LEXINGTON ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS, INC.

Interview
Marion Coletta
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Interview conducted by Nancy Earsy
Videotape length 54 minutes

MC: I'm Marion Coletta, and I moved to Lexington in 1950. We built a house—the house that I'm now in—it happened to have been designed by a friend of ours, and it was just a one-room house at the time that we added onto as we were able to. I had one child who was exactly two and a half when we moved in, and a few years later had another child, the first a girl, and then a boy. We actually moved here and chose Lexington because it had a fairly decent school system. I immediately got involved in these schools because I taught before I was married and helped bring about some changes that we thought we needed to make the schools a lot better at that time. A few years after that I started to teach a little bit, maybe part-time, and then after that I stopped the part-time teaching and did some substitute work in the Lexington school system, and then became a regular teacher later on at the high school level. I taught Art.

INT: You mentioned that you made some changes in the schools. What were they?

MC: Well, I remember in our first meetings, the group decided that the first thing we had to do was raise teachers' salaries to be able to attract better teachers and we did do that, and the schools finally, you know, really bloomed, I think. I was also involved in the first concert series for children that was called AIM, and that was in collaboration with the DeCordova Museum. I don't remember the name of the orchestra right now, it's so many years ago, but that was a wonderful, wonderful experience. I used to coordinate the art shows with the concerts on the day of the concerts, and it was innovative, and really it worked out very well. We had that for a number of years.

We had that going, and I also became very interested in those years in civil rights—civil liberties—and joined various groups that were active in that area, and became involved in…I was actually a pacifist and I joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and it was very involved in stopping testing of nuclear weapons. I remember there was a milk scare from the nuclear weapons at that time and we marched on Washington. We marched on Washington for that, and we marched on Washington for many things in those days. I remember the highlight was when we went to Washington in that civil rights march when Martin Luther King gave that wonderful speech, and I remember my children were there, they came with us. They were ten and fourteen and a half. And they remember those years very much and became sort of involved, but not that much.

I never really did proselytize too much with the children. I let it just come as it may, and we might say something at the dinner table about what I was active in, but not too much. The most that came out of that as far as the children were concerned was when Dario went off to college and the first thing he did was join in a Socialist youth group of some kind. Knowing the type of person he was I was kind of appalled and I said, “But Dario, you know, they're going to want every bit of your time,” and he just didn't believe it. He just thought that, well, he wanted to do this, and so he stayed with it. However, when he came home for Thanksgiving, he got calls all day long, people calling him, "What are you doing at home?" and the same thing at Christmas. And I guess he began to think, well, they've been demanding too much of me, and then later on in the spring, we went to see him. I guess it was Parents' Day or something. First of all, I noticed when he opened his closet there was half a gallon of wine. And I said, "Oh, Dario. Drinking wine!" We drank wine with dinner all the time, but he was never interested in it, and so he said, “Well, that's for my friends,” then

the next thing I noticed—you know, I started to look around, and here were these great big piles of all kinds of—I guess maybe papers that he had to give out that he never gave out for this Socialist youth group. [Laughter.] I guess he just gently got out of it, but that's as far as it went. And they just didn't participate any more.

But anyway, we were very anti-war at the time, and I never thought that Dario would ever get into the war. It started so early, and I thought it would be over before he was old enough, but I was still very anxious that we get out of the war, and took part in all the little walks down here in the [Lexington] Center, and walks in Washington, again. When the time went on and the war was still on, and it looked as though Dario might be called, we talked about it, and he decided that he would run off to Canada rather than go in. But fortunately he just wasn't called, and when he did have the numbers that were close to him came, I guess they skipped over him or something. He just didn't need to go. So he was spared that and we were very grateful.

INT: You mentioned that there were local marches or walks.

MC: Yes, there were.

I**NT:** And what can you tell us about that? That was here in Lexington?

MC: Yes, that was here in Lexington. There was always a group ready to march and walk for some of these ideals that we had, and things were certainly not going the way we wished. We worked for hard for candidates that we tried to get in, and I remember that time in the middle fifties, well, in 1952, I remember getting the call from a gentleman who said he was having a meeting at his home of those people who are interested in the presidency of [Adlai] Stevenson, and he heard that I was interested. So I went, and the young man that called me in happened to have started this Volunteers for Stevenson group in this area, and I thought it grew—because I had never heard of it—and then it grew until it was all over the country.

