
THE REVEREND RICHARD VAN WELY
RECTOR OF ST. BARNABAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Greenwich, Connecticut
1976—2002
An Oral History

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Richard Van Wely

The reader should keep in mind that this oral history interview represents the recollections and point of view of one person only. To verify historical facts, the information should be checked with other sources.

The material has been edited to improve narrative flow and to make it more readable than the verbatim transcripts, but the words are the narrator's own and have not been changed. This edition combines two interviews. Portions of the interviews have been rearranged to improve continuity.

The list of parishioners included in "In the Company of Saints" was compiled by the editor, who regrets any omissions or inaccuracies and requests that they be brought to her attention.

Mary Ellen LeBien, editor

Richard Francis Van Wely was born in Albany, New York, on August 15, 1936, the younger child of Richard C. and Myrtle V. Van Wely. He grew up in Albany and with the exception of two years spent at St. Thomas Choir School in New York City, attended local schools through high school. He studied forestry at Paul Smith's College for one year. He then transferred to Siena College in Albany, where he received a BA degree in Sociology. While attending Siena College, he was introduced to his future wife, Judith Van Patten. They were married in 1957 at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Albany, New York.

Following his graduation from Siena College, he was accepted as a postulant for Holy Orders in the Episcopal Diocese of Albany and enrolled in 1960 at Berkeley Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut, where he moved with his wife and daughter, Lori. A second daughter, Janet, was born in 1961 while he was in seminary. He received an STB, Bachelor of Sacred Theology, from Berkeley Divinity School in 1962 and later that year was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in the Diocese of Albany. He later studied biomedical ethics at Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, where he received a Master of Sacred Theology in 1972.

Before being called to St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, he served as curate at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Albany, New York, as rector of Grace Church in Canton, New York, and concurrently as vicar of Zion Episcopal Church in North Branford, Connecticut, and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Northford, Connecticut. His children Christian and Gayle were born during his service at the St. Andrew's Church in Albany. In 1976 he accepted a call to St. Barnabas Church, moving his family to Greenwich and the rectory on the "spiritual hilltop."

He was interviewed on February 25 and 27, 2014, by Mary Ellen LeBien, a longtime member of St. Barnabas Church and a past chairman of the Greenwich Library Oral History Project. The interviews took place at her home in Greenwich, Connecticut.

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MEL: Richard, I've looked forward to this interview for a long time. Been postponed because of the weather, but thank you very much.

RVW: Well, thank you very much for even suggesting such an unexpected project. It will be fun, with wonderful memories. I really appreciate your getting this together for us.

MEL: Well, I am personally delighted and also delighted that we will have a record I hope to share with the church. Before we talk about your time at St. Barnabas, I would like to ask some questions about you. Before you came to St. Barnabas, what made you, formed you? Where were you born and raised?

RVW: Albany, New York. I was born in 1936. We were—all the family were good churchgoers.

MEL: And in the Episcopal Church?

RVW: Yes.

MEL: By that you mean fairly regular in attendance?

RVW: Well, my mother was on the Altar Guild, and I can remember walking up the church aisle in a pageant, the Christmas pageant, bringing up the lamb. And that was in the very early years.

MEL: And do you have brothers and sisters?

RVW: I have one sister. She's three years older than I am.

MEL: Were your parents and sister musical?

RVW: My sister could play piano, and we were good singers, I think.

MEL: Now, I know that you attended the Saint Thomas Choir School in New York City.

RVW: Right.

MEL: And there must be some reasons that led up to your going.

RVW: When I was eight years old, my father was killed in action in Germany, World War II, and so it was just the three of us, with my mother and sister. There was some suggestion about my going to an all-boys school. That suggestion was developed by some very helpful people. Apparently my singing voice was good enough, and the organist and choir master at the St. Thomas Choir School was from Albany. He helped open the doors to get me there. A distant cousin was already at the school in his fourth term. He was from Carmel, New York, and together we would take the train from the city to his home when we had a break from school.

MEL: But you were nine when you went?

RVW: I was ten.

MEL: Ten when you went. Now, I'm thinking of my family, and ten is fairly young to leave home. And it's a boarding school, right?

RVW: Right.

MEL: And so you went down, and what was that like in the middle of New York City? Where did you live? Where did you stay? And what was life like?

RVW: It was really a nice boarding school. The faculty were caring, kind, and fun, but, of course, there were guiding rules that needed to be kept or else we would get demerits. That meant extra homework and missing the entertainment. The dorms looked like barracks with cots that we would have to make up tight and smooth and with our trunks slid underneath. We had the Sunday uniforms with military caps, Eton collars, and bows. The school was at 123 West Fifty-fifth Street, and so we would have to walk to Fifty-third Street at Fifth Avenue, where the church is.

MEL: Did you all process?

RVW: Oh, yes.

MEL: You had to walk two by two?

RVW: We marched.

MEL: You marched!

RVW: Going and coming. We'd be on the march so many times going over to Central Park and ...

MEL: Oh, yes. You're not far from Central Park.

RVW: Yes, they kept us going in sports and games, and many choir rehearsals.

MEL: Now, I have heard them sing, the men's and the boys' choir, and they sing many things that are in other languages—Latin or French or other languages. How did they teach you the proper pronunciation for all of those other languages?

RVW: I don't remember a lot of that, but they were taught at the rehearsals as needed.

In the church I was becoming an "end man" in the front choir stall, right next to the steps going up to the altar, and to this day when we're in New York City Judy and I go to the nine o'clock service, and there aren't too many people there at that time, so people are invited to sit in the choir stalls. We always sit right there where I sat exactly so many years ago to sing.

MEL: How very special.

RVW: They were two wonderful years at St. Thomas.

MEL: Well, you obviously had a very special experience at the school.

RVW: Back to school. In junior and senior high school there were always choirs, and often the musical programs included religious songs. During that time I joined other church choirs, also. And so it never stopped. There was always that connection. And in the senior high school there was something else—

MEL: And this is back in Albany?

RVW: This is back still in Albany, yes. It was called a speech choir.

MEL: I've never heard of such a thing.

RVW: The drama teacher gave me one of the leads in a play, and thoughtfully she suggested that I join the speech choir.

MEL: Well, wait a minute. The woman who headed up the drama department also taught the speech choir?

RVW: She had the speech choir, and she directed it very well.

MEL: What does a speech choir do?

RVW: The choir was a group of over thirty students from the upper classes with a mix of boys and girls. The teacher would direct our speaking in cadence of the words in poetry for example.

MEL: In unison?

RVW: In unison. All of us. Sometimes there would be a solo part to speak, almost like imitating a character in a play or someone real. I don't remember most of the pieces for the choir, but they were classic and beautiful. One of the solo parts that I had was something that—and I don't know where it had come from—but it was Abe Lincoln speaking, supposedly, and I am standing there as Lincoln, and I should have had his big hat on for more height.

MEL: Delivering the Gettysburg Address?

RVW: No, it was more like his life.

MEL: Oh, maybe from Carl Sandburg.

RVW: More about the women in his life, and when I saw that movie about Lincoln just a couple of years ago, it brought back a nice memory.

MEL: How special.

RVW: And I think there was no school that had that extra specialty.

MEL: I've never heard of such a thing.

RVW: Many people have said that when asked.

MEL: Now, as you're a senior you must have been thinking about college.

RVW: Right.

MEL: And where did your thoughts take you?

RVW: Well, the guidance counsellor said it's going to be two for you.

MEL: Two?

RVW: Two things I think you're going to be doing. And she said, I know you want to be a forester.

MEL: How did she know you wanted to be a forester?

RVW: Well, the guidance counsellor was really a nice person, and she would ask the students what they were looking towards. And she said, or you're going to be a minister. And so when the time came, because I used to hunt a lot and if not hunting I'd be taking a hike through the woods. We at some point lived in an area where there were a lot of woods, and probably I was just following what my father used to do when I was a boy and things that I remembered about him. So I heard of this place up near Saranac Lake, and that was Paul Smith's. And it was mostly a two-year school. It was good for hotel management and forestry, and there were a few who signed up for liberal arts, but most of us were either in forestry or the hotel program.

My idea was to really get into forestry, being up in Saranac Lake and up in the mountains. A lot of the teaching was going outdoors in the woods and logging areas as well as doing the regular classes of keeping up the English and Mathematics. And so the idea, from my point, was taking the two years at Paul Smith's and then get two more years by transferring to Syracuse, which also had a good forestry program. And so I hope I don't take too long about this, but—

MEL: No, I find this fascinating.

RVW: —it was an enjoyable and interesting first college year. There were only around two hundred and fifty students, perhaps only two girls on the campus.

MEL: Two girls, wait a minute, at Paul Smith's?

RVW: Yes.

MEL: Oh. Dare I ask if one of them was Judy?

RVW: No.

MEL: (laughs)

RVW: No, we avoided all that.

MEL: Two girls and ... All right, an unusual student body.

RVW: But we had to go off the campus to go into Saranac Lake. All the while I was there, I remember thumbing my way down from Paul Smith's to hitchhike a car that was going down on a Sunday morning.

MEL: To where?

RVW: An Episcopal church in Saranac Lake, St. Luke's. It was founded in 1878, and it is still doing well. So it's still hanging on there.

MEL: It's still hanging on, that connection you mentioned.

RVW: Moving on, it was springtime and practically everybody was leaving the campus, but way up there it's cold and sometimes it's snowing—sort of like what we're experiencing now—and I think it must have been around early May. I don't really know exactly, but it was still pretty cool. I was by myself on some trails that I knew well, and I wore my black and red checkered hunting jacket and carried my Winchester 30-30, not that I expected to shoot anything at that point because hunting was out of season. I guess it was a habit while hiking solo.

It was a nice brisk day, and as I was coming down from the hills it started to snow a little bit. The snowflakes were about the size of a quarter. There was no noise. There was no breeze. I stopped. It was so quiet that I could hear a flake touch my sleeve. I stopped for a minute and I said to myself, what are you doing? What are you—is this what you really want to do? And it's like a voice from heaven, you see, not really spoken, but what was going through my mind. And I said to myself, life is other people. And I'm thinking, why would I be wanting a—I mean, rangers can see a lot of folks, but also those towers that you'd be in—

MEL: You could spend some lonely times in lookout towers.

RVW: Yes. I only stayed the one year at Paul Smith's. And I couldn't afford another boarding school, so I had to go to one where I could easily travel from home. And that was Siena.

