wright needed a place to build his showcase and Ludd Spivey needed to build his kingdom. But, here's the cool thing, and it involves my dad. Back then the kids had no money, in fact my dad had to wait a year before he could even think about going to college and his voice teacher from Alliance, Ohio where he was born, brought him down to Florida and discovered that Florida Southern was accepting

students on a work/study program. The college couldn't afford workers to build Frank Lloyd Wright's kingdom so the students participated building and my dad's hands are all over the bricks of Annie Pfeiffer Chapel because he designed the bricks, Wright designed the bricks, sort of like adobe, you know, with chinks of glass in them. Well my dad got the mold and he made the bricks. That was his job. He was a music/voice student, good baritone and shortly thereafter he felt the call to ministry and he did pre-ministerial work here. Met my mother in the first year. He was a year behind her and they were an item and shortly after graduation a year later they got married at my mother's church in Mount Dora, Florida.

S: What year was that?

L: That would be 1941? I have to check. Do you need that post history? Do you need that information?

S: What do you mean?

L: I'm just saying the basic timeline is that they married and then my dad was accepted at Boston University Theology School or seminary in Boston.

S: The reason that it's interesting...

L: I don't want to give you too much information.

S: No. In terms of your parents as they're going to be pretty critical figures, I think, in this project. The more I have, you know, I can slip it in...

L: Well he studied under Harold Dewolf who later became Dr. Martin Luther King's graduate professor where King earned his PhD at Boston. That doesn't have to be said, I'm just giving you some links.

S: That's cool. Wow.

L: Harold Dewolf. In fact, he became an advisor, spiritual advisor, to King in his campaigns and I remember when Dewolf was alive, living here in Lakeland, going over to his apartment and listening to him tell his story about the St Augustine Campaign which was one of the most violent, and then at Birmingham. I mean this little hung over little guy, bald, you know, crying to think of it. It's amazing. Anyway. That's another story. Then, appointed to two little churches in Ohio. The East Ohio Conference, where he was a member. And my brother was born first, of course, at New Philadelphia, Ohio, First Methodist Church. And I was born in Millersburg, Ohio.

S: So you guys are from Ohio.

L: Yeah. I only lived in Ohio six months.

S: And then?

L: Then my parents decided and the Florida Conference agreed for my dad to transfer to Ohio. So he wasn't in the Florida Conference initially. He was already part of Ohio. So the bishops agreed, shake hands, and they transferred to Orlando.

S: This is Bishop Short?

L: He was the bishop at the time yes. 1950. No no. Earlier. Lets see. I was a few months old... I was born in '48. '49 I think they moved or '50. And my dad was appointed as Associate Pastor at First United Methodist Church in Orlando. And the future bishop that succeeded Short was John Branson. He was a senior pastor. And the mission, well they call them secretary, the mission secretary for the Florida Conference. In other words he and his committee were in charge of all the mission work while he was pastor there. But he was elected bishop in '52. No. '51. Anyway, my parents had their own... we believe as missionaries, okay your pastors are called to be pastors and to preach. Missionaries are also called to that specific ministry and my parents felt a strong call to missionary service. And I'm not sure about this but Branson may have had some influence as to where they were going. I think their attitude was 'anywhere you want us to go, Lord.' But there was a big push toward Cuba missions at that time in the early '50s. And there are quite a number of missionaries serving prior to that time and afterwards. So from First Methodist Church, they went up to Nashville for missionary training at the college.

S: Which doesn't exist anymore right?

L: Not as a college. I think as a research center and training center yes. But at that time there were many places missionaries were training. That was one of them. And this is critical to understanding why dad probably wrote those good letters and why they were not colonial like in the early days. At that time, and I can't tell you when, maybe late '40s, there was sort of an awareness that maybe missionaries should be more servants. You know, servant leaders than potentates. The training of missionaries at that time really became one of training servant leaders, training missionaries to serve a limited time, rather than forever, meaning you get rid of your job, you train, you pass it on to native pastors. So that was the training that was emphasized with my parents. And, you know, I'm prejudiced, I believe they had that attitude anyway but the main thing is that it was policy to train missionaries as servant leaders and to get rid of your job as soon as you could. So that's critical. So they go into Cuba, as I said, in January of '51 and what my dad finds... the school campus is there, now not everything was bad about the American missionaries of 1898, 99, and that period. One of the things that was very strategically possible and only later, after the revolution, did the Cuban church realize "My god we have these wonderful structures." They were builders. Not only were they builders, they were strategic. They built major churches all the way from Santiago de Cuba to Pinal del Rio and Camagüey was one of them. And it was anchored, I call them anchor churches, and from those anchor churches they could grow missions and perhaps more simpler chapels and whatnot. But you first establish the major ones and you built service institutions alongside them, like a school, like health clinics, like whatever, whatever the needs were. And you bring in the women missionaries and

the deaconesses. Single women missionaries. And that's a whole other story right there.

S: Well...

L: That's a whole other story. They were the ones with the cajones.

S: Yeah. I've been talking a lot to Carol English. Is that a name you know?

L: No.

S: She was a missionary.

L: Carol?

S: English. She was a missionary. She taught at Buena Vista and she also taught at...

L: How old is she?

S: She's 93? And agricultural school with Ed Neisman.

L: They were the... because the men were married. Yeah all the missionaries were married. They tended to hang out in the cities. The women were out among the very poor starting, not only being a nurse, a doctor, a pastor, you name it, and they are extremely effective sociologists, anthropologists, social workers and I can tell you one story. If you want to, I can send you to Orlando to a retired pastor who grew up in one of those places.

S: That'd be great.

L: And he says, "If it weren't for..." I'll get the name... She literally in those years, she literally transformed that community. And he could list you dozens of professionals who went from being dirt poor and they were so poor they didn't even have a school. They didn't even have a church. Not even Catholic. And over the course of maybe 15/20 years, these women just do incredible things. And in my paper I do mention her. I have a list because what I'm doing is toward the end I want to highlight, and I can't mention everybody, but you know the names of people and what they did briefly. Honor them. Honor their memory. And especially women. So you can get that information there.

S: Who were the other missionaries in Camagüey with your family?

L: There were no other missionaries. We were the only ones.

S: Who were the other Americans who were around you?

L: Not many. I mean they're around. As a child, I only remember meeting the consul of the U.S. who was a friend of my dad and he was a good source of information for my dad on what was really coming on with the Batista government.

S: In Camagüey?

L: In Camagüey.

S: Do you remember his name?

L: I don't remember his name.

S: Not Topping right?

L: No. He was one of the good guys, this guy. In my opinion, the good guys usually encouraged diplomacy. The good guys are the career guys. Not the ones that give the president all this money to be totally worthless or cater only to the very wealthy or sign business deals, which is the kind of ambassadors that Cuba had for a long time. Right up to the end of Batista. I've seen this living in other countries too.

S: Absolutely.

L: Although Costa Rica had some pretty good ones where we lived and I've interviewed some of them, the career guys.

S: It makes a difference.

L: Yeah. They just know. Anyways. Tate. That's it. Tate. Mr. Tate, the consul in Camagüey in the late '50s.

S: If I make another trip to D.C. I'll look him up.

L: I don't know why you need that information.

S: It's part of the project cause there are some career guys, like a guy named Topping, who now that I'm saying it I think he was in Santiago, and they were reporting very different things than the Earl Smiths of the world and the Gardners of the world.

L: You want to see my subversive library? *Legacy of Ashes, Overthrow*. This guy is really cool. He's an army colonel who... *The Limits of Power*. He talks about the endless wars since WWII. Andrew Bacevich. He's interviewed a lot on MSNBC. *Washington Rules*. So that's where I get my red meat. And I'm reading *The President*. The early founders. It's a slow process.

S: No my library looks pretty similar actually. And I...

L: There you go. I'm a leftist. No, I don't consider myself a leftist. I consider myself a truth searcher. Historian. I mean, an amateur historian. You've got to get to the truth.

S: I think when you're in it and you understand causes of things it's hard to think that the answers that we choose are always the right answers and that they're not motivated by something else. Which, I mean, brings me to one of the questions that

is most interesting to me about your father. Did he sense, and both of your parents... I don't want to just speak to your father just cause I've read his letters. What's your mother's name by the way?