He was a lawyer. He had graduated rather recently from Harvard. I guess he was head of the—was it the Harvard Law Review?—and so he got this group together. We were very disappointed when Stevenson lost, and then we got together again for the 1956 Convention, and from that we women got together and formed the Lexington Democratic Club, Women's Democratic Club. After a while we at that time—Lexington was very Republican, really Republican—we went from door to door, and people, I guess, were kind of surprised to find that we weren't all dirty and from the slums. I guess they thought only people from the slums were Democrats, and it was full of young women who had just graduated from Radcliffe or something. I had only graduated from an art college, but I thought everybody else was very educated. And so, anyway, we finally got the town to be more Democratic than Republican. It took a little while, and the men, then, wanted to join us. So, we changed it in order to…and then Dan Fenn became very, very important in…he had a way about him that could get along with almost anybody, and what he did was he worked on the old time Democrats in town that were on the Democratic Town Committee but they hadn't done anything since years before when a gentleman that they liked very much was running for some office and they all were on this committee. So, he worked very, very well with them and was able to ease these new people into this Democratic Town Committee, and from then it just grew, and so we think we really changed the thinking of the town in those days. We held lots of affairs, good ones, and we had speakers all the time. I sometimes wish it was as active today as it was then.

INT: Moving forward to 1971, how did you learn that the Vietnam Veterans Against the War planned to march here in Lexington?

MC: I don't remember exactly how I heard of it, but I remember at that time I was very interested in anything like that that was going on, so I did hear about it, and the only thing is that we were so anxious. We got

together at meetings and tried to figure out what was going to happen, and we decided that we would get together if permission was not given for the people—the soldiers—to stay on the Green, then we would assemble and stay with them. The decision had been made to do that. But we were going to a wedding that day and so we went to our wedding. We had not yet heard, and it was the night of the sit-in, but I called up from where I was…I kept calling someone who kept me informed, and when I heard that they were not given permission and they needed bodies there, we left the wedding with our children, and we ran home and grabbed some blankets, changed our finery, and went out to join the crowd, and it was a very interesting experience. First of all, we just couldn't imagine that permission wouldn't be given, and so it almost became like a holiday. You know, everyone talking about it, and wondering what was going to happen, and then we became a little anxious as it got later and nothing was done, and then, of course, the police came and I don't know whether it was 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

INT: What do you remember about that earlier part of the evening when you were down there with your blankets—who were you talking to?

MC: Well, I think it was someone from the First Parish Church that was right next to us. I think she was the Education Director, and we did talk to various people that we knew that were there. I can't remember exactly who, though. We just saw many people that we knew; many of our friends were there.

INT: Did you happen to speak with any of the vets?

MC: I don't think that we did. No. There weren't any vets right around us. But I was so glad that [later U.S. Senator John] Kerry decided to do this. I thought it was the proper place to have done it. He said "It began here," and he decided to use Lexington. I thought that was an excellent idea. It was just too bad that [Selectman] Cataldo, I guess was the

one who was very much against it, didn't allow it. Then again, it was politics. I think he was involved with the Republican Party, at the time that was very much for the war, like most people.

INT: Were there many Lexington Democrats who were down there with you?

MC: Oh, yes, there were. Oh, yes. Most of the women that belonged to that Women's International League for Peace and Freedom were there. A group from Lexington formed within that International League that had never been in existence, and then it did go out of existence after the war was over. We met for a few times after that, but I think the people in Lexington were very active against the war, even more so than most places.

INT: You mentioned that your children were with you.

MC: Yes.

INT: How old were they at that time?

MC: Let's see. What year was that? Well, Dario…what year did that happen now?

INT: 1971.

MC: 1971? Oh, yes. Well, Dario just was in high school…well, he was at Browne and Nichols then that last year, and Tina was at the New England Conservatory, I guess. And they were very anxious to go [there], and anxious to stay, and then—when we were herded into the buses and taken to the armory [Lexington Dept. of Public Works building], was it?—we paid a fine and were allowed to go home, but Dario wanted to stay and he wouldn't allow us to pay for his fine. He was going to stay right there, and it seems to me they were put behind some bars if I'm correct. It didn't look very good to me, but he wanted to wanted to stay, so I thought, well, it wouldn't hurt him, and I guess the next day he had to go up to the Concord court house, and so that was an experience for him.