MEL: So Siena fit that bill.

RVW: That was in forestry because what I decided to do when I thought about people, what I wanted to do was pre-med. And that's what I did. I went to Siena.

MEL: I've been online to look at Siena College. They have a pre-med program they're very proud of—strong liberal arts program, includes pre-med.

RVW: So I decided to go there for that, and I was ... Go ahead.

MEL: So you went to Siena. And did you know at that time that it was a Franciscan—

RVW: Oh yes. You would see it right from the beginning because before classes we would stand and say a brief prayer, and at the end.

MEL: At the end of each class, too?

RVW: Yes, and it was easy to share with everyone. The Franciscan Fathers were a strong, enjoyable faculty, but, of course, Siena couldn't accept all my credits from forestry, so I lost some time forward. However, something different was coming again. I think it may have been about the second year at Siena. Our bishop of Albany had this great dinner gathering called the Bishop's Men.

MEL: Now, you're talking about the Episcopal bishop and his men?

RVW: Yes, the Episcopal bishop, the Rt. Rev. Frederick Barry. I was in a choir at one of the big churches, and some of us went to hear the bishop talk about the ministry of the laymen of the diocese. The bishop's speech powerfully covered positive ways to serve. It hit me so hard with what he was saying, and I thought to myself, gosh, this does sound pretty good. What do I want to do now? Do I want to change my college years? And so I stopped the pre-med, and because I had so many nature and scientific credits, I had to switch to sociology for more liberal arts courses. I wanted to be a postulant. So sociology was the major that I could jump into, what I needed. I had to go to the bishop to see if I could become a postulant.

I can remember working hard in the Siena library, and I would spend a lot of time there. One time one of the priests came up to me and said, hi, how're you doing? And I said, I'm doing fine. He said, you look like you're trying to get out of here in three years or what. You're really working at it. And I said, well,

yeah, something like that. And he looked at me and said, you're not a Roman Catholic are you? I said, no. He said, well what are you? I said, I'm an Episcopalian. He said, really? Well, when you leave here I hope you will even be a better Episcopalian.

MEL: My goodness.

RVW: That's what I said, too. He gave me a pat on the back. I thought, wow, something's developing here.

MEL: And so from your graduating year at Siena you must have already been making applications to seminary? Yes?

RVW: Yes. I had to get the postulant first, and with that I went to the cathedral and learned a little bit more about acolyting instead of just singing in a choir. And there was a wonderful priest at the cathedral who was so helpful and also started teaching me Greek of the New Testament.

Also, in order to become a postulant, one would have to have a physical and a lot of tests with a psychiatrist. So I got over those hurdles—all okay. And so it was beginning to add up. This must have been near the end of my junior year, but I needed to catch up with extra courses to finish up.

But during this time something was developing that was totally unexpected. A friend of mine said, hey, you want to go on a double date? And I said, well sure. Why not? And so he said, you know the girl that I'm with is a girlfriend of the girl you have been dating sometimes. So we went, and his date was someone who was from our high school, but I didn't pay any attention to her. She didn't pay any attention to me. We were on different tracks. She was a great cheerleader, and so I didn't pay any attention. She was a year behind me. She turned out to be Judy.

MEL: So enter Judy!

RVW: We had had dinner in a place where there was a dance band, in the local mountains, and danced the night away. Then from there was, can I call you

sometime? And that's how we connected. And it turned out she went to the same church when I was a kid, she was in the same pageants.

MEL: But neither of you had paid any attention to the other?

RVW: Nope. Didn't know then.

MEL: Only much later when you were dating did you put all this together? Oh, you were there, too?

RVW: I didn't remember her and vice versa. It turned out that we were cradle Episcopalians.

MEL: As am I.

RVW: Right from the beginning.

MEL: So this is concurrent with your interest in becoming a postulant? And you've already made overtures to the bishop. You've been through tests. What else has to happen? Does a church have to sponsor you?

RVW: Yes, right, from their diocese. There would be discussions with the bishop about what would be the better seminary for me because by then Judy and I were married.

MEL: So she was very much a participant in your decision to continue seeking to become a postulant.

RVW: Right. And so I had to work with that. I went to Berkeley in New Haven and talked to some of the professors, and they would ask, "And why do you want to be here?" And saying, you know, is there anything else that you would like to do possibly in your life? One said, because if you do, you should do it. Not exactly in those words but saying to do this you have to really want to do it, no matter what. You have to have a passion for it. And why. Is there anything else that you want to do besides this? And that's when I told him, by now, no. This is what I want to do. He said, okay. They went back to the bishop and said, yes, come on board.

MEL: And so that fall you enrolled at Berkeley? At Yale?

RVW: Berkeley. The Berkeley Divinity School at that time.

MEL: And Judy was part of this?

RVW: Always, from the beginning.

MEL: You both had to be committed to do what you wanted.

RVW: Yes. She had a job at Yale, and I had a job at Berkeley cleaning the offices and the bathrooms, pruning the hedges, and other outdoor work. And so we lived there during the summertime, also, in a little space.

MEL: To become a priest, be it a woman or a man, involves the spouse very much in the process. A spouse has to be very supportive and bound up in the commitment that the husband or the wife has for becoming a priest.

RVW: Right. And she was all with it, and I say to myself if it wasn't for her, I don't know where I would be.

MEL: You would be maybe in one of the other places—when you were asked, is there anything else you would like to do?

RVW: Perhaps. But I would like to add something about our times at Berkeley by way of a recent response to a questionnaire about my memories of Berkeley. It was part of a celebration at Berkeley for the fifty years of priesthood with our class seminarians. In *My Memories of Berkeley* I noted: “Berkeley was our family home during all seasons of the years. Our basement apartment was across the narrow walkway to the broad window in the Dean’s office, and some members of the faculty lived on the floors above us. They kindly accepted our presence. One of them baptized our second daughter. Best of all were the numerous drop-ins from fellow seminarians. Good times, good friends, even good babysitters.

“Stirring up Berkeley reflections causes a chain reaction in a lot of directions, certainly too many to offer here even in the shortest forms. We are happy that the positive directions automatically surface quickly, and there is no more room at the top. So a collective memory should suffice.

“We remember the Berkeley experience as a very important growing period for our family life and for the team effort of two cradle Episcopalians to identify and fulfill a vocation to share for the rest of our lives. From every side—faculty,

maintenance, and administrative connections, classmates, the rector, his family and congregation in Waterbury for two years on our Sunday job, and the grocer a couple blocks away—in countless ways they all were part of helping us to think it through, encouraging, building confidence, and guiding with new levels of understanding. Indelible, grateful memories.”

MEL: Those are wonderful recollections. It sounds corny, perhaps presumptuous, for me, a layperson, to say such events and happenings are made in heaven, but there is much that seems to be guiding you in forming your life, in forming your lives together.

RVW: Yes. You’re right about a lot of that because there’d be these times when there would be somebody out there—those few people in your lives you could never forget—and they led you along the way.

MEL: You received two degrees. Am I correct?

RVW: Well, there are three if you count my BA degree at Siena College. Then I went straight to Berkeley Divinity School in New Haven for three years, studying for the STB degree, Bachelor of Sacred Theology. Originally, I was from the Diocese of Albany, New York, and after Berkeley we went to a parish in Albany, where I served as the curate. Our next parish was in Canton, New York, and my first position as rector. The ministry there included some chaplaincy for Episcopal students and faculty at St. Lawrence University and SUNY Canton ATC [Agriculture Technical College]. That experience was a factor in my growing interest for more study. Then, after seven years, in ’69, we moved back to Connecticut to pursue an STM degree with Berkeley at Yale Divinity School that focused mainly on biomedical ethics. Thankfully, the Rt. Rev. J. Warren Hutchens, bishop of Connecticut, was a great help with that move, and also with our move to St. Barnabas.

MEL: And your children arrived while you were at seminary?

RVW: The first two were with us the first time in Berkeley Divinity, and two more children were born during my first position as the curate at that beautiful church

in Albany that I mentioned earlier. The rector went away for a year on sabbatical, and he turned it all over to me. I learned a lot.

MEL: Lori, your daughter Lori, I know very well.

RVW: She's the first.

MEL: And I have met Janet. I don't know her as I know Lori, but tell me the names of all of your children.

RVW: There's Lori. There's Janet.

MEL: And she was second?

RVW: Yes. And Chris. We call him Chris, but he's Christian. And Gayle.

MEL: And Gayle. So you came to St. Barnabas as a family of six.

RVW: Right.

MEL: Tell me about how you came to be called to be the rector of St. Barnabas.

RVW: Well, as you know, I was serving as vicar in two churches, but the main one was Zion Church in North Branford. My office and our home were there.

MEL: I remember from *The Story of St. Barnabas* that you had gone on a sabbatical?

RVW: That's right. In '75.

MEL: And came back to find an envelope.

RVW: That's exactly right. The big envelope was among the stack of mail in my office. It had been sitting there a long time because we were in California for about two months.

MEL: And the envelope was from St. Barnabas Church, and you hadn't answered it in two months. (laughs)

RVW: Oh, my gosh, I said. Well, gee, that looks interesting. I don't know where Greenwich is, but oh, gosh, lying there all that time. They must be at the end of choosing candidates.

MEL: They must have completed their final list.

RVW: Yes. So I said, oh, what the heck. I'll send it in and see where it's going. I think it was in October when I got a notice from the calling committee that a few members were coming to visit us at Zion one Sunday, and then because I was

going the next Sunday for the ten o'clock service other members went to St. Andrew's. A different group. There might have been one of them that was coming twice. And after that they invited me to come down to meet the rest of the members.

MEL: To St. Barnabas?

RVW: To St. Barnabas. But I had a hard time finding—

MEL: Well, everybody has a hard time finding St. Barnabas Church.

RVW: I got to Greenwich, but I had to ask where the heck am I going? Someone said you have a long way to go yet, just keep following Lake Avenue. And I was late, but they were very kind about that and understood that sometimes if you get off 95 there, you ...

MEL: It is confusing.

RVW: And as I had mentioned in *The Story of St. Barnabas*, put together by Norma Bartol, we really loved it at Zion. And at most of the churches that we served, the laity were wonderful and fun and very supportive. So it was a little bit of a surprise for them that we were leaving. But the calling committee members were so warm and wonderful, too, taking a picture of our kids when they came up to see us. We have that picture right there [holding a picture] that one of the leaders of the calling committee took, a lovely picture of our four kids on the steps of Zion. Couldn't be nicer.