L: Katherine.

S: Katherine.

L: Actually her given name is... Oh I'm drawing a blank. Pearl Katherine Killyon Rankin. But she went by Katherine since she was a baby. Her mother was the same name.

S: But did your parents hold resentment to some of the other forces that were working in Cuban society that were American?

L: My parents have always had a strong sense of justice and they could see injustice, you know, a mile away. They didn't voice a lot of opinions to us, although we had a lot of conversations about what was going on around us. A lot around the table or my early visits with my dad. He was an early riser, so was I. So we had some really intimate conversations in those early years. My relationship and my brother's relationship with my parents was very positive. Very loving. Probably more time with my mother but it was not resented, it was just part of the nature of what they were trying to do.

S: What were they trying to do?

L: Basically to reach people for Jesus Christ. The environment was... but not like the right wing. You know what I'm saying. To offer people a loving welcoming god and a Christ who loves them and can attend to their needs through action, not just spiritual. They began from that church, three missions in town. They organized three different mini-churches. And if I'm not mistaken, all three survive today. All three churches. In fact, I was talking to... I'm going to be going to Cuba in February and the team is organizing now, soon. And that's a whole other story. There are so many rabbit trails. When a team from Florida Methodist goes to Cuba, they go to a sister church. Over the last 19 years we've had a covenant with the conference of the Methodist Church of Cuba, of course, now autonomous, independent, and the Florida Conference. And we acknowledge that we've been tied to the hip since 1883. That's part of our heritage together. In 1997, we signed a covenant, both sides, both annual conferences, and we've been organizing caravans or groups of people as teams as churches establish relationships based on the fact of we may have money, they may not have anything but we exchange spirituality and money together. And money may not even be a part of it at all. That's not the colonial way to do it. It's real respect and mutuality with each other. So in February, we're going to go as a team of maybe 12 or 14 people and we're going to be in relationship with the three, maybe four churches in town. The biggest one, 600-700 members. Another one called San Marcos that was built, organized around '54 when my parents were there. And two little missions, one very close to the house where we lived and another one across town. But that's another story. What were we getting at? Oh and another thing you

need to know, when we arrived in '51, there was no sanctuary beside the campus. Have you seen a picture of it?

S: No I haven't.

L: I have to... I won't get it now. When I find it, I have an aerial shot that shows the campus and the church in 1955. Anyhow, there was no church beside the campus but there was a lot there. The original church and the college were founded in 1903 and I got off track but remember what I said about the missionaries building infrastructure? Buildings? Ministries? We're talking about a period of time from 1899 up to about 1930. Most of those buildings were built. And in Camagüey they did build a sanctuary but they didn't build it beside the school. My dad inherited a very weak congregation at the time in an old building that had been there since 1903. Not too well kept. I don't have any memory of it. In 2011, I asked my pastor friend, my host, take me down to where the Methodist church used to be. And it lies... He said it's now a warehouse and it still has the window frames like a church, pointed at the top, you know, and it's by a railroad track and that's about all I know about it. So, immediately they began to organize a building campaign and the sister church for San Pablo was Saint Paul, St. Louisville. First United Methodist St. Paul, Louisville. And the pastor then was... Oh c'mon. It'll come. You can find it. How did you find out about St. Paul, Louisville?

S: Because of your father's papers and the archivist at Drew University was the archivist at St Paul when he organized your father's papers there.

L: Wow. It'll come. Anyway, that relationship... and it's not unique. More recently I've been to other churches where they had relationships. Anyway, they provided basically the money to construct the building next to the school and that really revived the church and it established what the school needed. Being that it's a Christian school, they needed a place to worship or chapel, you know what I'm saying. My dad would lead the worship every day. The students were uniformed. I went to school there. I went from pre-K through sixth grade.

S: Were you and your brother the only...

L: No. There were other Americans there. Not many but there were.

S: From what industry?

L: Farming. Most of the Americans we knew were farmers. A few ranchers.

S: What do you mean farmers?

L: Cattle, fruit trees, our closest relationship was with the Rutz Farm. Anthony Rutz and his wife moved to Cuba in the early '30s and developed this farm from scratch. I don't know how many acres.

S: So it was cattle?

L: Cattle. Milk cattle. Cattle. They had a stand of hardwoods that they protected. I remember that. Lots of citrus and different diversified kinds of citrus. He dug out ponds and put bass in it. Tragically it was all taken away from them.

S: With the revolution?

L: Yeah. But you know what? And I've heard this too many times. After they took it away from them, they don't do a damn thing with it. They trash it. I'm no fan of Fidel. I'll tell you that. And most of the revolution I'm totally against because of what they did to human rights and the education was good, necessary. Healthcare. All of those things were good but under the cloud of Marxist Leninism. But I'm not one of those rabid Miami... I've always had to thread the needle with people. You know, they think you're this or that. I'm sort of... I'm a human rights guy. I don't care if it's right wing or left wing or in the middle. I mostly dealt with rightwing human rights issues, later. Living in Latin America.

S: That's interesting because the way I've been doing this, conducting oral histories and I started in Boston and I've just sort of worked my way down the east coast and next is Miami where I have a grant from the CHC, the Cuban Heritage Collection so I'm going to be conducting some oral histories down there. Everywhere along the way they said, "Be wary."

L: However, the millenials are changing.

S: I'm not interviewing millenials.

L: Well there's a third, maybe two or three generations since. '59, '60. Anyway. Okay where were we?

S: The Rutz family. Did you go to that ranch ever?

L: Oh a lot. For my dad it was heaven because he loved to fish. And pastors need to get away from it and just sort of relax and be themselves and not have to... so we would go as a family and just hang out and stay at the big house with the family.

S: Were there Cuban employees?

L: Yes, a lot of local employees.

S: Did they live on the ranch?

L: They lived on or around the ranch. I don't know the details but I can give you a contact who would. His youngest son, Darryl Rutz. He doesn't live close to here but he's got another brother... you know it's interesting how in the same family you can respond to a catastrophic event like this and you either go right wing or you go left wing... or not left wing. Pragmatic. Darryl is more pragmatic about it. Although he... His brother has filed the ranch under this reclamation thing.

S: Cuba Claims Commission?

L: Yeah. And he's very right wing. I don't talk to him much about it. We don't get into politics.

S: Where does Darryl live?

L: Here we go... Don't tell me. He has two r's. Darryl. Rutz. He lives close to Miami. Penbrook.

S: Oh that's wonderful. I can interview him.

L: Be sure to tell him that we talked.

S: Sure.

L: So he feels okay about it. But he'll talk. And copy me so he knows we're talking together. He can tell you all about the farm. He's got pictures.

S: How old was he? Is he older than you?

L: He is a little bit older than me. I was the baby. They had a beautiful family. Two boys, two girls. Women. Darry, the oldest died. Terry is the next oldest. Helen. Darry's husband was the first... shot down and disappeared in Vietnam. Another story. So anyway, we're very close. Anthony the father, Daryl lost his mother to cancer, and he met one of these single female missionaries and they got married in the social hall of the church in Camagüey.

S: What was her name?

L: Oh you're asking too many questions.

S: Sorry. Darryl will know her name.

L: Darryl will. They called her Cookie. That was her nickname. She did spend some time in the school. Let me rephrase that. There were a few women missionaries who did teach at the school and stayed with the girls in the girl's dormitory. The school was a day school for the locals and a dormitory or a residence for those who came out from further away.

S: Like the Rutes? Would they be living on campus?

L: Yeah on campus in the dormitory. They had a full facility. Dormitories, sports center. It was pretty good. The dormitories for the boys and girls. All that stuff.

S: Did you visit schools like Candler? Why do people choose, why would they choose Pinson? Who was the target audience?

L: Well it's too far away to go to Havana. The students were mainly from that region. That area. And later when the rebel combat got really hot, some of those kids came from that area for safety. Not that... I don't think they were the ones being targeted or anything its just that they needed more stability. I remember my dad inviting a

couple of those students to come. He got scholarships for them. That's a whole other story. Both of them became pastors. One of them is gone. The other one is still around. Yeah. There are a lot of links. I'm giving you a lot of links.