INT: Were there other young people who were also down there on the Green or…

MC: Yes, oh, yes. There were a number of young people, too, that were arrested and a number of them stayed just as Dario wanted to stay on, and not go.

INT: Any of them your students at the high school?

MC: Yes. There were some of my students there now, now that I recall. There were some. I remember at that time there was quite an active group against the war right at the high school, very active politically, but that didn't go on later, but at that time it mobilized a lot of the students to act.

INT: What kind of interchanges could students and their teachers have about the war at that time?

MC: Well, there were some, not that much, but there were some. I remember [Noam] Chomsky coming at one time, but I guess that was mostly over the Israeli-Palestinian question, but the school certainly opened its arms this sort of thing. They were fine about it, and allowed the students to do what they wanted.

INT: So, when you went to school on Monday, what did people say to you?

MC: Well, I remember telling the students about it, and they were kind of excited about it, and of course some of the students had taken part, and it was a very exciting thing to have done, I think.

INT: Were they surprised that their teacher got arrested?

MC: Oh, yes. They did, as a matter of fact. They did. And I remember Jack Nolan became President of Mass Art [Massachusetts College of Art] before he was arrested that night, and I always remember thinking, well, he was arrested with us, too, the President of Mass Art.

INT: What about your colleagues, the other teachers? Did they take different views of your arrest?

MC: Oh, some, yes. There were those that I argued with a lot. And they didn't think it was right to have done that, you know? But it's a minority.

INT: What were their concerns, the people who thought it was the wrong thing to do and told you so?

MC: Well, they thought that it just wasn't right to do this. That just didn't give any reasons that I know of. They just disapproved of it, and anything against the war, because they thought that way to begin with, but I thought it was a very political thing myself, this action.

INT: Why did you decide to be arrested? What was central for you?

MC: The central part was that I was very much against the war, and I very much thought that this veterans group should appear and do this. I thought this was a wonderful move on Kerry's part and thought the publicity would be very good to show that veterans were against the war, too, once they got back, and decorated veterans at that. So, I thought it was an excellent idea.

INT: Did you have to go to court after your arrest?

MC: No, I didn't have to go. Dario did. But he didn't talk about it much, but I think he liked the idea that he protested a little bit more than we did.

INT: What was the personal impact of this event for you?

MC: The personal? Well, I don't know. I felt satisfaction, certainly, that I had done something. I felt, well, you've gone without sleep and you've…but then it was something very different, too, and whenever I had an occasion to say when I was arrested, I kind of liked the reaction I got to "When I was arrested..." "*Arrested*? For what? " [Laughter.]

INT: So, you hadn't been arrested before?

MC: No. Never arrested before.

INT: Why do you think that this went the way it did?

MC: Well, to begin with I thought it was political. I thought the Selectmen were probably led by Bob Cataldo, who was head of the Selectmen at the time, and I know he was very involved with the Republican Party on the state level. I think he was the man who raised all the money in this whole area, maybe all of Massachusetts for the Republican Party. And the Republican Party, of course—I think Nixon was in at the time—and they wanted the war to go on. They wanted to see a finish to it. So, first of all it was that, and I thought that it did help people to do a little more thinking about the war and whether we should be in it or not. Why is it that it went on for another four years or so—didn't it? It didn't seem to help that much, but I think it was a part of helping the people sort of get sick of the war, and maybe certainly it helped before that. Enough people wanted to see an end to it that they voted Johnson out, but I always felt that not enough blame was given to Nixon who kept on and stayed with it all those years. I couldn't understand it, and he wasn't blamed that much somehow. I don't know why, but when they say who was to blame, it's usually Kennedy and Johnson, whereas Kennedy, I feel didn't even started the whole thing. As a matter of fact, I think it was the Dulles brothers that started everything; one who was Secretary of State under Eisenhower [John Foster Dulles] and the other was head of the CIA [Allen Dulles]. And the strangest thing about that—and I've never, ever seen an answer to it, but it's my own thoughts about it—is this: both those brothers during the war, before the war, they headed a corporation that represented the Krupp munitions makers of Germany, and they were absolutely for Germany at that time, and did not want us to get into the war, and how when Eisenhower was elected they became the two most important men, even more important than Eisenhower because Eisenhower was not a