MEL: And then they gave you a true telephone call. I mean, you received a call from the calling committee.

RVW: Shortly after these visits I got the true call. I said, Judy, you know, we're going. And the kids. It was a hard time to be breaking in there, especially for Lori because she was already a senior in high school and switching. But she got through it.

MEL: So that brings you to the church. Brings you to the hilltop. Brings you to the rectory.

RVW: Yes.

MEL: Surprises? Unusual activities? You liked being in the woods by yourself. Now you're in the woods with a wife and four children.

RVW: That was fun up in the woods there, too. So we came to St. Barnabas. Judy's occupation was that of a travel professional and she was working at a travel agency in Madison, Connecticut. So she commuted from Greenwich to Madison for a year, and then helped to start a travel agency in Branford, Connecticut, and continued to commute to Branford. She finally decided that it was time to find an agency in Greenwich and was employed at McGregor Travel on Lewis Street, where she eventually became manager of the retail department. She continued in the travel business for all the years in Greenwich, until we left.

MEL: Until you retired and left.

RVW: Right. Our daughter Janet was ill during many of the years with kidney disease and spent many months at Yale Medical Center in New Haven and at Norwalk Hospital, too. It took a lot of our time traveling back and forth. In '79 Judy gave her a kidney and the immunosuppressives didn't work and so Janet lost it, and so there was a long time between getting the next one from a cadaveric donor in 1988. She's had that since up to now. It's been over twenty-five, twenty-six years that she's been keeping that. Still having a hard time in many ways.

All four children graduated from Greenwich High School. Some of the brightest and best times in the rectory were when our grandchildren were born and spent many days with us enjoying the rectory and the church. There were so many joyful, fun-filled times at the rectory with our children and grandchildren.

With a few happy tears I performed the weddings of our three daughters, and I had the honor to be the best man for my son's wedding. I baptized our three granddaughters. Our son was an acolyte and so was the oldest granddaughter. After I retired, another granddaughter stepped in as an acolyte and a reader. And, of course, Lori, our oldest daughter, has served the church as senior warden, delegate to Diocesan Convention, vestry member, Church School teacher, and as a member of the Calling Committee and the Mission and

Outreach Committee. She continues to serve as a teacher and as a member of the Mission and Outreach Committee. Judy was a reader, chalice bearer, and for many years sang in the choir.

Our home certainly offered privacy, and my commute to St. Barnabas was thirty seconds. On the other hand, it was good exercise to take the daily trip down the hill to the mailbox in all kinds of weather. I worked a small vegetable garden for a few years. Put up chicken wire around it, but some rabbits and deer helped themselves anyway. They managed to do that. The fauna was mostly what you would expect, being somewhat on the edge of woods. A coyote once.

MEL: Oh, really?

RVW: And a bunch of turkeys gathered round trying to get through the parish house door. I think they got lost from some local turkey farm. But they were huge.

MEL: These must have been wild turkeys, don't you think?

RVW: I don't know, but I don't know why they stopped at the door.

MEL: How did you know they were there?

RVW: It may have been one of the staff who called, do you want to see something different? So that was weird, but some—no, I think somebody came and got them when they heard the news about the visit. The most regular visitors were the deer. You know nothing about that, right? (laughter)

MEL: Oh, the deer. They cause such a problem for me.

RVW: Sometimes they were a nuisance and sometimes they were stunning to watch. And one of the best was after the new parish house was built. The rector's office is at the north end. It was a peaceful location, really a wonderful spot with big windows along the edge of the woods right there.

In the spring I think it was, I was sitting at my desk with my back to the windows. I didn't hear anything, but you know how it is when you feel a presence behind you, you just sense it. I turned around and fifteen feet away there, standing still, was a beautiful doe and also her frail young fawn. Deer have good ears, good noses and yet they don't see very well. They're not good in

the shadows. I would have been in the shadows on the inside looking out, but it was ... So they looked like they were just showing off, how the way things get done in the woods. That's what you would think because they were simply right there. The fawn clumsily nudged its mother trying to get her attention. Obviously it was time for nursing, and the mother and fawn completed their performance and casually strode away.

I have never seen that. One might see it with cows on farms or with puppies in homes, but to have something so close and from, say, this window to that, where you're sitting, and their not knowing I'm there. But maybe they did. Maybe they were showing off.

MEL: Maybe they were posing for you, look at him looking at us.

RVW: Took care of things and then just walked away.

MEL: You are now on the hill, in the rectory, and rector of St. Barnabas. I have a list of things to explore with you about memorable parish events and programs. Tell me about highlights you remember.

RVW: Good. There's a list, all right. We arrived in '76 and during that year there were many events, and here are a few that I recall with the help of something like the rector's State of the Union. Every year in January there would be the Annual Meeting, and I would have to give a report, most of which I saved. For example, at the opening of Church School in September I noted that the children in the fifth and sixth grade performed a great version of *Godspell* arranged by a parishioner. It was very moving with a joyful spirit and certainly a hit with the congregation because it was SRO. It had been performed before, which I noted from the other oral history with Dr. Bassage.

MEL: You mean the interview with Dr. Harold Bassage, your predecessor.

RVW: Right. And also in that first year there was the celebration of my installation service as rector on the Sunday after Easter. Two of my professors from Berkeley Divinity School at Yale when I was studying for my STM—that's a Master of Sacred Theology—came down from New Haven for the service and participated,

one of them preaching and the other reading the Epistle. Then in April there was an ecumenical event called the Anglican Roman Catholic Pulpit Exchange. I went to Saint Michael Roman Catholic Church and the pastor, the Rev. Thomas Guinan, visited us at St. Barnabas. It was a special pleasure, and we both enjoyed that event.

One of the programs I noted was that St. Barnabas had sponsored a very active Boy Scout troop with many of the parishioners, not only from the youth group, but also from the excellent adult leadership. We all remember them selling the Christmas wreaths. It always added to the festive activities.

MEL: They still sell Christmas wreaths. Did the Scouts meet at St. Barnabas?

RVW: They did, yes. Yes, for a while.

MEL: I don't know whether they still meet at St. Barnabas.

RVW: I don't think so. I think some of that has faded a little bit over the years.

MEL: But they sell wreaths, I know that.

RVW: Another program, similar to past years, included the adult education meetings during the Lenten season, usually in the evening with dinner in people's homes. The groups covered many different issues and discussions, anything from biomedical ethics to religious art as well as Bible studies. And also under the heading of adult education there were breakfast discussion groups that were held very early in the morning in order for some of the participants to catch the train to business in New York City. And these meetings, each month, were often in homes with the host cooking a variety of breakfasts. And the group continued after I retired, so for many years that was going on.

MEL: Did you lead all of these discussion groups?

RVW: Yes. But it was a group that was familiar with each other, a small group, maybe ten, twelve, or sometimes fifteen, and we talked about *anything* under the sun. I would introduce the theme, and it didn't take long for everybody to jump in because it had a lot to do with the latest news. Good time. Another new event was during the season of Epiphany. It was called a Feast of Lights.

MEL: I remember that.

RVW: Yes, in which the acolytes played a major role as they would come forth from the altar rail, where they lighted a candle, and each spoke the name of one of the apostles or one of the Gospel writers or great saints. And it was a first because girls had become acolytes and joined the boys in that first Feast of Lights.

MEL: So the girls were not simply helping in the Feast of Lights? They were participating as acolytes?

RVW: That's right. They were acolytes, yes. And I don't believe there were girl acolytes before that time.

MEL: That is great, and that's very early. You came in 1976, so this was—

RVW: Yes, I'm still with the years '76, '77.

MEL: And this was before—I think it was 1977, when the church permitted the regular ordination of women. You already had girls as acolytes at St. Barnabas. All right!

RVW: Yes. Some of the events that began in the early years actually became regular programs throughout my twenty-seven years and more. And like the great family picnics and Christmas pageants that were already in place, there were also some fellowship events; for example, Tennis Nights in the indoor courts in Old Greenwich.

MEL: Where? Whose indoor courts?

RVW: The indoor tennis center down there in Old Greenwich.

MEL: Oh, all right. Tennis Nights.

RVW: Yes, and they had a lot of courts in there.

MEL: And what did people do? Did they do anything before or after?

RVW: Oh, people would bring food and they could take a break if they wanted to with a lot of good chatter and laughter. And, of course, the time and talent auctions right at St. Barnabas which have been named in many ways over the years, like Trinkets to Treasures. About those events, I have to tell you, planned and

beautifully executed by the women of St. Barnabas. They were always the back-up guys. It was great.

Another first in '77 was a chancel drama on Palm Sunday in the church by adult volunteers. It was one of the best written chancel dramas that I found when we used it in the first church where I served, and that would have been in Albany when I was a curate, and it went so well. And then in other churches that I served before St. Barnabas; they all liked it too.

MEL: And you found this where? Or did you write it?

RVW: No, I did not. In the late autumn of 1975 I was sitting across from a gentleman of St. Barnabas at a table down at Mory's in New Haven for lunch.

MEL: At a table down at Mory's. Has a lilt to it.

RVW: Yes. I like the lilt of the Whiffenpoofs.

MEL: (laughs)

RVW: And there I was, looking with great delight at the author of these wonderful chancel dramas, the Rev. Dr. Harold Bassage.

MEL: My goodness.

RVW: When I first met him up in New Haven—he was very humble—and he appreciated that we had performed the drama at the other churches. Such a great guy, and I checked in with him at times over the years.
And then, jumping to 1980.

MEL: All right.

RVW: Yes, we skipped a few things. There was a dedication of the new Washburn College Bibles.

MEL: Oh. I've opened those Washburn College Bibles many times for the Altar Guild. Who gave them? Tell me about that.

RVW: According to my rector report then, this large three-volume set is one of a limited first edition. It embodied a unique typographic concept in biblical publishing. These volumes in the King James Version contain full-color reproductions of sixty-six masterpieces of religious art and have been permanently on display

upon a lighted shelf especially designed for that purpose at the rear east wall of the church. So I guess people are still checking that out. The Bible was a gift made possible through the generous donations of members of the parish.

MEL: I see. So that shelf had to be built for those Bibles?

RVW: Right. Right.

And also in this same period the new cemetery and columbarium developed rapidly. That took a lot of planning—and thanks again to several members of the parish who worked hard on this project. They were overseeing the progress of the design on the burial plots and the landscape. They took great care of it, and of course to this day it's beautiful.