S: How big was the school?

L: I would suspect it was about... well K through high school. Or as they call it there, you had bachelors, they use the word bachillerato for high school. And two different types of high school, one is commercial/business and the other was more humanities and other stuff. So comercio and bachillerato. Anyway, so actually pre-K through high school, 13 years. So I would estimate around 450-500 students.

S: Now your brother would've been in the high school by the time...?

L: Yeah. He was six years old when we arrived in '51. He started in first or second grade I think. He actually... when we left in '51 he ended in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and I ended the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. He was in bachillerato. He was in high school.

S: Where would he have gone to college?

L: Probably the U.S. But that's where it became critical for him because he really needed more English influence. But there's another story to that. There were enough American kids in the area, some of these farmer kids, rancher kids, a few business kids, there was enough to open up a one room school in English. It was about 1955, no about '57. So we had different grades and Martha Tucker, I remember her very well, was the teacher. She was already a veteran. Her story briefly is that way back in the '20s she came to Cuba as a teacher to teach children in an English speaking community called La Gloria in the Camagüey area. Do you know about La Gloria?

S: Sure.

L: You do?

S: *El Ultimo Norte Americano*. A book is written about La Gloria.

L: Yeah. Okay. Well she was one of those teachers that they hired.

S: Martha Tucker.

L: Martha Tucker in the '20s married a citrus farmer because all of those Americans came after the so-called Spanish American War. I like to call it the 'War for Cuban Independence.' And after it was all over, not a single Cuban was around to sign the Treaty of Paris, that whole colonial thing. Anyway, they developed that community, Americans. It slowly, as time passed, Cuban nationals had moved in. Another village near La Gloria is called Sola and I remember as a child, a little child, visiting the Tuckers as a family in their home in Sola. That should be in that book because they're real close. So anyway, from that point on until the time we left, we would spend, I remember spending most of all morning in the Pinson Spanish curriculum

and much of the afternoon in the English speaking school. And Dave of course was part of that too. But when we left, we went back to Florida and then to New York where David graduated. David and I attended a private boys school. Sort of like the English style. The tie and the jacket and all that kind of stuff. Upper school, lower school. And he graduated with so-so grades. His English was poor. Grammar and stuff. I don't think he ever recovered as a doctor because he had the horrible handwriting, as doctors do. Anyway, very smart guy, I mean extremely smart. He did go to Florida Southern College. '62 to '66. Graduated as a pre-med and in the process met his bride, Trish Wirick, who lives in Ohio and they went off to Miami to the brand new University of Miami Medical School in '66. Finished medical school. They went out to San Diego. He was commissioned as a lieutenant in the navy. That paid his way to go specialize in radiology. He finished there. They moved to Orlando and became part of the Radiology group at Orlando Regional Medical Center and that's where he spent the rest of his career. Along the way he contracted MS, Muscular Sclerosis. He was able to function. I mean he was amazing until finally he could not see very well. The MS had messed up his sight and he had to get out of the screening. He could easily misdiagnose and all that. So he got out of that or they told him to get out. But he understood and they retired and moved to Ohio and he contracted a melanoma in the brain and he died in February 2006.

S: It's nice that you guys were so close for so long. That must've been...

L: He was a charmed individual. He could do anything. While in Cuba, as a teenager, he built radio receivers and transmitters from schematics. He'd go out and pick out different pieces and he became very close to these old buzzers that had this old equipment that they could transmit all over the world. These Ham operators. Got to know them and kept talking to them after he got to Florida. Anything he could think of that he wanted to do, he would do it.

S: Was he, I mean, because he was a little bit older than you, was he active at all during the revolution. Did he think about what was going on maybe?

L: No. All of us were not active. We were observers and sympathizers. And this goes into a story that you may or may not know about my dad. Did you ever come across some of his letters announcing his support for the revolution?

S: After it had triumphed. The long ones. Yeah.

L: That's amazing. I hope before this is over you can tell me who to call or contact.

S: I'll email it to you.

L: Cause this is stuff I'd love to have. I have some of it. But anyway, that's amazing that they have this stuff. What I'm getting at here is that he openly acknowledges and supports the revolution in the early days, the first half of 1959. After October when he begins to see that things are going south, he went through a deeply emotional crisis. He had his moods. I would say that he was mildly depressive without taking any medication. I think he had his moodiness and later on, the last

five years of his life he had Parkinson's, which it moved into dementia. In that period, much, much later, it really came out. Not that he was bed ridden or anything, just... he would chew his cud a lot. "Did I do this right? I shouldn't have done this." And he really suffered having made that declaration. They really suffered, my parents. Really suffered leaving Cuba.

S: And you said it was 1960 they left? When in 1960?

L: We left in June. But you don't know the rest of the story.

S: Yeah. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

L: The family left in 1960. Three months later, my brother moves in with my grandparents, my dad's parents in Boca Raton, Florida and I move in with my mother's oldest sister and her husband Perry James, a pastor. And they go back to Cuba around August or September of 1960.

S: Your parents?

L: Yes.

S: Wow.

L: Thinking that somehow... and this is an important thing for me too. I've had therapy over this. Literally. And I don't know about my brother but we both went through... but they go back and they try to support the leadership, I don't know exactly, whatever. But during that time they're there or while they're there, the neighborhood committees to defend the revolution are organized, okay? You know what they are?

S: Vaguely. Yeah.

L: Well basically it was a network of spies and the revolution called them local governments where local residents would decide who is in charge and the committee and so forth. And they would pressure people to go along, get along, otherwise you're an anti-revolutionary. That was the dividing line. Either you're for the revolution or you're against the revolution. And they would make sure... they were the cheerleaders but also the spies. That's another thing. I don't see how anybody could support the revolution that way. Anyway, at some point while my parents were there, some of the national leaders who were friends of theirs say, "You've got to leave. The committees to defend the revolution are putting pressure on us not to associate with Americans." Maybe they use the word "Yankees." So the point being, the government never told my parents or any of the missionaries to leave Cuba. It was more deceptive, more from the locals who were being pressured from the locals to tell the missionaries to leave. Oh and by the way, by mid '60s, 61 missionaries had left. There were that many. Methodists only. Let alone other groups. So that was part of the crisis that my dad went through. And, you know, I used to tell him, "Dad, you've accomplished so much. Why do you keep chewing on

this issue that you haven't done enough? Or I shouldn't have done this or that?" I used to get into arguments with him. I finally said, "You continue doing this and you are disrespecting your own legacy and our family's legacy." I told him. You know? That was a side that nobody saw but my mother defended. He was never abusive. He never lost his temper. He could be gruff and tired. He also had a sleeping disorder that would cause him to go to a night meeting and he would sometimes nod off because he wasn't sleeping enough. What's the term?

S: Narcolepsy?

L: Narcolepsy. Yeah. So those are... that's the other side. My mother defended him. She was a very strong woman and had her opinions and all but she really was basically a grits girl, a girl raised in the south. And she grew up with two other sisters in hyper-segregated south. She grew up in a coal mine and her father and father-in-law lost the mine and my grandmother's home was lost because they used the house as collateral and forced them to move to Mount Dora, Florida. And my mother was raised by one of these, what do you call these strong, southern white women? There was a movie made about them. Steel magnolias. She was one of those steel magnolias. She didn't care what her husband said about having blacks in her house. She brought them into the house and treated them with humanity. That's where my mother learned, in spite of the south, my mother learned receptivity and openness to anybody and whatnot. And my dad just had that as part of his experience. That's where I thought my parents had such success in accepting people as they were and compassion for people who were really poor. We had beggars coming all the time at the house.

S: In Cuba?

L: In Cuba. That was typical. So much so that you couldn't... I mean you could create a whole campus of people like that but my parents, what my mother did was she prepared a very simple, highly nutritious meal whether the people liked it or not, here's some food. She tried not to give them money. I know I'm jumping around so much.

S: No. This is good. These are details.

L: These are anecdotes.

S: What did your mother do at the school?