forceful President. He sat back and let things go on, and these men surely went on and ran the country, and I think they had the whole mind set toward getting us into an arms race with Russia. They were very anti-Communist, of course, and so two men who are really Fascist-thinking men were put in charge of the country, practically. I have never seen the answer to it, and they started it all. They started the Vietnam thing; they started it all. I think that our country would have gone on to maybe greater things if they hadn't come on the scene because it's been downhill ever since then. My own little thing I add to this. But I feel strongly about that.

INT: Moving to the Lexington scene just a little bit, did the protest have any impact on the Democratic Party here in town?

MC: Well, I think they were all in agreement with it, certainly, and I guess most of the people were in agreement with it, the Democrats, most of the protestors.

INT: Do you think that that protest had any long-term impact on the town?

MC: Well, I'm not sure. I really don't know. I hadn't thought about it.

INT: Could it happen again?

MC: I guess it could. It could if something were demanding it to happen.

INT: What do you think you would do?

MC: Oh, if I felt strongly, I would go ahead in spite of my age.

INT: Do you have anything that you'd like to add to this formal part of the interview at this point?

MC: Well, I can't think of anything else that pertains to that. It's certainly something that I'll never forget. It did make quite an impression, and I'm sure it did make an impression on everybody that took part, but I can't think of anything else that I would say about it.

INT: What we usually do at this point is open it up to other people who are sitting here, and they may have some questions that they would like to ask you. So, if that's all right with you we'll just continue on.

MC: Absolutely.

INT2: I was wondering if you had tenure at the time.

MC: Yes.

INT2: Would there have been any fear of losing your job?

MC: At that time I don't think so. Mr. Johnson was…but if the principal who is there now was a principal then there might have been a question, because he and I used to argue all the time. He used to call me names. As a matter of fact… Oh, yes, he did. He may be nice now. I don't know how he is now, but he used to be nasty to me because he knew how I felt. I mean, I never hid my feelings on any of the subjects, and I didn't talk too much about it to the students. I didn't think that I should, but I do remember when I couldn't resist when Chomsky came for his talk, I told my classes we were going down, so the art classes got a little bit of politics that day. But I did feel very strongly about all of these things. I can't say that I'm that excited now, because things are different, but…

INT: I was thinking there must have been a lot of frustration and anger at the same time.

MC: Yes. There was a lot…

INT: Well, talk about that and how you saw it and what was at issue.

MC: Well, the issue was always those that were a little more liberal against the conservatives as I saw it, and that was with us…well, I don't remember it so much before. Of course, I think that there was no reason—since the town was very Republican at one time—when I first came here there was no reason for me to have noticed anything, but then gradually as we became very active the Democrats became very active, we began to notice that politically, and then it even went further than that, not

only politically, but also into living and customs and what we do with our children and all of that. It pervaded everything, and I think it's very strong right now too with the groups that are against condoms and that sort of things. It goes into that, and…

INT2: Did you follow John Kerry's career?

MC: Yes, I did. I always supported him as much as I could. And he has done some things that I haven't approved of or he's been for some things, but I've always written a letter.

INT2: What other oppositions within churches and demographic groups and so forth?

MC: Well, I was never a member of a church, but my children did go to the Unitarian Universalist Sunday School, and I was friendly with a lot of people that went to that church, and I saw it there, that there was a division even then, and I also noticed that there was a division in the Catholic Church from some people that I knew, when the priests were liberal versus those that were not liberal, and I think there was a difference between the two churches, the one here at first, the Catholic Church near the Green [Saint Brigid's], and the one in East Lexington [Sacred Heart]. I think even there it was a division, the liberal versus the conservatives. And so it has permeated the town, this difference. It was almost just a matter for liberal versus conservative in all matters.

INT2: New versus older families?

MC: Well, not necessarily. I think that depending on, like, many of the children of the conservative families would be conservative, too, in many cases.