MEL: There must have been burials before the cemetery was built. Where were those people buried?

RVW: Well, they were buried in other cemeteries, many in Putnam, and also in the columbarium at the old Calvary Cemetery on Round Hill Road.

Jumping to 1985, there was a celebration at the Field Club for my tenth anniversary at St. Barnabas. We were also celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the first services held at the tack house on John Street.

MEL: My goodness.

RVW: So we always go back a little bit to all the wonderful events that happened and recall how they have grown since then.

I noted a couple of interesting items in the annual report, one being positive, saying that forty-four persons became official communicants of St. Barnabas during the year. Twenty-seven of these members were presented to the Rt. Rev. Clarence Coleridge, Suffragan Bishop of Connecticut, at the service of Confirmation. That was in May.

The other seventeen persons became communicants by letter of transfer from their former parishes. Nineteen of the persons confirmed were young people under age eighteen. Several of them joined our large group of acolytes, who formed the core of our youth group for eighth grade and up. The youth group

had occasional meetings for education and fellowship. They joined in the sponsorship of two bake sales, assisted mission work of the community of St. Luke's at Thanksgiving, and presented another chancel drama for the parish in November. So that was the positive.

MEL: That's a very big positive. Those are large numbers.

RVW: Not kidding.

MEL: Certainly compared to today, large numbers.

RVW: That was positive. So the negative event was in late October on a cool night with a full moon, a thief entered the church, broke into the cabinets in the sacristy and stole several of the sterling silver vessels, among them, those used for the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The dollar value of the stolen pieces was in excess of ten thousand dollars, but the memorial and artistic significance also violated by the theft could not be measured. I mean it was really a sad thing. The donors of the original articles were very sympathetic and understanding, which really helped ease the pain. The ones that were stolen were never found, and we figured that they were melted down because silver was kind of high at that point.

MEL: And at that time there were a number of thefts in churches, not just in Greenwich.

RVW: Exactly. It turned out that a couple of years after, the thief turned out to be—I think they said something about a guy from Long Island who was with some other church. I'm not quite sure exactly, because it was some time after the theft when they finally caught him. And, surprisingly, he rode a bicycle up here. Probably he took the bicycle right back there by the cemetery and maybe went in the back door.

MEL: But he didn't take those tall sterling silver candlesticks.

RVW: No, I guess that was too much.

MEL: Or he did not realize that they were sterling, but they were big.

RVW: Well, also, the idea of being on a bicycle and he had a sack.

MEL: (laughs) But it's not funny. I'm sorry.

RVW: But it's true, just what you've mentioned, that he knew the churches that would have sacramental vessels.

MEL: Yes.

RVW: So that was the negative item. But we go to '86 now. In September of '86 the Rt. Rev. Bradford Hastings, Suffragan Bishop of Connecticut, ordained to the sacred order of priests the Rev. Sydney A. Woodd-Cahusac.

MEL: Oh, tell me about Sydney.

RVW: It was a historical first within the walls of St. Barnabas, a unique occasion, but more significantly an occasion of thanksgiving for a new priest among us. This was just the beginning of priests coming on staff for part-time.

MEL: Now, ten years have elapsed since you arrived at St. Barnabas, '76 to '86, and you had no assistant?

RVW: That's correct. There would be a supply priest coming in to preach on occasion when I was away.

MEL: Yes, or when you had a vacation or you were away. How—a bit of a digression here—but for those ten years you had very large numbers of people who attended services. I joined the church, I think in '78, and there were chairs in the side aisles to accommodate all the people. How did you manage to communicate, as a priest, to handle the Holy Eucharist services with just one person, you?

RVW: Well, we managed it somehow. I think at that point there may have been the chalice bearers, but that was it. And sometimes a guest priest would drop in, but there wasn't any really paid staff.

MEL: There were large, large numbers of people, many parishioners, and there was no one to assist you for ten years.

RVW: Who assisted me were the laity because—truly fantastic all the time, ready to be positive about tasks and moving forward, and, again, the women of the parish

were very supportive. And then we had a good group of volunteers teaching and taking care of the Church School. And it was great.

MEL: But now return to Sydney because I do remember him well.

RVW: Okay, but before we return to Sydney, I want to tell you a little bit more about what was going on here.

MEL: All right.

RVW: So there was another jump to '88. After lengthy deliberations by the vestry, a letter from the wardens outlined a preliminary plan calling for improvements to the physical plant, including the church and parish parlor, and some necessary investments of funds in either replacing or refurbishing our existing organ. In addition, the plan included a proposal for an increase in a modest endowment of our parish and an operating reserve for our outreach programs, a major subject coming up for 1989. And, of course, in '89 that meant a new capital campaign called the Building and Program Enrichment Fund.

In my annual report in 1990 I said "Perhaps more than any other year since I became rector at St. Barnabas, 1990 had been one of transition and transformation. Changes within a parish community are, of course, inevitable and necessary for growth. In the past years, however, the changes seemed more dramatic. The physical environment, for example, was very important to most of us, and we took quick notice of what was altered significantly." So the first stage of the building program provided much new quality space.

MEL: And what was that space?

RVW: Among the changes was to widen the narrow corridor leading to the parish house. On the left side going toward the parish house sliding glass doors opening on the lawn replaced the very small windows. On the right side, two new restrooms were installed. And in the church were three extra pews that nearly eliminated the need for folding chairs for most occasions of worship.

MEL: How did they create the space to put in three extra pews? What happened to the footprint of the church to permit that to happen?

RVW: This was the whole part of the narthex. Remember the entry door to the left was at an angle?

MEL: Yes.

RVW: With this building program the whole narthex changed—the façade of the church was changed to what you see from the outside today, with the beautiful new stained glass windows and with the main entryway being at the right end. And so what was going on in the inside was a well-planned expanded narthex.

Above the narthex was the expansion for the organ.

MEL: I do remember when those pews went in, but I've blocked out totally the mortar, the wood, the paint, the physical disruption, whatever was happening. But that lasted a long time.

RVW: Yes, that's a long story, really.

MEL: Are you coming to Opus One, the organ? Is that next?

RVW: Oh, no, because that comes later. In my report I write with great delight, "The new heating plan has already proved its effectiveness and the whole system stirred further anticipated pleasure." Its massive complicated network of pipes and valves appeared to say, "You haven't felt anything yet. Wait till we play it cool in June or July."

Air conditioning after thirty-three years may not be noticed by the future summer bride and groom who gaze adoringly at each other, but their well-wishers will appreciate it.

MEL: So it was not until 1990 that the heating plan included air conditioning for the church itself?

RVW: That was part of that big plan. Everything was happening at that point step-by-step.

MEL: There was a wedding in the summer, I don't know remember when, but probably June, and I was serving as one of the Altar Guild members for that wedding. And it was a very hot day and at that time the church had lots of hand fans. That was all we had to cool the people in the church, lots of fans, and one

of the bridesmaids fainted during the service. She literally fainted and fell down on the slate floor. And the Altar Guild members are always told to have spirits of ammonia in the pockets of their smocks, and for the first and only time I used spirits of ammonia on someone. But do you remember?

RVW: Sure do.

MEL: You were there with the bride and the groom and bingo! Suddenly a bridesmaid goes down.

RVW: Right. It was like a statue leaning over and right back, and there—it was so fortunate that she did not hit her head on the steps to the pulpit.

MEL: Oh, yes. They're unforgiving steps. They're all slate, I think, and sharp angles.

RVW: That's right. And she was fine and things went on.

MEL: And she was fine. I recall someone got her a chair and she was revived with the spirits of ammonia, and then she recessed with all the wedding party.

RVW: And, there again, what would we do without the Altar Guild?

MEL: Well, and there again the need for the building plan, which would eventually include air conditioning.

RVW: Right. Back, again, to the building plan. The choir gallery was enlarged to accommodate the new track organ that was being custom made by Richards and Fowkes from Tennessee.

MEL: I understand that this was their first—

RVW: That's correct.

MEL: —organ, working together. I think each of them had made organs separately, but they had never worked together on an organ. All right. So we're still in 1990?

RVW: Yes, but just a little more about '89. It was the year when we embarked on that ambitious Capital Campaign, the first in twenty years, to support the vision of a Building and Program Enrichment Fund. By the end of '89 nearly \$900,000 had been pledged, enabling us to proceed with the first phase. That included what we just talked about. But also in '90 and '91 the expansion of the parish house was taking place. From my perspective it was a major and wonderful change, so

much better with the new Church School rooms, rector's office, kitchen, and a "real" parish hall looking out on the patio for all kinds of activities. What a comfort and enjoyable space, and I know that we all were grateful. Moving on to '91.

MEL: Ninety-one, and work was almost completed. The rear expansion has been done and work is going on with the organ.

RVW: In '91 the bishop, the Rt. Rev. Arthur Walmsley, visited for Confirmation in October, and it was also a celebration for the dedication of the organ and other construction that had taken place. Even though we thought everything was in place, there was an interesting little glitch at the end of '91. The church was overflowing with people for the Christmas Eve pageant, and the lights went out a few minutes right before the opening hymn. The first time in anyone's recollection of that happening.

MEL: (laughs)

RVW: An inconsiderate circuit breaker was the culprit, and we thought that all of our shepherds and angels would be stumbling in the shadows. And anxious moments during the beginning of a service turned to joyful relief as the actual pageantry was about to begin. I was too preoccupied myself to notice it, but I was told that the lights came on just as the choir was singing a verse from *O little town of Bethlehem*, that is to say, "Yet in the dark streets shining the everlasting light." That wonderful white paper star overhead in the nave came through again.

MEL: Well, that's rather dramatic, but with a happy ending. Okay.

RVW: Okay. Now we're going to jump back a bit. In '88, after four years as assistant to the rector, Sydney Woodd-Cahusac received an appointment to serve as interim pastor at Trinity Church in Trumbull, Connecticut. In October then, that year, the Rev. Stephen Bolle, priest from the Diocese of New York, had been able to give some of his time to serve as an interim assistant. Stephen served for two

years, then moved to Cincinnati, where he and his family were engaged in a new ministry. Then the Rev. Carole Johannsen was ordained deacon in June of 1990.

MEL: At St. Barnabas?

RVW: No, she joined our staff in September as the new part-time assistant, but she was also ordained to the priesthood at St. Barnabas. So there were two of them.