L: She was a high school teacher, English and commercial arts. Her degree at Florida Southern was office and commercial arts, secretarial and how to manage an office and so on. She had a job in Miami for a while before she got married. She knew the Greg style of shorthand, which you never see anymore. She could do it. She would take notes really fast. She was a homemaker. She wanted to always be home when we got back from school. So she was able to teach her classes and be home and would go with my dad everywhere. Part of that was for protection from any questioning of my dad's behavior with local women. You know, perception is

everything. Innuendo is everything. So my mother would always make house calls with my dad.

S: Sure.

L: Did you know my father was a district superintendent?

S: I think I did know that yeah.

L: Which brings up another story. He was the district superintendent of Camagüey. I don't know. I don't think he was that all the time but in those days- thank god they don't do them anymore- they had what they called quarterly conferences or every three months you had to pull in all the members of the church and make reports and do this and that with the DS President. Not anymore. So because of my dad's nodding off to sleep, my brother learned how to drive a car when he was 11 years old. The meetings were always at night. You had to travel several kilometers, as far as Nuevitas, which was almost at the border with Santa Clara province. Or up to the coast or down south or whatever, and my brother would drive the car so my dad could sleep on these dark roads with nobody.

S: And that was legal there then?

L: No of course not. My mother would drive too. She would drive. We had a 1951 Ford sedan and after... we went on furlough, which is a year break. We went to New York City and my dad earned a masters in Cuban... on the Cubans influenced by the French... like Rousseau and... philosophers but there's that period of the illuminator or something. Anyway, he wrote his masters, which I happen to have right here. But you don't want to get into that.

S: Wow. I may.

L: I have the only copy. Not on the computer but on paper.

S: On the Cuban Enlightenment?

L: The Cuban Enlightenment. Is that something you're interested in?

S: I don't know anything about it.

L: Well I don't know if it would be related or not but if nothing else it tells you how imbedded my dad was in knowing and wanting to know and understand the Cuban philosophy and theology and history of the people of Cuba.

S: What period was this?

L: This was the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

S: 19<sup>th</sup> century. Got it. That's interesting.

L: One of the names I remember is Juan de la Luces Caballero. John of the light and gentlemen. Do you speak Spanish?

S: Yes. And that was in New York?

L: Yes he got his masters at Columbia while we were living there.

S: What did your mother do that year?

L: She was basically a homemaker. Wait a minute. She may have worked at the mission headquarters. I cannot vouch for that.

S: I think there was something on 125<sup>th</sup> street actually.

L: Yes. Actually in the mid '50s the Board of Missions was located somewhere else. They moved to the God Box on 125<sup>th</sup> on Riverside Drive, a new building at the time, owned by the National Council of Churches and the Methodists rented most of the space. Now the mission board has moved to Atlanta. But yeah, well after we left Cuba and we were in New York and David and I went to this McBurney School. McBurney was made famous by JD Salinger, who went there. And he writes in *The Catcher in the Rye* about leaving the goddamn foils of McBurney. That's the only reference about McBurney and we all had to read JD Salinger in school. Excellent school. Very tough for David and me because our curriculum was a year ahead but we survived. Meanwhile my dad was the associate of the mission board of Latin America area. Basically he became that unofficially because his senior became very ill. Then we were reassigned to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Do you know about that?

S: No I don't.

L: Yeah. 1963. By then David was in college, I was starting high school and we went... so the three of us, my parents and I went to Buenos Aires and he was appointed to the historic first Methodist church of Buenos Aires. Better known at that time as La Iglesia Americana. It was one of those international churches that you find all over the world, English speaking churches, protestant churches. And the National Council of Churches assigns pastors all over the world and they take turns with different denominations so neither of the Methodists but my dad was available so boom. Down to Buenos Aires we went, which for me was really great. At the high school there I had a blast.

S: Did they think your accent was funny in Buenos Aires?

L: Yeah.

S: What's your accent these days?

L: You know, people say that I still have a Cuban accent. I can get into Cubanismo but I can also get into some of the porteño. Carlos Gardel. Have you heard of Carlos Gardel? He's the Elvis of tango. He died in 1936 in a plane crash and they still grieve for him. He had a beautiful voice. He did. Still does.

S: '63 was when...

L: We moved to Buenos Aires.

S: What was the government then? Was that...?

L: It was an elected government then. Yeah. We're talking pre-dirty war.

S: But it was post Peron the first time.

L: Post Perón. Perón is in Spain and there's a strong Perónista labor party and they're causing all sorts of rabble rousing and so forth. The economy was very bad. The central government was weak, probably corrupted, and I started in the latter half of my 9<sup>th</sup> grade and I graduated in 1966. On the day after I graduated, the government was overthrown peacefully by a junta. I always remember the name, General Onganía. And from that period on, until... did Perón actually take power? He came back but did he take on power?

S: I think he was there for a year.

L: His second wife was elected.

S: I think he took power and then she replaced him.

L: Okay so he died.

S: Yeah.

L: Supposedly, I think the generals were in charge all the way through, and after she was removed, that's when things got really nasty. La Guerra Sucia.

S: My girlfriend actually studies the dirty war in Chile. That's her project.

L: Well that dirty war too. When we were living in Costa Rica, those issues, well the dirty wars, lets see... the dirty war had ended pretty much with the failure of Lavinas, the generals were discredited. Pinochet was still in power until '90/'91. Those issues were really hot stuff. I mean really... And the work we were doing in grassroots literacy and community development, yeah, we were a very progressive group and you had to be very careful in certain countries like Guatemala and Honduras and Chile and so forth. Different affiliates had to be very careful.

S: There must've been a substantial exile community in Costa Rica at that time right?

L: Yes. In fact, members of our staff there, a couple, were Chilean refugees. They survived because the Canadian ambassador picked them up when that big... you know that turmoil with Allende was cornered in his office, either he committed suicide or they killed him. Whatever, they killed him. In that huge gathering of people they made it to the embassy just in time. Then they shipped out to Canada. He was a Catholic priest and he became a United Church Canada pastor. They came back to be a part of the literacy staff, to develop progressive literature in Costa Rica.

And one of my epiphanies, towards the end of our time in Costa Rica, I flew down to Costa Rica with them because there was a window that opened up for exiles to come back before Pinochet actually left. So I was with them and he told me, "Lets go to this church. A priest, a friend of mine..." And we went to this barrio, very poor barrio and what's his name? One of those wonderful people that actually helps the folk right or develop their own liberation theology in their own context. A real guy. Not one of these desked... Anyone who tells me that you developed a... Anyway. He started the mass by saying, "Anybody that's here from outside, stand up." And they stood up and the place went bananas.

S: They knew who they were?

L: They knew who they were. They greeted them and clapped them on the back. The place just went pandemonium. It was so much energy and the priest kept talking about the women who go to jail to visit their husbands or partners and they get beat on, they get messed up and the kids from the church going out to work with the slum kids sniffing glue. So all these incarnational... you know what I mean by incarnational ministries? That this is real stuff. So when he calls to the host, I'm a protestant minister, I'm not supposed to take communion from the Catholic Church. I don't mind. The Catholic Church doesn't let me. I felt the body and blood of Christ had become real because of all this energy going on. So I say that only to say that that's where my passion is. That's what I live on. The raw meat of experiences. That's what motivates me. That's what wakes me up in the day. Not that I have to go back to it. But here, there's a lot of stuff here. Are we way off?

S: Whatever. This is interesting. Who you are is framed by these experiences.

L: What brought you to, you already said this... but you found my dad's letters in Drew and the archivist is from St Paul, or was...

S: So he was the archivist at that church.

L: So he has letters of correspondence with...

S: With the home mission board but also just letters he's written, probably for publication.

L: Hightower. Dr. Hightower, the pastor at that time. St Paul church in Louisville. And he came down and made a number of visits to, you know, visit our family and see how the project was going. He was a big guy. I remember slick black hair. And one thing he loved more than anything else, and the only place on the island where they produced it was the best coconut ice cream you could eat. The Guarina Company was the company that made all these ice creams and they had local little guys on tricycle bicycles going along with an icebox and for 5 cents you could buy an ice cream stick. That's where I fell in love. But this guy was crazy about it. He would buy whole bunches for everybody. And the ice cream was in the actual shell of the coconut.

S: Wow. That's so cool. They don't do it like that anymore.

L: But anyway.

S: So were there other schools in Camagüey that people would've gone to?