INT2: You and your husband—you were a pacifist, and…?

MC: I might have. Yes. I don't know too much about that because right within my own family there are conservatives and then there are those that are as liberal as I. I have one brother that's as liberal as I am, but then

I have a sister who has grown so conservative through the years that she can become very hysterical with me, so I don't even broach it. She's become very conservative in the Catholic religion, which she had never been, and as a matter of fact even now is going to these curative masses where you sort of go out like a light, like the Born Again Christians, and she's been doing that recently. She's about a year and a half younger than I am, I'm past my mid-seventies. So, it's kind of come late in life, this sort of thing, but I haven't changed, and I haven't changed politically either.

INT2: Do you remember what might have happened as a child?

MC: I can't remember. I know I've been for the underdog all the time, and that might have been…I had a very strict mother who abused us verbally and even physically, and it was her only way, I guess. I look back on it and I realize that she was a woman who should not have had five children certainly, and she should have been an actress maybe, but she was caught in a marriage, I guess, and just didn't know any better, and I think she might have been manic-depressive. I'm sure she was, and I think this sister of mine is, too. So, I always felt like I…she was always very negative in her treatment of us, and I knew she loved us. It was just her way, and I think because of that I…I remember she used to tell me that I was homely… But anyway, she used to tell me that I was homely when I as a teenager. When you're young you think you're homely anyway, and so since…I know now, that…I'm an artist, and I like to do portraits so I'm interested in faces, and I remember I would look in the mirror and I would say, well, your nose isn't too bad, and your lips aren't bad. I would just look at myself and try to analyze why I was so homely, but I always ended up saying, but you are homely. You know? And it wasn't until I went to art school, and we had a teacher called Mr. Major. Oh, my, that man was something again, and everybody was scared to death of him, and he was almost wild. He had a big mane of white hair. He was not very tall. He

had a white beard, and he had eyes that bulged out of his head. Oh, wow. That man! He just threw fear into everybody, and he would go around to your drawing and he would say "Chhyehhhick!" [Laughter.] And then he'd walk around. I don't know if that thing—he's walk around like this. [Demonstrates.] Well, I have to show you what Mr. Major did. [Laughter.] And he would go around the room and squish-squash-squish, and he would go all …until he was…you draw your drawing, and if he didn't like your drawing he would say it was mud, and he'd go around squishing. His feet would do this sort of thing. And then he would get very angry at somebody's drawing and he'd say, "Go back to the room, and do somersaults and get that brain matter effervescing," and he would do crazy things like this. But somehow he liked me, and he would say, "Now, class there's a romantic Italian beauty," and he would tell me I was beautiful and so on, and so I began to think my mother says I'm homely, and this man says I'm beautiful, but he's an artist. Maybe he knows. [Laughter.]

But, no, really, getting back to this, I did always feel for the underdog, all the time. And I think it was because I felt that my mother picked on me. I was the oldest, and she expected me to keep everybody in line, and she forbade us to do so many things. Like, we lived in the city in East Boston. It was a lower middle class neighborhood, but nice trees and all that, nothing that looked slummy or anything like that, but that was the general idea, and we weren't supposed to play ball, nor could we get on a sled because you'd kill yourself, nor could we do anything, but my brother and my sisters did everything. They would go…there was a firehouse diagonally across, and they had a nice big wide alley and they'd go in there and do all kinds of somersaults and all lovely things, but I was very timid, and I stayed right by the house and did what she wanted. And by golly, she would see me doing something and she would call me first, because I hadn't stopped them, and lick me about it first. So, I always felt I was being

picked more than anybody else. So maybe that's why, but I always tend to see the other side.