MEL: How extraordinary! Two deacons ordained to the priesthood at St. Barnabas!

RVW: In 1991 she was ordained to the priesthood in April by the Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Rowthorn. After that, in August, Carole went forward to serve at another church in Connecticut. Next, the Rev. Vicki L. Prescott joined the staff in '94. After about five years, Vicki announced that she and her family would be moving to Cincinnati. I'm saying to myself, what is this about Cincinnati?

MEL: (laughs) Yes.

RVW: When they're done with us they go to Cincinnati. Her husband, also a minister, had accepted a new position there as a pastor of a church. In February of '98, though not to be on our staff, a member of our parish, the Rev. Dana Campbell, was ordained at St. Andrew's Church in Meriden. Dana, a confirmed member of St. Barnabas for fourteen years, served as a choir member and a chalice bearer, and the parish had sponsored Dana as a postulant and candidate for Holy Orders. And she wrote, "Indeed, long before seminary my formation process began among you. St. Barnabas will always be home and remain in my prayers. May God bless all the ministries." And right on, because all of our ministries, of course, the ministry of the laity but also of these priests who came along and really helped the church even though they were not full-time.

And moving on, to May of '98, when the Rt. Rev. Andrew B. Smith, our newest bishop suffragan in the Diocese of Connecticut, made his first visitation to St. Barnabas. We presented one of the largest youth classes in the history of the parish as Bishop Smith confirmed twenty-four young people.

MEL: Oh, my!

RVW: That group was part of the Church School kids when they were coming up with their families, and so you could almost feel the movement of them going through the church. I mean, several had left for other places. They moved away, but others came in. And so the eighties and the nineties were really exciting because there was quite a group.

MEL: Large family participation and younger families.

RVW: Right. And then in 2000, the Rev. Everett Perine—he liked to be called Father Perry—

MEL: Yes, I remember Father Perry.

RVW: —became the next assistant.

MEL: Was he a full-time assistant to you?

RVW: No, all of these assistants were part-time, but it varied sometimes.

MEL: Longer hours perhaps?

RVW: Yes, I think that happened, and he was the next assistant to the rector. He was ordained in 1986, and he had been residing in New Milford, Connecticut. After I retired in 2002, he continued at St. Barnabas. But that was quite a hike for him, coming in on a Sunday from New Milford. So usually he was there only for the ten o'clock service.

MEL: I have a bit of a digression. You have named Father Perry and Vicki Prescott, Carole Johannsen and Stephen Bolle, and Sydney Woodd-Cahusac.

RVW: Yes.

MEL: They were all part-timers. You had a large parish. With the restricted hours that they had to work, were they able to take any of the pastoral responsibilities that had always been shouldered by you?

RVW: Yes, they did. You see, after the—it was nine years, or close to ten, after we arrived in '76, that we had finally decided that an assistant priest should come on board, and so it began. And it was an event, really, an important part of the program for the parish.

In total there were five priests in succession on the staff serving the parish as assistant to the rector, as that was the title, on a part-time basis. That time varied somewhat. Along with Sundays it could have been two to three extra days. The responsibilities were mostly overseeing the Church School, the acolytes, youth forums, helping the laity in teaching the curriculum, et cetera. They shared in the worship at the 10:00 a.m. service, occasional preaching and celebrating the Holy Eucharist, and from my point of view it felt good to have good backups whenever I was away.

MEL: I should think so.

RVW: But it was great and fun to have them on board. I remember that the parishioners gave them a warm welcome, enjoyed their presence, and were thankful for their gifts of ministry. Some priests were well-seasoned, and the others who were new quickly put their special skills and devotion to the vocation they signed on for. They brought care and dedication to serve the Lord by pastoral engagement and prayer with us in the parish. So that was a good stretch. That was part of the good program with them.

MEL: It was a good program to have them. However, it strikes me that you were stretched rather thin for so many years. Some wonderful people eventually came on board, but for limited functions and limited hours.

RVW: I think by the time that Vicki Prescott came on, and also Father Perry, who remained at St. Barnabas after I retired, there might have been more hours. I'm not sure.

MEL: And that's really after your tenure?

RVW: Yes, right. But also in 2000—this is the last item here—there was a very special event. A dozen of us, a hardy dozen from St. Barnabas, had the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Israel in March.

MEL: Oh, tell me about that.

RVW: It was an exciting time to be there when people, young and old, were joined in the spirit of prayer, study, and personal reflection in the Holy Land. And that was the year when Pope John Paul II was there at the same time.

MEL: No, I didn't remember that.

RVW: As part of the Great Jubilee of 2000, the Pope made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and, among other activities, officiated at a celebration with young people from around the world. And it was packed, but we had a special guide with his small bus who knew just where to go, where the crowds would not be, and at what times, and it was fantastic.

MEL: Who put this together? And who organized the Bible studies that occurred there? I assume you celebrated the Eucharist from time to time? Did you do all of this yourself?

RVW: Yes. Well, there was the guide.

MEL: Yes, but the guide was not an Episcopal priest?

RVW: No, no, no.

MEL: And he took you from place to place?

RVW: Yes, he would take us wherever.

MEL: But the study, the outline for the study and the outline for the prayers and for the services, you did that?

RVW: Yes, had that all set up and the guide was very cooperative. He was a veteran lieutenant colonel in Israel, and he was pretty savvy about "What do you wanna know?" He knew the Bible well, and so he would say, here now was so-and-so. I hardly had to say anything.

MEL: (laughs)

RVW: But we did do whatever we wanted to do and needed to do. It was just so beautiful to be at the tomb of the Lord, and that's where we celebrated the Eucharist with these little wooden chalices for each of us that were made there in Israel.

MEL: Oh, my.

RVW: And we all jumped in the Dead Sea. We all did a little wading.

MEL: Did you put black sand on you?

RVW: I skipped that, but we splashed in the River Jordan.

MEL: Did you go to the Sea of Galilee?

RVW: That was unbelievable. There were so many people going to the boat tour in Galilee, but we did have one of our overnight stops in a local hotel. And so the guide was saying, we're going early in the morning, and we're not going to get in with all those tour boats. We had a little boat all our own. The captain on the boat took us out right in the middle and stopped the boat, and we all sat there quietly. Not a word. There were no waves. Just sitting there and looking to the shores of Galilee, meditating perhaps. But there would be this little breeze that would come by, and nobody bothered us. And sometimes our eyes watered a bit. I think we must have been there about twenty minutes.

MEL: In silence.

RVW: And then the captain put the boat back in gear and we were ... It's hard to tell. You had to be there. One of those things, you know. We were fortunate that everything about that trip fell into place, allowing us to share the maximum benefits that flood the senses as body, mind, and spirit. We were all immersed in this inspiring, beautiful land of our Lord. We pray that somehow it will be preserved and remain at peace in order that future generations may experience this phenomenal heritage of major religious traditions.

MEL: So many significant things happened to the parish from '76 to 2002. How wonderful.

RVW: Yes, and there were many more things, too, but we can't unravel it all.

MEL: No, those are highlights.

RVW: Some of these things will come up in some of the other items we want to talk about.

MEL: Yes, tell me something about outreach programs at the church.

RVW: Can we go back to '76 again?

MEL: I'm happy to go back to '76, yes.

RVW: We noted how Church School members decorated two Christmas trees: one for the Nathaniel Witherell nursing home and one with fifty pairs of mittens on it. We called it the mitten tree, where the youngsters would bring new mittens and decorate the tree, and the mittens were distributed to needy children. And that was a way of the kids doing something.

MEL: Distributed through Greenwich Social Services?

RVW: At that point it gradually went to Carver Center.

MEL: And Carver Center is in Port Chester, New York. Is that right?

RVW: Right. And the women in the church put forth a Christmas dinner project that helped fifteen needy families in the Port Chester area, so there was that connection. And a new venture was the summer day camp program for underprivileged children from Port Chester, Carver Center, and that was with the generous cooperation of the Greenwich Country Day School, using both the indoor and outdoor facilities, including a swimming pool. And it was further supported, again, by St. Barnabas women making bag lunches for all the children.

MEL: Now, St. Barnabas sponsored one day each week for the Carver Center summer camp? Is that what the summer camp was?

RVW: Well, this is featured in *The Story of St. Barnabas*. There's a statement about that. I would drop by occasionally. The children were having a wonderful time with the many activities.

MEL: They swam. I remember the lunches. Did the women all gather at St. Barnabas to make the lunches?

RVW: Not at the same time, no. But they would sign up for a particular day and deliver the lunches in time.

MEL: My recollection is that in the same story of St. Barnabas Betty Brown talks about her involvement with the Carver Center.

RVW: That's correct. Also, members of the parish were on the Carver Center Board.

There were a few of us who were on the board for long terms. In my '96 annual report I noted a plaque of recognition was presented to St. Barnabas by Port Chester Carver Center "For continuous outreach ministry and support services."

MEL: Well, that was a major undertaking for people from the church to make, and I believe it lasted a long time.

RVW: Yes. It went beyond after I retired. Let's see, the last one was in 2005. The program lasted quite a few years.

MEL: All right. Tell me some more.

RVW: Another memorable mission was in '79, when the Diocesan Convention adopted a \$6.8 million goal for Connecticut's share in a nationwide "Venture in Mission" capital funds drive.

MEL: "Venture in Mission."

RVW: It was a Mission capital funds drive, and they called it VIM.

MEL: And this was a project coming from the diocese?

RVW: Right. Connecticut's share among other dioceses all over the country.

MEL: And what did that entail? What was St. Barnabas's role in participating in VIM?

RVW: Each parish in Connecticut was assigned a suggested goal for its participation; funds to be pledged over a three-year period. The "Venture in Mission" campaign did take place as scheduled and our parish pledged approximately \$34,000.

MEL: In '79?

RVW: Yes, a good parish response to the larger mission of the Church.

MEL: Yes.

RVW: And, of course, that's characteristic of the way St. Barnabas does it. The Time, Talent and Treasure Auction; again, the women of St. Barnabas sponsored the occasion, and beyond their financial goal \$5,000 from that event helped to kick off our "Venture in Mission" campaign. So there you go again.

MEL: All right. The stalwart women of St. Barnabas.