L: Well there were Catholic schools. There were probably other Baptist schools. The Protestants pretty much did a lot of the same kind of things. Of course you had public schools but if people could afford it they would prefer to send their kids to private schools and maybe because there was religion taught there as well.

S: Like why would a family choose Pinson over one of the Catholic schools?

L: There were probably smaller classrooms. Oh the Catholic schools? Okay that's an interesting question because Pinson has all this infrastructure and services and they're open to everybody. You didn't have to be a member or a Methodist or whatever. That was the whole evangelistic strategy of course and the reason why the missionaries were very wise about this, even though they were colonial, was they knew their history, and it's in my paper. Catholicism was introduced by the conquistadors and the monks 500 years ago and it was the classic cross and the sword. And the Indians of course pretty much died off to about ten percent of the population with about 75 to 100 years and when nobody was around to cut the sugarcane that's when the slaves, the Africans were brought in. And the Africans brought their culture, their music, their religions and so forth. And as is the case in all of Latin America, you have sacratism. So my conclusion in that paper, and it's not just me, is that religion, Catholicism was only skin deep and you had mostly women attending mass. The men were not apart of it. They would show up... or a lot of people would say, "Oh yeah, I'm a baptized Catholic." But they wouldn't go to church. Only for weddings, funerals, baptisms, first communions, you know, the basic sacraments, they would show up for that if it was your family and you were the godfather and so forth. That kind of Catholicism was rampant, and maybe even today. Although we know that in Latin America, Catholicism has become a whole lot more open and evangelistic since Vatican II and John Paul II. Although you know John Paul dismantled the ecclesial-based community churches. He appointed conservative bishops in the place of progressives and they dismantled a lot of...

S: Liberation theologists?

L: Oh yeah. Remember, John Paul II was a rabid anti-communist and he didn't want to distinguish... Well but the main thing though is doctrinal. Remember the priest is the one who administers the sacraments, who controls what is taught or not taught in the parish, and when you start organizing lay groups to meet, like little bible study groups. That's all they are basically. And to discuss issues and how do these issues in our community and what does the bible say about that meaning the bible provides an ideal mission of what should be compared to how things are not and so forth and so on. That's where liberation theology emerges.

S: It's interesting. Cause I mean I've never thought of liberation theology outside of a Catholic context and so it's interesting to hear you articulate this.

L: Yes.

S: Because obviously it makes sense that evangelizers would be into these ideas.

L: Well, I cannot tell you exactly. The centers for protestant liberation theology would be the seminary in San Jose, Costa Rica- I don't know the name of it- and in places like Buenos Aires, Argentina and perhaps a couple of schools in Brazil. Oh gosh. It's terrible. Now most of my sources of liberation theology are Catholic, but I know enough to know that the Protestants pretty much went along or contributed and there was good dialogue between Catholics and Protestants. There was a very close relationship between the Protestants and the Catholics. Like the letters in Claudio Bauff one of the originals. One of the finest books on this is Gustavo Gutierrez. He's a Peruvian priest who is one of the originals. *A Theology of Liberation*. "A" that's the key. Not "the." He did his work in the context of the poor in, was it Peru? So, you know, anyway... Are you familiar with Galliano? I love these. I use it all the time. These little quotes. Such irony. Such sarcasm. This is a jewel. I don't think that's published anymore. Well they do publish it.

S: I've read a lot of his poems.

L: I wish I could read him more. And Allende and Marquez and all those folks. Anyway.

S: What type of families would want to send their kids to Pinson over these other schools? I mean you're saying that it's more open.

L: Well a place where you had smaller classrooms, a more spiritual environment.

S: Was there more English?

L: No.

S: So was English taught or emphasized at all at Pinson?

L: Yes. English was taught at the high school level.

S: Okay. That's it.

L: It was all Spanish. I mean, as I was going through the grades, and my brother, it was all Spanish.

S: So your early education was completely Spanish?

L: Until that one room schoolhouse opened up.

S: In '57 or something.

L: Yeah.

S: Wow.

L: Early, early on my mother complimented some of it with English but it wasn't regular.

S: And so the Americans surrounding Camagüey, this was the school that they would choose? There were no other American schools?

L: If you were protestant you would.

S: And they were comfortable sending their children to schools that spoke all Spanish.

L: Yes of course. They already spoke Spanish. Many of these kids were born there. Like I said, the Rutz, they moved to Cuba, you know, back in the '30s.

S: Were there any major sugar mills around you? Like big U.S. owned ones?

L: Yes. Lots of sugar mills. I cannot place them. I do remember a French kid who was enrolled by his father who was the manager of a French owned sugar mill and I remember he had wavy blonde hair. He had his French accent. I remember going and spending a weekend on the sugar mill. I remember visiting the sugar processing on several mills.

S: Wow. What was that like?

L: Sugar and cattle were the main industries of Camagüey. Were. How's your time? Do you want some water?

S: No. I'm good. Unless you do.

L: No. Oh yeah, of course this was made in Cuba. One of the gifts that locals like to give visitors.

S: It's beautiful.

L: Yeah. Hardwoods.

S: I didn't stop in Camagüey but I was near... what's the port city to the north of Holguin?

L: Santiago?

S: No. To the north.

L: Oh. Nicaro.

S: No. I mean yes that is one of them. How far was Holguin from you guys?

L: Oh it was a good... next province.

S: Las Tunas.

L: Las Tunas. So these are the new ones but Holguin was still further. See?

S: Right. Puerto Padre. That's what I was thinking of.

L: Puerto Padre. I remember going there in Nicaro and standing up on a hill and that beautiful bay. And one of the saddest moments I had remembering the Neismans and the agricultural school. The agricultural school was... where was it?

S: Near Preston.

L: Which is not used as a name anymore. Preston is a company name. So it was a company town. Nickel.

S: United Fruit Company.

L: United Fruit. You're right. Anyway, when I was there, they were calling it something else but I went to the old site of the school that had been totally destroyed. And what made me so sad is that, as far as I can tell, there was never any other incident where the government would go in and destroy a church. That was the only one they destroyed. And I remember walking into what remained of the chapel and one wall was like this and no roof and so forth. There were signs on it. How tragic. Here these people were training young people how to help people, you know, basically county agricultural advisors or whatever. They were training them to help the people to be better farmers, and yes theological education. The idea was you offer Christ and you know, spiritual and practical. It's a great concept.

S: Were other denominations pursuing the same? Like the southern Baptists for instance?

L: Yes. The major historic denominations around that 1880 period were the Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopals, Methodists. Those were the major ones.

S: Was there a southern culture in the Methodist church in the '50s?

L: Yes.

S: Still?

L: Yes. Remember I said all of that colonialism comes from the... okay the Methodist and Episcopal Church split in the late 1840s.

S: Over slavery right?

L: Over slavery but the main issue was that some southern bishops had slaves and it was so contentious because John Wesley, the main founder of the Methodist church, fought all his life to eliminate international slavery in the British Empire. And he

even had an ally, a member of parliament, William Willerforce, who as a young man knew Wesley. He was already very old and the last letter that Wesley wrote to Willerforce was "Keep on with the fight." And it took another 50 years or so to finally defeat the pro slavery. Now all that meant was that the empire was no longer trading in slaves but once you have slaves on the ground, they make more slaves right? And Cuba was the one that finally liberated slaves, the latest, the last country in the western hemisphere. They were the very last in the 1880s.

S: Right. Them and Brazil I think yeah.

L: Oh Brazil too? Was it that late?

S: '88 and '86 was...

L: I wonder why.

S: Because they never had a revolution.

L: You're right.

S: I mean, that's my theory.

L: Yeah. You mean Brazil was run by an emperor or something.

S: Yeah and it was the descendent of the king... But yeah those two. Could you tell me a little bit about your house in Camagüey.

L: The house was a brick... I've been there many times then and now. My last visit was 2011. It was a flat topped, which is very common, brick, very solid brick house. Hurricane wouldn't move it. It had a little porch with a front door. It has. It's still there. It's the pastor's house.

S: So it's not the American style houses? Not those big wooden houses.

L: No no no.

S: Did you have help?

L: Hmm?

S: Did you have live in help?