Another thing, as I was growing up I was very idealistic about our country, and I liked the system. I liked the democratic system. I just thought we were great, and then I slowly found out all the wrongs that were going on, and then later what the CIA was doing in all the Latin American countries and all. I was apt to believe it when others did not. For instance, when Kennedy was assassinated I believed that it was some kind of a conspiracy, and I believed that the government at the time was involved, whatever the government was then—whoever. So people think I'm very suspicious and so ready to believe in conspiracies, but from what I've observed I can't help but feel that way. I remember a friend of mine, a black fellow. He was the only black in our high school, and he was a friend of ours. He was the most intelligent man in the school, and I remember him coming to see us here when we moved here, and he picked up, I guess, *Time* magazine, and he looked at it, and he said, " Marion, is this the only thing you read?" And I said, "Oh no, Edwin, I don't know what else to read. What should I be reading?" He said, "Well, you should be reading the alternative press," and I said, "Oh yes, of course. Yes. Now what is that?" And so he told me *The Nation* and *The Progressive* and so I subscribed to *The Nation* and *The Progressive* and I became progressively more liberal, but at the same time he started becoming very conservative, and he became so conservative so that even though we're still friends, we are barking friends if we talk politics. So we don't. He really is so intelligent that I cannot stand when there are people who look up to him, and he's telling them lies! And he does. I mean, he's so conservative right now; he's incredible. So, he's the one that got me really started reading the alternative press, and so I've always believed this way, and I have not mellowed or gotten more conservative as I've got older.

INT2: Can I ask you ask you a question about the weekend of Memorial Day, 1971? You were at a wedding the Saturday, so I'm assuming you were not present for some of the meetings between the Selectmen and the townspeople?

MC: Not that evening, no.

INT2: Were you present at any of the meetings or things that happened after the arrest took place?

MC: No, no. I was not involved in those. I guess I was very busy teaching at the time.

INT2: How did you feel about the arrests?

MC: Well, I didn't like it. I do know I did not like it. I wasn't frightened. I thought all night it may happen, but they would be crazy. I mean, they just can't do this. I just didn't believe it was going to happen, and it did. And when I did, I know I felt kind of strange getting into that bus, but I really wasn't frightened over it. I was ready to do it. I knew what was going to happen and that it would happen. It might happen, and I was ready for it, but I didn't like what happened, certainly.

INT2: On the Green that night, just prior to the arrest—there are two things I wanted to ask—one was you said that the atmosphere was festive, I think, was the word you used.

MC: Sort of, yes.

INT2: Could you just kind of elaborate a little bit about that word? What was happening that…

MC: Well, people were talking and laughing and there was, like, an anticipation type of thing, you know, well, what's going to happen next? Maybe they'll say all right, it's okay, and of course nothing like that happened.

INT2: Did it appear that people were partying in some way?

MC: Oh, not really partying. No, no, I don't think so. But people seemed to be very friendly and talking to each other.

INT2: And then what happened that the people who were in an official capacity, do you recall what they did or said prior to the arrival of the police?

MC: No. I think there wasn't anything that I knew of.

INT2: There were no speeches or…

MC: No.

INT2: Other people have mentioned tension between the police and young people…

MC: Meaning just in general? Yes, yes. There was a lot of tension. There was one boy who had been killed or one boy that was—not killed, but hurt very badly—so he was really a cripple all his life.

INT2: What happened?

MC: Well, a policeman had shot him as he was going over a fence. He was running from him. Actually those kids were doing nothing. He was from Peacock Hill. He was a Peacock Hill…wait a minute…

INT2: Was he from around here?

MC: I think so, yes. It was the…she said it was the Uranek boy. I think it was the Uranek boy. There were two boys and let's see, I'm trying to recall it. I don't know if they were in a car on [Route] 128 or something, and the police told them to stop or something, and as they stopped, one of the boys started to run. Now, he might have had something in his pocket, I don't know. Maybe he might have had something. I'm not sure. But he started to run, and right at 128. It was right near home, I guess, and there was a fence, and he started to climb the fence, and they shot him, and that crippled him. He was in a wheelchair the rest of his life. His back was injured badly.

INT: At what era was that? What year approximately was that?

MC: Let's see. That might have been the seventies.

INT: So, you being a high school teacher, you were aware of what was happening with the young people?

MC: Oh, yes.

INT: How did the students discuss or talk about these events?

MC: Well, of course, they didn't care for the police at all. Most students just did not like the police. And I remember this: many letters came from this, pro police and against the police, and there were a lot of letters going back and forth at that time over that affair. But the police were always very suspicious of the students, and in those days, you know, they weren't…it isn't that they were like some of the students are today. They were really mild.

INT2: What were the police doing? I mean, what purpose did the police have, or did they....