RVW: Yes. It goes on and on and on. In '88 there was a new commitment toward our outreach efforts by sponsoring suppers for the emergency shelter at St. Luke's Community Services in Stamford. The project was on a once-a-month basis. A growing number of St. Barnabas members found these evenings at St. Luke's to be very meaningful and satisfying experiences for carrying on the mission of the church. It was the mission of a church in a direct way, sort of a hands-on, face-to-face.

MEL: To become personally involved in the mission of the church.

RVW: And St. Luke's Community Services in Stamford changed its name a couple of times. It became St. Luke's Lifeworks.

MEL: I remember that.

RVW: And it's now called Inspirica. That's it, Inspirica. But it has always been a top priority for the parish.

In '92 an excerpt from a report by the outreach committee chairperson reads this way: "Members of the committee and other parishioners are the bright stars in the St. Barnabas constellation."

MEL: Wonderful.

RVW: "Their dedication and efforts made possible a new life of opportunity free of discrimination in the greatest country in the world for Cu—that's C-U—and his family."

MEL: Oh, the Vietnamese family.

RVW: That quote referred to our sharing in the interfaith refugee ministry through a resettlement project for an Amerasian family, Cu Van Duong, his wife and two children, and his mother. There were two at the time, two children. Over twenty members of the parish assumed direct hands-on responsibility for guiding this eager, hardworking family from Viet Nam in their resettlement in America. And there was much to do. Listen to the list: "Finding and furnishing affordable housing; clothing the family; teaching them the rudiments of grocery shopping and laundry; establishing medical and dental relationships; transportation;

learning English; finding employment; understanding of American finances and government forms; and social integration to build a network of friendships and support groups.”

Many parishioners joined in providing the essentials of daily living. The family, they looked healthy, happy, and hopeful. Cu had regular employment working for St. Luke’s Community Service. The transformation and adjustment were exemplary, certainly due on the one hand to their strong motivation, diligence, and courage; but the care and friendship of the group from St. Barnabas who spent countless hours with his family was a major factor in their successful adjustment. In ‘95 Cu and his wife, Lan, served as sextons on our staff. They did a fine job amid the various needs of the changing liturgical seasons.

MEL: (laughs)

RVW: They had to step down from the staff because they found full-time employment.

We have seen them many times since then, including at the ceremony when they became citizens of the United States.

MEL: You attended that?

RVW: Yes, we did. It was another tear jerker.

MEL: My goodness.

RVW: Yes. Now they live in Shelton, Connecticut, with three grown children. I think they’re all teens now. And we check in with them every once in a while, Christmas cards with photographs.

MEL: That’s a wonderful story of accomplishment with Cu. Yes, very exciting.

RVW: In December of 2000 another first for St. Barnabas was held in our parish hall.

My report said, “The Outreach Committee with many volunteers, probably a hundred or more parishioners, hosted the Christmas Sharing Party.” This was a major event to benefit recipient families identified by the Greenwich Department of Social Services.

MEL: I remember. Jim and Ba Edwards spearheaded that event. What was it like?

RVW: St. Barnabas Church was given the names of some of the neediest families in our community, along with the ages of their children. Our mitten tree became a gifting tree. In the place of mittens, there were cards with the age of a boy or girl. Parishioners would choose to provide a toy or piece of clothing for a particular child.

The Outreach report noted that the families identified by Social Services were invited to come to St. Barnabas on a Saturday before Christmas for the Family Sharing Party. Church School students decorated the parish hall for the event, and our parish families were ready to greet them with lunch, games, and cookie and cupcake decorating. “Our children played the games with their children and enjoyed all the goodies together. Each guest family was given a Polaroid picture of each of their children, made into an ornament that could be hung on their Christmas tree.”

And the report continues, “Meanwhile we had a ‘shopping mall,’ where small donated gifts could be selected by the children to give to their parents. Parish volunteers were standing by to wrap each item. There was another room filled with new clothing and toys provided by our parishioners. The parents could select the items that best suited their children. These were also wrapped by St. Barnabas volunteers and sent home with the families in a shopping bag.

“Everyone was beaming with smiles at the end of the afternoon, and this became a St. Barnabas tradition that lasted for over ten years!”

MEL: What a wonderful event. The sharing parties were high points for the hosts as well as the guests. A lot of people at St. Barnabas have stepped up over the years to do things hands-on.

RVW: Yes. Their reference points were not only financial contributions from our operating budget, but included the other continuing traditions of the parish such as the dozens of mittens from the Christmas tree and the dozens of lunches prepared for the summer camp—and at that point it was in its twenty-first

year—and the dozens of kind thoughts and volunteers' hours that sustained these traditions year after year.

MEL: Richard, thank you. Your comments about the laity are so important to preserve.

I would like to explore some other topics and one is the changing liturgy in the Episcopal Church. I grew up with the 1928 Prayer Book, and you must have been trained at seminary using the 1928 Prayer Book. But if I'm correct, in 1976, I think, the church approved the 1979 Prayer Book services for trial use, and the 1979 Prayer Book went into a trial period.

RVW: Yes.

MEL: So you came to St. Barnabas literally when the trial was just beginning. I love the King James Version of the Bible and those words were echoed in the 1928 Prayer Book. Also, I remember that before the 1979 Prayer Book was approved churches offered Morning Prayer three Sundays out of the month and Holy Eucharist on one Sunday. Later there were alternating services of Morning Prayer and Holy Eucharist. Tell me about these changes and why and how they were implemented and how the people of St. Barnabas reacted.

RVW: Okay. What I would like to do is go back to the seventies, when we were talking about the earlier events. In the late seventies there was a planning document for parts of the life of our parish family, and what I said at that time was that we would give special emphasis to the concept of family worshipping together, including youngsters, in thanksgiving and celebration during a ten o'clock service on the third Sunday of each month.

In addition, the young people were with us in worship for fifteen minutes every Sunday at the beginning of the service. And my reason for that planning document was a way of being with the parish and understanding how we wanted to keep families interested, and also allowing them to add the youngsters before they went to Church School in order to be with the rest of the family at some point in the ten o'clock service.

MEL: And either witness or participate in the liturgy, become familiar with it.

RVW: Witness that. Right. And that worship experience provided an appropriate context within which the subject matter of our Christian heritage—the Bible, the Creed, the Prayer Book, the Sacraments, and music, et cetera— could be explored intellectually and creatively in a classroom setting. So that was very important to try and get that going so that everybody would be participating.

MEL: When you had this plan and you tried to have everyone participate, were they participating with what became the 1979 Prayer Book? What liturgy were they experiencing?

RVW: I noted in my report that in '76 we were trying out the liturgy from Rite II in the proposed Book. By '78, hardly a pew was vacant at the 10:00 a.m. services, and during our regular schedule that hour-and-a-half represented the peak of participation each week: the musical offerings of both junior and senior choirs, church staff, and the ECW, the Episcopal Church Women.

That was the view. Coffee hour, the ushers, greeters, the acolytes, lay readers, and the Altar Guild, they represented a tremendous amount of individual service that became a united witness and commitment to gather for Sunday worship. So that's what we were trying to do, very much connected together, and I think that was a good step. By the way, the acolyte group had grown in membership at that point to twenty-one boys and girls together, and with that larger number we were able to have that first Epiphany Feast of Lights that I had mentioned before.

MEL: Yes, I recall that.

RVW: And then in '79, and here we come, one of the many actions of the General Convention of the National Episcopal Church was the final approval of the revised *Book of Common Prayer*, and our Connecticut bishop had set up guidelines for the gradual transition to full use of the new book by those parishes in Connecticut that were still using the 1928 version. And so that was really a big change. We organized a committee to effect this transition at St. Barnabas.

MEL: Were they all jubilant? Or were they hesitant? Or dragging their heels?

RVW: Some folks were hesitant, but I think because we had the proposed book in the pews a couple of years before the final approval, the parish moved forward in a positive way.

MEL: Did you keep both of them? Did you get rid of the '28s?

RVW: Well, by '79 the '28s were packed away, but there was an inadequate supply of hard-bound copies of the new ones, and an anonymous gift enabled a purchase of five dozen new books.

In the '79 prayer book besides the new Rite I and Rite II for Holy Eucharist there's a whole separate section which is commonly referred to as Occasional Pastoral Offices, and these were great improvements over the '28 prayer book. Even though I liked the '28 prayer book for decades, I welcomed the new version.

The Episcopal Church is a sacramental church. There are some options within the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in both Rites I and II. If we can jump to year 1987, we can note a new addition at St. Barnabas. This is what I wrote in one of my reports. "The sacramental tradition that has been preserved and repeated again and again over the centuries, the office the priest has offered in behalf of and with the people, the Holy Eucharist, our thanksgiving at the altar. A traditional vestment of that priestly office is the chasuble." The chasuble, matching stole, and chalice coverings were presented to me for dedication and blessing as our parish's first set of Eucharistic vestments.

MEL: Not until 1987?

RVW: That's correct. They are beautiful vestments. Have it down here as "glistening white with dark blue banding and gold appliqués."

MEL: They are beautiful.

RVW: Majestic colors joined to those festive seasons of a Church Year, and that was an honor at that point to receive these gifts for the parish. It was great. And also we had sufficient copies of the revised 1982 hymnal in the pews by then.

MEL: Oh, yes, by '87. And now you're using the '82 hymnal.

RVW: And by 1988 in our worship we seemed to peak, and here is the note from my annual report in January 1988: “Between September and May when the Church School is in session, attendance at the 10:00 a.m. service exceeds official seating capacity nearly two-thirds of the time. In the span of a year, over two hundred different parishioners are assuming some special responsibility from the beginning moment when an Altar Guild member sets up the communion chalice to the closing moment when a coffee hour volunteer cleans up the last cup. Many busy people witnessing to the vital spirit of our community of faith; all that, building around our worship.”

And then it also said: “A large portion of this joyful activity reflects a new generation of families with young children joining our parish.” So this was kind of the peak that was coming up. In the nursery through the first grade alone we had over eighty children. That was nursery through first grade. Eighty children!

MEL: My goodness.

RVW: Right. Our volunteer teaching staff, as I said at that time, had the finest church school programs anywhere with an excellent curriculum, and that was mostly up to the laity. In connection with this wonderful commitment of lay ministries—this is from one of my reports in ‘92—I was saying I often come across surveys that make these claims with only slight variations in the percentages regarding factors in church growth. This statement is from the editor of one of our “trade” publications. “The Institute for American Church Growth did a survey to find out what brought people into the church. They found that six to eight percent came because of some church program. Two or three percent were drawn in”—get this—”Two or three percent were drawn in by the pastor.”