L: Part of the time. When I was very young my mother needed help when I was not in school. But no after that. She was a Spanish woman, Gallega from Galicia. Anyway, you walk in the living room; it had bars in the windows, screens. It had shutters. And then you go down this hallway and on the right side is one bedroom and on the immediate left side was my dad's office. Continue on a little bit further and on the left side is a dining room. Then followed on the right side, one bathroom with a bidet. You know what a bidet is?

S: Yes I do.

L: That's another story. Then the kitchen on the left and originally... Oh and then my brother and I had our bedroom right after on the other side of the bathroom. That was the original floor plan. I forget exactly, I think it was when we got back from New York, an indoor porch I remember with a cement floor. The floor was all tile, marble tile. Then they added a very nice, like a covered porch, another bathroom and a larger bedroom where my parents moved in. Now the house was basically a hotel. People were coming and going all the time so that extra room was really nice. And the porch area, that provided room... that sort of, for a long time, became the social hall of the church. People were always in and out, there was a little more room to put some tables and chairs and so forth and parties and stuff. And then we had a pretty good yard and then this wall that went along this right side as you're looking toward the house. This brick wall that was about, you know when you're little you think it's high as all hell but maybe six feet tall? And my brother got pretty good at knowing how to walk, practically running on that top of that wall.

S: You were acrobats.

L: Then there was a gate into the other property. The church owned that and it was undeveloped for much of the time it was there and then a real social hall was built on that other property and some stone type covering of the floor was put in and a basketball hoop. And I don't know why they didn't pour cement because the basketball would bounce all over the place on this rock. So we had scouts there, we had cub scouts, we had all kinds of, you know...

S: Who ran cub scouts?

L: A local woman and we had a great scoutmaster, my dad's secretary, a male secretary. A great guy who literally came out of the dirt. A real smart guy. He's still around and living in Georgia. He earned a PhD from Gainesville in horticulture.

S: Do you have his number? I'd love to talk to him.

L: He was mostly my dad's secretary but was also a scoutmaster, trained well, and went to one or two jamborees. One in Canada.

S: Where was he from?

L: He was from Camagüey.

S: Oh so he was Cuban.

L: But really, really poor. Lived with his mother, maybe with a sibling or two. I don't know. Let me call him first. I have not had any contact with him in quite a while and I don't want you to make a cold call.

S: No worries. That's cool. Can you tell me about the teaching ratio in terms of Americans to Cubans at the school?

L: There were no American teachers except for maybe my mother.

S: And your father was just the headmaster? He didn't teach?

L: He was not the headmaster. It was all Cuban staff. The administrative staff, Moses Bodae was there when my parents came. He died of cancer and one of his professors, his name was Jose Blanco, who has been gone for awhile. That was the cool thing about it. It was not missionaries running the school.

S: It was Cubans.

L: All Cubans. You've got to realize, we're not talking about... I mean, Cuba then, the middle and upper crust of Cuba was well educated. The ones that Fidel went for were the sugarcane company's hired cutters and they only had work for three months out of the year. The rest of the time they were sharecropping and barely surviving. But then you have a strong middle class, a lot of shop owners, small business owners and so forth, some of them working for American companies. You still have, I don't know, at that time 60 or 80 percent of business, large business owned by American or European companies. The sugarcane, most of the sugar plantations or the sugar... the sugar mills. Let me check with Trudy just a minute.

S: And also do you need to... I'm just looking at your books.

L: What do they say? Books define the person.

S: That's perfect. Thank you.

L: I try to read most of the books I have.

S: This Alexander Hamilton book I've just been recommended a thousand times. That one.

L: These are incredible. I'm listening to the audio books on Washington. Unbelievable.

S: The one that I'd recommend if you're into that kind of thing is Robert Caro, he's a biographer of Linden Johnson and it's some of the best writing I've ever read.

L: Where do you live?

S: Currently I'm sort of a nomad. I have a grant in Miami so I'll be there for two months. I have a storage unit in North Carolina but then my girlfriend got a grant and we'll be in Santiago for a year and half...

L: So what... you want to focus on my dad's writing, so his involvement in the Methodist church of Cuba.

S: That's a part of it.

L: Are you also interested in his involvement in the... I can tell you some stories about his involvement in the Cuban Revolution. I mean, two brief stories that I can remember.

S: Lets do that.

L: Castro took off from Yucatan, you know the story, and landed here in Granma. I've seen it. I've been there. Most were capture to kill and about 20 remained or so. So the insurgency really began then and the way they did it then, they were smart, they befriended the local peasants and they fed them and took care of them and so on. But then, as word got out, especially after Herbert Matthews said that even though Batista said he was dead, he's alive and here he is and so on. But there was a sense of "Wow. Maybe we can do something about this." And I don't know the extent of it but people began to hope that this revolution would be positive and began to support it. I mean, I don't know about the upper crust but certainly the middle class got involved by surreptitiously sending medical supplies, equipment, sometimes weapons. My dad was a member of the Rotary Club of Camagüey and I still have the banner to prove it.

S: Wow.

L: And his membership card.

S: I'm going to take a photo of this. Is that okay?

L: It's probably the only one remaining. You've got to understand, remember these are skin thin Catholics, professional men, well educated. I think that's what my dad wanted to understand. What made them so smart? What was their philosophy? What caused them to do who they were and what they were? And he became very good friends with lots of these men. He was so respected as a protestant minister that he became the chaplain of the club and all these guys are Catholics.

S: Was he the only American in the club?

L: I don't know. Maybe Mr. Tate was. I don't know. I have no idea. And it came to his attention, my dad's attention, that some of these guys were sending supplies to the Castro rebellion groups who were operating mostly in this area. And as they gained strength of course they expanded. He knew that was going on. Now here's another story related to that. There was a family behind the parsonage... if you moved into a very poor neighborhood. There was a woman who was a member of the church, an Afro-Cuban woman. By the way, race is not an issue. In Cuba, race is not an issue.

S: Very different. Yeah.

L: She had several sons and one of them, as they would say, "fue a la loma," a euphemism for "he joined the movement." He took off and at some point in time, I don't know, it had to be after '57 when things are getting critical in late '57, '58, things are really becoming very interesting you know? I don't know if you read

about Che Guevara bringing in the group that split three ways or four ways. Raul went up to here. Fidel stayed here and Che Guevara went to Santa Clara and he took over Santa Clara and the railroad and that was the end of the story. But this guy, this young man, I don't know why but he had to come back to his home at night. He was already a comandante and he needed a place that was safe and he stayed at our house. So they just stayed indoors. I met him, you know, he just stayed indoors. He was a very quiet man. He came in at night. My parents took him in.

S: For how long?

L: I don't remember. Not too long. Maybe three or four nights. He just needed a safe house. Why did he choose our house? Americans were not searched. We owned Cuba remember? I don't mean it that way. I meant that that was the least suspicious place and the safest place he could stay. That was, to me, indicative of the level of commitment for the revolution. That demonstration of support.

S: I also read that he gave a sermon one time kind of bashing the Batista government and then one of his members was picked up by SIM.

L: His secretary.

S: Wow. His secretary. This guy?

L: This guy. Yep. As a threat. It was a threat. They can't touch my dad but we can touch somebody you know. Orlando Perondo. Did I give you his name?

S: No.

L: Oh. Orlando Perondo. We use to call him Theo. He was the nicest guy.

S: What happened to him?

L: Orlando married an American woman, Cynthia. What happened to him was he was held and my dad went down to the police station and got him out. There was nothing... he wasn't hurt or anything but he was just a threat.

S: You said there were two stories. Was that the second story?

L: Yeah. I'm trying to think of another one. Well you know about the letter defending the triumph of the revolution. He never did write a second letter denouncing it? I don't think so.

S: I'm going to look through the archival record. I've just begun going through all the Methodist stuff. I have 41 pages outlining the photographs I've taken so it's going to be a process. As soon as that comes up I will forward it to you.

L: You said you chose my dad because he had a lot more material to describe the Methodist church and the situation?

S: Yeah and I was trying to understand at that time, I wrote a paper a few years back about why different groups, different religious groups reacted differently to the revolution. What I found is people who were more engrained in communities that weren't as cosmopolitan as maybe Havana, oftentimes felt a closer connection with the struggle that was going on.