MC: Well, they were afraid of drugs, I guess, and marijuana. It's marijuana mostly, and some of the kids were smoking pot, like everybody else was, I guess.

INT2: Has it changed?

MC: I think it has changed. I don't think there's that much going on now. I don't think so, and I remember Dario was asked to be the leader of the high school group when he was very young, a youth group at the Unitarian Universalist Church, and I was surprised, because it was always a senior, and yet Dario was asked, and when he told me I said, "Oh, Dario you're too young to do that, you know, you sort of have to be in charge of all these kids and they're all older than you are," and he says, "Well they asked me." I said, "Well, you know, maybe you'd better not," and he said he wanted to, but he stopped himself after a few months. He had a hard time. He had to see that the kids were all out of the church by a certain time Sunday nights when they met, and I think they chose him because he

was the only one not on drugs, that wasn't smoking marijuana. [Laughter.] He was the only one who had a head on his shoulders at the time. And he says he had a hard time controlling them. It was very difficult. So, this is why, finally, I was spending more and more time at school, because there were a lot of troubled kids that were coming. There was a lot of moving around in those days, people coming in from California, and I found a lot of the kids used to come in after school to talk to me; rather than go to a counselor they'd come to me. I often wondered why they always came, but I think I know why. I remember the first time someone came to me and was telling me that she tried to commit suicide three times, and she had slit her wrists. As a matter of fact, I knew her parents quite well, and things weren't going too well at home. Her father was fooling around with other women and so on.

INT2: That kids would come to you with their problems…

MC: I don't know if it was with her or with somebody else that tried to commit suicide, and I said, "Well, you know, I tried that, too." So I think this is what used to get the kids to come to me. I think in those days if you went to a psychiatrist he'd sit back and you'd do all the talking, and lots of times some people don't talk that easily, but I notice by taking part…and when I said this, they said, "You did?" I said, "Yes." Yes. I was 16 years old and I went up towards Chelsea Bridge, and there were these great big hulks of sailing boats rotting away against the bridge, and I looked in the water, and in those days—not today, but in those days—there were great big, ice floes. This was true. You could almost walk across Boston Harbor from East Boston. At one time there was always ice in the winter, and I said, "And I saw those great big ice floes, and looked down, and I said, oh, if someone had told me it would be a good way to die, you know, you hear music, you drown." I said, "I looked down in that water, and it looked so cold, I just wouldn't commit suicide that way." So, of course, they'd laugh,

and they'd say, "Well you know, Mrs. Coletta almost did, and lookit. She's okay now." And so that would make the kids talk a little more, and most of them had their parents in mind when they were talking, you know, and so of course, being a parent, I would gently turn it to show them that their mothers and fathers were doing the best they could, and so on, you know. And it worked. They liked it. So more and more I was caught in school until late hours. It was then I would try to clean up all the mess around. Joe would come in around 6:00 o'clock and say, "Hey, when are you going to get my dinner?" And I'd say, "When you help me around here, and get me out of here!" And he would come in and he'd help me. Well, I thought, Dario can't go on like this. I want to be home for him. So the last two years, that's why I sent him to Browne and Nichols, because they have a program all set up there for after school, and so I didn't have to worry about him. And then I knew what…his friends were all smoking pot, and I didn't know when he'd start. So, I thought, well, I'll get him. He objected, of course, but I knew that I could do this with him, because he was okay. Never with my daughter. My daughter would never have consented to anything like that, changing schools. [Laughter.] Here I'm rambling on. I don't know whether this is doing any good.

INT2: It's very good. We need to hear about it.

MC: Well, most of the students that I talked to certainly…I mean, those that would hang around and all that, felt the same way I did. They were against the police in those days. The police were out being nasty. They had nothing else to do, I guess.

INT2: Is that how you felt about possibly being arrested by those same people?

MC: Well, no. Everybody else was going to be arrested. It was too big a thing for them to…there were a great number of us. Does anyone remember how many?

INT: Over 450 people.

MC: Yes. That's true. That was a lot.

INT: It was the largest mass arrest in Massachusetts history.

MC: Is that right? I hadn't thought about it that way. Wow. Amazing. Amazing. What a stupid thing to do! [Laughter.]

END OF INTERVIEW