MEL: (laughs) Not what I would have thought.

RVW: “Eight to ten percent found the church met some of their special needs. Three or four percent came in response to a visitation program, and one or two were introduced through the Sunday School. All the rest, seventy to eighty percent, were brought into the church by a relative or a friend.”

That particular survey was reported ten years before, so that would have been back in '82. I have a sense that the significance of the friendly invitation and warm reception by the laity hasn't diminished one bit. That has another statement about the laity going on in that period.

MEL: So not only the involvement of the laity in the life of the church, but their reaching out to others to become involved in the church.

RVW: Yes, very much so, and making it work.

MEL: But statistics show—and this is broader than St. Barnabas at this point—that in the mainstream Protestant churches there are fewer people now involved. We see at St. Barnabas today, and at other local churches, a growing older population and fewer young families and children. What do you think are the competing factors now? What is happening that makes it difficult, uninviting, or not compelling for people to go to church?

RVW: Over the years, people come and go. Probably a small percentage come to a church, try a couple of churches, and really decide that, we won't miss Christmas, we won't miss Easter, and that's it. And so there's not much support there, and so that doesn't make up for the congregation that we were just talking about with two hundred people involved, from a—well, that would be a good percentage from those who have signed on.

MEL: Do you think there is a creeping secularization among us Americans?

RVW: Like in Europe? Like in England?

MEL: Well, yes. Like in, well, England, definitely. One reads that churches are almost quaint museums where one goes perhaps to be buried or possibly married.

RVW: I think there is more secularism.

MEL: Here? In America?

RVW: In America.

MEL: I think so. There are so many secular demands on families and children. For example, many sports activities seem to be scheduled on Sunday mornings.

RVW: That's been going on for a long time, but it's increased even more. But regarding St. Barnabas, there were a high number of families who connected through schools, clubs, professions, and of course through their grandparents, who were already loyal parishioners. They started to come to church, and some were really energetic about coming, and, hey, we've got to get our kids involved in this. They were excited about teaching their own children in the Church School and keeping them going. There were a lot of these younger kids out there. And I think that was a time when other churches were growing, too. At St. Barnabas there was a strong foundation from the beginning. A lot of people started during the time with Hal Bassage, and even before his tenure. So they hung in there, and you could see it expanding at that time and all these people getting involved.

A beautiful addition to our schedule of services—this is going to 1990—was the Great Vigil of Easter, celebrated after sunset on Holy Saturday as the first service of Easter.

MEL: Now, tell me how that came to be. I mean the service is in the Prayer Book, but what caused it to happen then?

RVW: Because I remember Stephen Bolle, Father Stephen Bolle, coming up from New York, and he said, why don't we try that here? And of course that would have been a different experience for the choir, too, and something added. Everybody kind of liked the idea, and so we went for it because it's so profound.

MEL: Oh, it's an extraordinary experience.

RVW: The observance of the light and the hope, the resurrection, breaking through the darkness of seeing death—

MEL: Right. You come into a dark church.

RVW: —and the celebration, including the lighting of the Paschal candle, which begins Easter with Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. And so it has been going on since then. I think that was a big change, and I get excited about it.

MEL: Yes, you should be excited about that. I can get excited about that. It's a very powerful service to walk into a dark church and then see the Light of Christ come to us.

RVW: Right. And then speaking of Eucharistic vestments, in the early nineties we received the other three main colors.

MEL: And what colors were they?

RVW: The purple vestments especially for Lent, the green vestments that are worn most of the year, and then the red vestments for Pentecost. Sometimes, if you visit some other churches, they may have added colors for certain occasions, but we stayed with four, including the white. And during that period, over twenty years, somehow there were so many memorial gifts. There were the altar office lights, that is, the matching candelabra.

MEL: Oh, yes, the candelabra. They are seldom used now because they tended to be used at Morning Prayer, which is seldom offered now.

RVW: I think when I left we still had it once a month.

MEL: Yes, you did. But we no longer have it once a month on Sundays. We had two services last summer when the rector was away and we had no priest to celebrate the Eucharist and a few services in the summer of 2011. But, anyway, those candelabra are beautiful.

RVW: Also, someone gave a portable communion set so that we could take communion to people in their homes because of illness or in hospitals.

MEL: Oh yes. I've seen that.

RVW: And there was a silver ciborium, where the consecrated bread and wine are, by the altar.

MEL: Where did you keep the consecrated bread and wine before you had a ciborium?

RVW: I believe there were smaller containers put in the aumbry, the tabernacle.

There was a new altar missal. That's the book on the altar.

MEL: Yes, the altar book. And the missal stand was there all along? That beautiful silver missal stand?

RVW: And the candlesticks for the aisle.

MEL: All these things we're so accustomed to.

RVW: New paschal candlestick. There was a new one.

MEL: No, I didn't remember that.

RVW: Baptismal shell. That wonderful piece.

MEL: Yes. That's a beautiful shell. Yes.

RVW: And I always loved those baptisms where you could scoop the water in the shell over those beautiful heads. And the processional torches.

MEL: Oh, yes, which brings to me to another subject, thinking of those torches, because the acolytes are not always careful in keeping them held upright and sometimes the wax drips down in places. But, yes, those torches are definitely used.

RVW: Another job for the Altar Guild.

MEL: (laughs)

RVW: Before we add a few more on the list, it comes to mind that most of these gifts are taken care of by the Altar Guild. They are always on call for Sunday services and other celebrations. The flowers in the sanctuary wall vases are beautifully arranged. Most of them are given by parishioners as memorial gifts or for special occasions. On Principal Feast days, such as Christmas, the sanctuary is filled with wonderful decorations, including another annual gift, a tall, perfectly shaped Christmas tree in the space on the Gospel side. Another on the list was the big outside bell cast in London that is rung from the narthex before the processional hymn begins.

MEL: All these wonderful things that we think have been there forever weren't; they all were given during your tenure.

RVW: That's right. Matching silver chalices. Musical hand bells.

MEL: Now, that makes a wonderful segue into music, which has played a really singular role at St. Barnabas. And Michael Roush was hired, I think, two years or very soon after your arrival at St. Barnabas. Tell me something about the musical tradition at the church.

RVW: Okay. We would say a very significant role, as it is in most churches, and for many of us, especially in the Anglican tradition. Again, there are so many options in the liturgy: the congregation, choir, organ, and other musical instruments; our singing, chanting, *and* listening to special choral concerts—all of that, with some of the greatest sacred pieces from a wide religious repertoire. There was so much there. In all its grand acoustics. I would say ...

MEL: Richard, I have to say—because people will not be able to see you on this taped interview—that your face is so excited and so animated as you talk about this.

RVW: St. Barnabas has an A-plus. It had from the beginning, and it continues the same way. Coming to St. Barnabas—of course, we're back to the seventies again. Besides the warm welcome from the laity and the foundation that Hal Bassage had already put in place, another important setting added to our comfort zone. We came in the presence of two wonderful staff members. First person: the all-around daily secretary, a member of the parish, Jeanne Johnston, Mrs. Tom Johnston. Her office skills and kind heart led the way to get me organized and was very helpful to my family. She was unforgettable. She loved music, and often with perfect pitch I would hear her whistle or sing a happy tune while taking care of business. Uplifting. She was a wonderful person. Yes.

MEL: Did you hire her? Or she was there when you arrived?

RVW: No, she was there when I arrived. And Hal Bassage in his—

MEL: Oh, in the oral history interview that was conducted by Peggy Ekberg, who I believe was a member of the parish.

RVW: Right. He speaks of her, too, and she was there.

The other staff member—Now, Judy and I had always been into all kinds of music and have a deep feeling like the romantic lyric from a song by Michel Legrand, “How Do You Keep the Music Playing? How Do You Make It Last?” It's a beautiful song. Great to dance with. I'll get back to that, but the organist then was Jon Gillock.

MEL: I never knew him.

RVW: Dr. Jon Gillock, who with a small choir, kept it going beautifully. Our music program was certainly one of the high points of our worship beginning at St. Barnabas. It was so good just to come to St. Barnabas because of the organist and the choir director. Superb quality of music selection, direction, and performance was surely recognized by the parish members, too. I think they've always been supportive of that.

MEL: Always.

RVW: And we were fortunate for Jon, whose unique talent and love for that parish were continually manifested by his devoted and inspiring musical leadership. The choir might have been small, but hardworking and tops in performance. Jon was the organist and choir director for seven years, so we had him for three years, but before that he had at least four years, I think, with Hal Bassage. And then in '78 he accepted a new position to go to New York City. From there he went to France, near Paris.

MEL: To the American Church in Paris?

RVW: No, he lives in Boussy-Saint-Antoine, and he is an international performer and teacher. He is noted as an organist for the work of French composers, especially Messiaen. Sometimes he comes back to the United States, and he travels to different parts of the world. Fantastic and a wonderful guy. We keep in touch with him every once in a while, especially when we hear he's coming back here.

So that led us to search for an organist who could continue with that high quality. But, again, with good fortune, the organist position was filled in time for the reopening of the fall schedule in 1979. Michael Roush, a spirited and talented young artist, led the musical program with creative imagination and keen sensitivity to parish needs and style. He worked with the junior choir and expanded the participation of parish members and the adult choir. He helped to get more volunteers into that.

MEL: Oh, we had always had some paid members of the choir?

RVW: I think what Hal had mentioned was that there might have been some students that had been brought in.

MEL: And then augmented by volunteers. So Michael ...

RVW: Right. Right. And so Michael was able to get some professional people, too. No, I was going to say that for thirty-four years, then, because he's still there, J. Michael Roush as director of music continues to this day, and that's with great appreciation of the people of St. Barnabas because he provides the exceptional sacred music that has become a treasured and well-known tradition in the parish.

The music portions of every service of worship are the results of Michael's meticulous planning and expert artistry that are a part of his total music ministry, about which he cares so much. And then a good reference to Michael's own reflections is included in *The Story of St. Barnabas*, and that's where you would hear more about the new organ. And the choir was and is exceptional, also.

MEL: Tell me how large the junior choir was in those days when you had so many communicants and families?

RVW: It was on and off, not very large. It might have reached fifteen, but sometimes it would be six, usually a girls choir.

MEL: And you and Michael would get together and discuss the liturgy that was to take place on the Sunday in question and then plan.