L: Yeah. The Neismans would be a part of that. The Robinsons. You know the Robinsons?

S: I just...

L: Esther just put on Facebook about their anniversary.

S: Who is Esther?

L: Esther is their daughter.

S: Where does she live?

L: She's a pastor and they're still around.

S: Morel? He's still alive?

L: Yeah. I just saw their picture. Let me go to Facebook. Just a minute.

S: That would be incredible cause he's someone I'm very interested in.

L: Morel? They were at the agricultural school. He was sort of the pastor or the chaplain or what, I don't remember.

S: Well he wrote a really interesting letter in 1960 to the home mission board saying he didn't want to be repositioned because the revolution had made him think about the role of foreign missionaries generally. It's kind of what you were getting at, the colonial aspects of it in an interesting way.

L: Well they were doing a very non-colonial work there. But he still said he felt sensitive about that?

S: He said unless we can offer something unique that national pastors can't offer, we're competing with them for jobs.

L: Exactly. He was absolutely right. Yeah. I'll say this, of all the missionaries I've known, I think with a few exceptions, there's a situation that happens with missionaries all over the world, I can only speak about Methodist missionaries, at some point, they're so embedded in what they're doing that they're radicalized by the realities and the issues and so forth. And it goes beyond politics and you just know it, you're with the people that you're working with. You not only sympathize but you empathize and you join their struggle. If you really go all the way, some stayed in Cuba and joined the revolution. And that happened, I don't know if it was a

Methodist woman but one of the missionaries actually did. So let me see if I can find it.

S: That would be fantastic. Do you know where he's located?

L: I think you'll have to find out from Esther. She's a clergywoman from the United Methodist Church. Morel and Lois Robinson. Okay. The number is 904... Morel and Lois and Esther.

S: And it's okay if I use your name?

L: Sure. I may have the wrong address. She was a co pastor with another friend of mine, Bob Brown. All I have on Esther is that email and if that doesn't work, you may try another one. All pastors have, if you don't know their individual emails you can always go to the domain @flumc.org and the first name is usually an initial and a last name or something like that. She may still be at that address but that's the address of the New Smyrna Beach Coronado United Methodist Church.

S: Where is New Smyrna?

L: New Smyrna is on the Atlantic Coast, just north of Daytona Beach.

S: So that's doable from Miami too.

L: It's about two and a half hours.

S: Oh. Sort of doable.

L: North of Daytona. Beautiful area.

S: Getting back to your father. Did you say there was another story there?

L: No I can't.

S: Well why did he think the revolution was necessary?

L: Because he knew Cuban history as you do. Also my paper, there's another paper I wrote. I did a lecture up in Vermont on another topic, related but totally political one on why there was never democracy in Cuba. Never has been. And the hope for this one of Castros is maybe now there will be a democracy. I substantiate that and you know it too is that the third and final independence war of the Cuban liberation started in 1895 and just when they had, were really, just when they were taking over Santiago de Cuba or somewhere in there, the main explodes, the Americans choose to intervene in the war for their imperialistic reasons. And the Philippines and Guam and so forth. And they co-opt... I shouldn't say that word. They just take over. They just take over the war. When Santiago de Cuba falls and part of the Spanish navy is destroyed in the bay, the Americans forbid General Calista Garcia from doing a victory march in downtown Santiago. And the order was out that nobody should celebrate, no Cuban should celebrate the victory. Then the invasion comes in. Not that... they need the infrastructure, they needed the highway and the

railroad and all that but it was being done for the benefit of the American companies. They needed education and they did that. Health- eradication of yellow fever, etc. etc. But it wasn't independence. It was quasi-independence, as you know. The Platt Amendment, you read about that?

S: Yeah. So you think it was about autonomy and democracy?

L: Right. Nationalism was the main passion so that you have... in my paper, the other one, I'm talking about five interventions. Three of them physical, military, and three or four heavily political influence interventions under unstable, with unstable corrupted Cuban government all the way to Prio Socarras who was corrupt. And then Batista, at the eve of the elections, he takes over and we were there.

S: Do you remember how... I mean you were two. No. Did they talk about it later?

L: If they did they talked about it with each other. I mean, I knew my dad was disaffected... I mean, Batista was bad from the beginning. I mean, you know. Especially when bodies started showing up around Camagüey.

S: Did you ever see the bodies?

L: Nope. But a friend of mine did. They used to execute people down at a ravine where a school bus would go over and they told me one day... And that was just once. They would electrocute, torture, and electrocution of genitals and etc. etc. Extrajudicial killings. That was going on all over the island but especially among the peasants close to where the military activities. They would try to get them to talk where the Castro brothers were, where the group was and so on. I mean, Batista did it all wrong. And, oh I read a, I have it here somewhere. Did you read the one about how Meyer Lansky got involved in the casinos.

S: TJ English was the author. *Havana Nocturne*?

L: Yeah. And how they would deliver a box or something of the winnings every night. So we had that kind of corruption, of course, and I think that's where Tate was supplying my dad with the inner workings of what he would hear while at the same time he would tell him how the ambassador didn't have a clue. He only stayed around Havana, didn't know what was going on. In fact, he was surprised, the ambassador was surprised when Batista left. That's how removed the state department was and how blinded he was about anti-communism. He is our SOB. Like El Salvador, like Iran contra, like on and on and on. I presume he was very upset so when this opportunity emerges with the hope for the revolution, of course. And 95 percent of the Cubans agreed with my dad and my mother. We used to get in the car when we heard that *Radio Rebelde* was transmitting. You heard about that?

S: Yeah.

L: And I don't know if it was that there was a lack of radio at the house or somebody might listen but we would get in the car and drive around town listening to the news

and it was more accurate than what we were getting locally. But we also had a shortwave anyway and we listened to *Voice of America*.

S: All four of you would pile in?

L: Yeah. Yeah. My brother and I were very knowledgeable about what was going on and I'll tell you this story. My brother had a lot of good friends. I had a few. I had one good friend, his name was Eduardo and I've seen him. I've been able to go see him.

S: He's in Cuba still?

L: Yeah. And Eduardo's older brother was David's friend also. His name was Carlos. Anyway, I first heard about the triumph of the revolution when I got up early, as I usually did and went over to see a friend at his more humble home. A bohio. Do you know what a bohio is?

S: Yeah.

L: In town. And as I approached the open window of this frame house, I could hear *Radio Reloj* a morning radio program. Have you heard of this?

S: I have.

L: You've... It's amazing. You've read all that.

S: You know, it's been my job for five years.

L: And next thing I hear is band music, you know, John Philip Souza or whatever, "The revolution is victorious. Batista has fled." Blah blah blah blah. This is January 1, 1959. And I can't describe to you how I personally reacted to that but all it was was a surge of euphoria. We're foreigners. We're only observers. We're not Cubans but you reach a sense of embeddedness that you begin to identify with the emotions of the Cuban people. So that surge of joy was part of my being a part of this thing. I'm only 11 years old. So the next day my brother and his friends decided to go downtown. They had heard something about people with baseball bats hitting parking meters. "Lets go down and see what's going on." Now this is before Castro made his victory loop around the island. This is before that. That would come later. So I followed along and I saw men, there was no violence but there were a lot of people moving around and excited and whatnot. Rumors said or whatever and men with baseball bats smacking these parking meters. I said, "Why were they hitting these parking meters?" Well to get the coins of course but it was part of the corruption and the next thing I see are out of gambling parlors, people bringing out gambling equipment like, what do you call it? Roulette wheels and so forth. Breaking them up and lighting them afire in the park.

S: So there was gambling in Camagüey?

L: Oh my gosh yes.

S: For tourists or for who?

L: Well the tourists would go to the cabarets and the bars, mostly in Havana or maybe in Santiago or they would come with their yachts or whatever. The filthy rich. You know, Frank Sinatra, all the actors and actresses of that period would do gigs in the Hotel Nacional. Did you go by there?

S: I did.

L: Did you see the pictures on the wall?

S: I did.

L: Well there you go.

S: Did you ever go to Havana?

L: A few times. But that leads into another story. I hated going to Havana.

S: Why?

L: You know why? And I stayed with friends but I hated to see drunk Americans making fools of themselves and treating the Cuban people badly. I hated going to Havana. I told my mother I didn't want to go to Havana. That's why the ugly American is singed in my brain. In fact, I wrote in my blog, I wrote a note about you know those Olympian swimmers? I framed it around didn't they know what they were doing? Of course not. They were just boys from the local hometown in the U.S. But they have insulted Brazil, insulted the people of Brazil, they've insulted our country, they've insulted the I.O.C. and that's why we put a moniker on them and call them ugly Americans. And what kind of training do they get before they go to the Olympics. You know? Just boys will be boys.

S: And one of them is 32.

L: Anyway.

S: Right. Did you ever identify with anything but American?

L: Myself? That's a good question. Up to that point, I knew that I was born in the United States. I was told that I was born in Ohio. But I identified myself more as Cuban.

S: When did that change?

L: It changed when towards the end of that time, one of my friends, after all of us were hearing propaganda about yankees and "yankee go home" and "you're not part of the revolution," one of my friends called me a yankee and that was an insult. I knew I wasn't a Cuban. That was an insult. But blonde, blonde, blonde, white blonde hair, white skin, very susceptible to the Cuban sun. See? And the day that we left was a very difficult time. The new pastor and family that were coming in, came the day

we were going to fly out and my dad handed him the keys to the car. All my mother's china and all my dad's books, which he told the seminary to take, you know, use. Those aren't the real issues. The emotional leaving, that's the real issues. I had my bike. David had a girlfriend. Suddenly we have to leave. We get on the plane, each of us carrying a suitcase. My dad with \$100 and my mother rolled up two portraits of me and my brother made by a French artist there, watercolor. She rolled them up, put them in the bag. Course our luggage had to be checked cause we weren't allowed to take any state property from Cuba and the young guard with a rifle argued with my mother. "These are state property." "No these are my sons' pictures." They're not art. So she won the argument and I have mine here. I think Trish, my brother's widow, has David's. Anyway, we got on the plane and then I think I went through a period of depression.

S: At the age of 12.

L: Yeah. Not I think, I know I did. Sort of a slow burning depression and anger. And then when my parents decided to go back, I guess I was just numb. And unfortunately my dad was gone when one day my brother and I went to go see my mother where she lived over here. And I don't know how the subject came up but one of us asked, "Mother, why did you decide to go to Cuba after we got out?" "Oh because we wanted to do the work..." And so forth and so on and the cork just unstopped and the rage just came out. "Didn't you realize what you were doing? You were leaving us behind. You were separating us. You were going to do something and you knew it was over. It's over." And I think my dad was the driver of that decision because he was still trying to deal with his guilt about not having done enough. I don't know if you want to tell all that stuff but I'm trusting that you will know how to handle that. I mean this is deep stuff. I was diagnosed bipolar in '92 and I've been in therapy ever since and medication. So I've worked on all this stuff and I'm fine, I mean, I've dealt with it but it took a while.

S: Yeah. The stories of the scars left from this...

L: A lot of missionary kids go through it. Many of them completely abandon, I've been involved and I became a minister for god's sake, but many of them abandon the church or they have a hatred for this or that or they hate their parents or whatever. I think we came off pretty good but there is a lot of shit that you have to get rid of. And I don't blame my parents. I don't even blame them for going back. It's just that there's that... I remember telling my mother, "You mean you cared more about the mission than your children." And it was obviously cathartic because she was already starting to have a little Alzheimer's and you know, I don't think it really... So anyway those... and I'll say this, that I would never ever trade my life for any other, for the adventures, the experience, the people. Today I live connected with Cuba. I have friends in Colombia, Central America, the Costa Rica experience. I have people all over the world now and you can Facebook on. In other words, the best gift my parents gave me was a global experience and perspective. We just returned from Latvia, a whole new country, right on the edge of Russia and that stuff. In fact, I have some disconnect living here. So anyway. That's all my... I've already given you the

whole nine yards. I hope you don't... I don't want you to put all that stuff in there. I'm trusting you that I'm giving you some depth to what you want to say about my dad.

S: Your personal stuff will not be in there at all. What did I miss? What else should I have asked?

L: I guess I go back to the initial question. You say that you're focusing on my dad. What is the main theme? The interaction of the Methodist church in Cuba?

S: I mean its part of a larger project that's looking at Americans in Cuba generally.

L: And you're looking at company owners? A variety of people of Americans and why they're in Cuba?

S: So have you heard of Ruston Academy?

L: The Ruston...

S: Ruston Academy. It was the big American school in Havana.

L: No. Like I said I knew very... I only really got to know Havana better in recent years as an adult.

S: Sure. What Havana has offered me... So I got in contact with the son of the director of the school and he has this whole list of every alumni and where they live. So most of my interviews have been conducted with the children of United Fruit Company employees, the children of General Electric employees, the children of whatever. So I'm trying to paint this picture in all of its complexity because you can look at this and say this is imperialism, this is whatever. But it is so much deeper and more complex than that and there are many faces of U.S. influence and I think the Methodist... this has really allowed me a counter narrative that complicates the role of some of these other groups and so...

L: The Methodists were, and not all churches were this way, but from my prejudiced point of view, beginning with the missionaries of the late '40s and early '50s, the Morel Robinsons, the Knoxes, I don't know if you knew them? Lloyd and Edith Knox. The whole gamut of that generation. Much more grassroots oriented, much more progressive in their theology. I don't know about the southern Baptists but the northern Baptists, you know the situation there. You have two different Baptist conventions operating. And I've been by in Havana, there's a church I stayed a number of times. It's a Methodist church that began as the University church in Vedado. If you go around the block, I remember seeing a big yellow U.S. school bus, the Martin Luther King Center. Isn't that promoted by the Northern Baptists? They're more progressive.

S: They split up the island. That's what the Baptists did. What the Methodists did is the southern Methodists got Cuba, the northern Methodists got Puerto Rico.

L: Right. Which was great. It just happens to be the best thing that's happened for expansion because today since when I first started going to Cuba there had been a series of pretty good bishops but then Ricardo Perada was elected who has a much more charismatic experience and basically the Methodist church in Cuba has a charismatic expression. Not pentacostal, which is different. They have very Wesleyan and they believe they're trying to uncover the original Wesleyan activity and they are. But Perada can be a little bit... not a little bit, authoritarian. You don't talk about homosexuality. You don't deal with those issues. They have their own discipline and I respect them but because of our covenant we let our churches be who they are and then we interlay as local church, local church. And that's the way it's been for 19 years and it's going very well. But anyway, they're growing like crazy. Two percent per year and their membership process is early Christian church. It takes a year to make a member. And the reason they say is because we're bringing these people out of Santeria, out of quasi-Catholicism and so forth and we almost have to remake the person through the process of learning and experiencing and so forth. By the time they become baptized and a member, they're already embedded in a ministry of their calling, whatever in music or hospitality or sending on a mission or whatever. And not just a pew sitter. They are an active disciple. And I say, "wow, I wish we could have that here." The demands of being a member but then again the context is, church is under totalitarianism. If they're just given a little inch they grow like crazy. The communist system, at first from '60 to '67 a number of the pastors... Oh what's his name in Orlando. He's retired. He's a veteran of... Oh c'mon.

S: The guy who you gave me the number?

L: No. I didn't get to that point. It's not Armando Rodriguez?

S: No. He's younger but he grew up in Cuba.

L: Oh. He was raised in that little town that I told you about that was just dirt poor. Omaha.

S: Omaha yeah.

L: Omaha.

S: Yeah I know I know.

L: An American from Omaha came... You've been there?

S: When I was in Las Tunas. It's right near Las Tunas.

L: Who took you to Omaha?

S: They didn't take me there. I didn't go there. But I went... but it was like 20 miles from where I was.

L: When I think about it why does it go away? Well I'm 68 that's why it happens. Wait until you get there. I'll remember it.

S: We're going to have to continue an email correspondence because I'm very excited to hear about these articles you've written. If you could send me some...

L: I'll send you both. Yeah.

S: This has been so helpful. And your father and mother in ways that I'm just beginning to learn about have been...