RVW: Yes. I would usually choose the hymns, and, of course, he would do all the other selections.

MEL: Yes, he puts in a lot of thought and effort into what might be good hymns for the lessons or the Word that is to be spoken that day.

RVW: The choir was and is exceptional, as I say, and they've been loyal members for many, many years—a great group of choristers that I've seen who are still there, and they're so friendly. And when you picture it, I think everybody gets excited

at the beginning of the service when the crucifer walks up the aisle with the cross.

MEL: Yes, at the beginning of the processional.

RVW: The processional with the choir coming up singing with gusto. And, gosh, how can you top that music. It really, really runs right up your spine with inspiration. So that choir, their contribution, is beyond measure, and back to the lyric from Michel Legrand, they know “how to keep the music playing,” playing professionally. That’s what they’re all about.

MEL: Oh, that’s wonderfully said.

RVW: In 2000, before we left, there was the formation of a youth choir under the direction of Elena Williamson. And Elena, on the staff, is no stranger to St. Barnabas. She and her husband, Thomas, sing in the choir. An added note is that they and their young family are moving away. They will certainly be missed.

MEL: I believe there has been a marriage from that choir also. Cynthia Wallace’s daughter, Cecily Hewes, married Daniel McNickle, a member of the choir. I understand that their service, with all the choir members present, was just an unbelievably beautiful service.

RVW: It was because they were also professional singers.

MEL: And there was such love among them all.

RVW: Yes, well I married a couple of couples who were in the choir.

MEL: So that choir marriage was not our first? It followed in a wonderful tradition.

RVW: Yes, so that was a good connection and we certainly loved that.

I want to add something to finish the important coverage of the staff. Having checked in about the members of the hired staff—five part-time priests, two organists, choir directors—there is also a must about the rest of the staff, the ones who were not around on Sundays, but on weekdays.

There were several part-time sextons who maintained the interior of the church and parish house. I remember Mr. and Mrs. John Williams, who were

with us for ten years. John and Louise were kind and most considerate while taking care of our place of worship. They knew well the fluctuating needs during the liturgical seasons and sustained a watchful eye on the supplies and upkeep, including assistance with special events.

During the twenty-seven years there were only two regular bookkeepers who would come to the office two days a week. The ones I remember were Jennifer Thornley, who was there about four years, and then Marlene Czajkowski, who came in '84 and stayed eighteen years and beyond my retirement. Then we come to the full-time secretaries, or called now parish administrators. I've already mentioned Jeanne Johnston. She was followed by five others with the last being Carol Settembrini, who came in '97 and is still at St. Barnabas. So that would be, make it at this point, for sixteen years.

MEL: And she is terrific.

RVW: A lot of changes in the office when we think of the times with Jeanne in '76 to Carol in 2014, from the heavy typewriter and carbon copies to techie machines and computers. I tell you, faster work and communication as time went by, and at any year, though, they steadily covered the aspects, all the aspects of parish administration. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to keep in business at St. Barnabas. We'd have had to close down. And I believe none of them were Episcopalians, except Jeanne, but were and are respectful and devoted to our church's needs.

MEL: Oh, that's nicely put. And that's true.

RVW: Yes. And the other thing is that they were on the frontline for parishioners dropping by or deliveries. They were taking on all those kinds of things. And it was really a ministry that they carried on for the parish. They would be the first to meet, with warm welcome, and sometimes they'd get in conversation with people who would want to talk about something. If a priest wasn't present, they could make people feel a little better. They were very helpful.

MEL: They must field calls from time to time from people who are greatly distressed or who have a loved one who has died or who has suddenly gone to the hospital, and they are sometimes the first people to hear that and then make you or another priest aware of that.

RVW: Yes.

MEL: You mentioned wonderful people. I know Carol best of them. I like your term of their providing a ministry because it is a form of ministry, as you have said.

RVW: Definitely.

MEL: Richard, this has been a wonderful interview. I've learned so many things from you. Have you parting thoughts about your life on what you have called the spiritual hilltop and your time in the rectory in the woods?

RVW: I loved being on that spiritual hilltop during the change of seasons. Springtime and the fall were magnificent. And there were some spectacular moments at night when the atmosphere was crisp and clear and there were no earthly lights to distract the naked eye from our own personal planetarium, which is what it felt like. We set the clock to be sure that I would be awake to see the pre-announced comet or once-in-a-lifetime configuration of the planets. There was always that. The creator of the universe at work in all that splendor. Then I would turn in another direction and suddenly catch the silhouette of the cross perched on the peak of the church—what splendor indeed.

There was a favorite tree in front of the rectory, a flowering crab—I think that's what it was—beautifully sculptured by nature in its trunk and canopy of branches. In early May, for a few brief days, it blossoms into thousands of white flowers covering every inch of that canopy inside and out. They emit an unmistakable enticing fragrance. And those brief days or evenings when it was in full bloom I occasionally made a point of standing under that tree for a moment. Probably looked a little strange for somebody. It seemed to be the most satisfying way to really see this tree and capture the feeling of its natural meaning. And then one time I happened to be viewing a home videotape that

included a clip of springtime some years ago before that. Here again was that tree, and standing under it was my granddaughter, who must have been three years old at the time—

MEL: —And this granddaughter was Nicole?

RVW: Yes, Nicole. On the tape, with no other sound except the gentle breeze and her careful exploring footsteps, she seemed to linger there in a spirit of playfulness. For me, that sight was heart-stopping because I imagined she understood something about eternal harmony and how to play within it as all children do under their own special tree, I suppose, I guess. It's akin to the children of God in any age standing beneath a canopy of a trillion billion stars on a clear night, perhaps in August, when a meteor shower is in full display. And for some of us, the mystery and meaning of our being here resurfaces from within, standing beneath the cross.

MEL: What a lovely, lovely image.

RVW: I really appreciate your time with this project.

MEL: I feel very privileged to have been able to participate in this interview with you. I thank you very much.

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In the Company of Saints

Members of the vestry

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| Stephen F. W. Ball* | Edward G. Ewing |
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| Terry Birdsong | William D. Gaillard |
| Rinda Bishop | Catherine Gates |
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| Dwight C. Coffin* | Susan Holey |
| DeLancey Cook | Joseph W. Hotchkiss |
| Thomas C. Cooper, Jr.* | John E. Houx |
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| Charles T. Coyle | Mary H. Huyck |
| Anthony F. Daddino | Phillip Ives |
| Virginia V. F (Ginny) Day | Susan Jackson |
| Larry Dennis | Ginger Jenks |
| John Douglas | Robert R. Jenks |
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| Pamela Eberhart | Helen W. King |
| Walter M. Eberhart, Jr.* | Libby King |
| Frank W. Edlin | James W. Kinnear |
| Katherine Edlin | Mary Kinnear |
| Barbara (Ba) Edwards | Lawrence E. Larson |
| James C. Edwards, Jr. | Mary Lawrence |

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Charles M. Lewis*
James Link
Oivind Lorentzen III*
Patricia Lovejoy
Thomas Lovejoy
Alan MacDonald
Isabel Maddux
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Donald F. Miller
Phoebe Milliken*
John D. Moore
Lydia Moore
Douglas M. More
Bruce P. Morrison
Dale Morrison
Fred B. Morrison
Nancy Mott
John Nelson*
Virginia Obrig
Alicia Orrick
Stuart S. Orrick, Jr.
Janet Osborne
Michael R. Parker
Caroline Patten
John Patten
G. Laurence (Larry) Peters, Jr.
Austin Pryor
Debbie Reynolds
Lynda Reynolds
Alice Ritts

L. Chase Ritts, Jr.*
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Gerald Ross
Jean (Jinny) Sammis
Carol Santora
Richard G. Schulze
Jonathan Simon
Katie Simon
Debbie Stapleton
Caralyn Stevens*
Debbie Stiles
Ned Stiles
Clifford Storms*
Val P. Storms
John Stratton
Ruth Streeter
James (Jeb) Baker Stuart
Geoffrey Styles
Marcus M. Tarkington
John M. P. (Terry) Thatcher III
John L. Townsend III*
Marree Townsend
John H. Troy II
Heather Van Nostrand
Nadine von Storch
David Webb
Marjorie H. Webb
Lewis S. White
Sydney M. Williams III
Sue Ann Massey Williamson*
William H. Willis, Jr.
Carl A. Willsey
John Wilson

* Also served as warden

Members of the altar guild

Bess Ballou*
Terry Birdsong
Betty Brown
Nan Bull

Lucia Carver
Priscilla Clark
Betty Close
Salley Cooper

Lucy Corrigan*
Nan Dwyer
Caroline Edgar
Katie Edlin*
Alloe Enos
Kathy Flatley*
Kassie Gaillard
Anne Gaynor
Carol Gronquist
Margaret Hanson
Gladys Hicks
Jane Hotchkiss
Susan Jackson
Pauline Jewett
Mary Ellen LeBien*

Patricia Lovejoy
Phoebe Milliken*
Polly Moore
Mary Ann Morsey
Jane Nickerson*
Ginny Obrig
Joan Ottman
Nancy Pham
Alice Ritts*
Linda Ross
Caralyn Stevens
Helen Stratton
Eleanor Toby
Heather Van Nostrand

* Also served as directress of the altar guild

Church School directors

Catherine Gates
Charles M. Lewis
Henry Marx

Stuart S. Orrick, Jr.
Sydney M. Williams III

Property and cemetery keepers

Chandler Bates, Jr.
William Gaillard
Catherine Gates
Chris Goddard
Ginger Jenks
Charles H. King

Thomas Lovejoy
Bruce Morrison
Val Storms
John H. Troy II
Sue Ann Massey Williamson

Buildings keepers

Bruce Kelly
Thomas Lovejoy

Fred B. Morrison

So great a cloud of witnesses

The company of saints include parish clerks and treasurers; chalice bearers, readers, acolytes, and ushers; church school teachers and the leaders and members of parish life committees; those who led or volunteered for The Giving Tree, the Carver Center summer camps, and the Christmas Sharing Party; those who raised their voices in song and praise; and those whose ministries took them beyond the St. Barnabas spiritual hilltop.

The hardy dozen pilgrims to the Holy Land

Dwight Coffin
Tina Coffin
Bill Gaillard
Kassie Gaillard
Cathy Gates
Elizabeth Gates

Polly Moore
Dick Schulze
Caralyn Stevens
Doug Stevens
Judy Van Wely
Richard Van Wely

