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Interviewee: Molly Dougherty

Interviewer: Miguel Gutierrez Jr.

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TRANSCRIPT BEGIN

Interviewer: This one is going now. If you want to start, we can do your name, your age, title, and the organization that you're currently working with.

Molly Dougherty: My name is Molly Dougherty. I'm the Executive Director of Vecinos, a non-profit here in Austin. I'm 64 years old. I've been the Director of Vecinos since 1984, since I started it to get people. At the time there were a number of wars going on in Central America. I need some water.

Interviewer: Vecinos is a support network or support group that aids ASAPROSAR?

Molly Dougherty: Well, that is what it is now. It started out before I even knew about ASAPROSAR. Before ASAPROSAR even existed. It started out because all the wars were going on in Central America, and that my aim was to get people in Texas more informed about the wars, especially in Nicaragua and El Salvador. There was also some war in Guatemala. But I felt like we are neighbors of these countries, and we should be informed. At the time I had gone through a process, I had been a leftist for many years, I had gone through a process of disillusionment with the hardcore left. I was frustrated that a lot of the groups that existed, the different solidarity groups, were very much one side of the picture. Then you had, of course, the governments that were another side of the picture. Well, in the case of Nicaragua, it was the other side. But anyway, I felt like there needed to be somebody giving both sides different perspectives, so that's what we did. We brought in speakers from various perspectives to talk about that, and in the process of that, I met some people from El Salvador and ended up going there and we was there at the founding of a ASAPROSAR. We did put out a conference at the LBJ School about corruption. As corruption, how it affects US foreign policy in Central America. We had some really good speakers come in for that.

Interviewer: What year was this?

Molly Dougherty: That was in 1985 probably before, I'm not sure. But after that really our focus shifted to supporting ASAPROSAR because I was so impressed with them.

Interviewer: But before your work in El Salvador, you were in Nicaragua at the time, right?

Molly Dougherty: Right. I spent a year in Nicaragua from the fall of 1981 to the fall of 1982. I went to Nicaragua because when I was living in Paris in exile from my Panther activism in Oakland, I had met a number of people who are exiles from Latin America and I learned to speak Spanish. Then when I came back to the States, I got hired as the Assistant Editor of a film documentary about Nicaragua called, Nicaragua, These Same Hands, that was on PBS. The film company sent me to Nicaragua to get some additional material for the film. That was my first time to go there, and so I had to go to the television station and just sit there until they gave me, I guess they were really busy, it was a speech by Tomás Borge, I just needed them to copy it, but it took forever, but finally I came back.

But I was able to make some connections. One of the heroes of the film is Walter [inaudible 00:03:59] , he's one of the action at the National Palace. There was commandante [inaudible 00:04:08] [inaudible 00:04:09] was commandante dos or uno, I don't remember which, I guess and then [inaudible 00:04:15] . Anyway, whatever. All these different commandantes. But anyway, Walter [inaudible 00:04:23] was commandante tres, I think. Anyway, he was one of the heroes and he was one of the people we interviewed our movie along with Ernesto Cardenal and had a lot of wonderful music in the movie. Some told a story through music and through Ernesto Cardenal's poetry. It's a pretty cool movie.

That was how I first went there. It was to get more material, and then I used the connections I made with the movie to arrange to go back there in the fall of 1981, soon after the Santa Misa's had taken power. After, just to go back slightly, after I had come back from Paris, I had made some connections with the Cuban government through a friend who was a former CIA agent, who I went with him. His name was John Stockwell and we went to Cuba. I met some people there and they invited me to come to Cuba several times. That connection ended up being very helpful because when I arrived in Nicaragua thinking, well, this is great, I can be a volunteer. Well, there's hundreds and hundreds, I don't know, maybe thousands of people, including our director here, Charlie Hale, who was one of the many volunteers who came from the states. The Nicaraguan government had a very funny situation, I thought it was funny. They had all these people wanting to stay there who had arrived to help. It was just chaos and they were very disorganized. You can sympathize with them. What do they do with all these people who want to volunteer? Well, they had what I consider a very silly rule that you got to the front of the line if you had been a member of a solidarity group in the US or somewhere else. Well, that was silly because somebody's working in a solidarity group maybe to prove their loyalty, their commitment, but they might not have any skills that the revolution needs. Meanwhile, they were sending home doctors and other people who are engineers and people who had skills that they desperately needed because they were so ideological.

Ironically, the person who decided who stayed and who left was a Mexican. I don't remember his name but it was funny. Even though I had spent a year helping to make a film that was on PBS. It wasn't all over the country, but it was on in several cities in the US. Very favorably trying the Nicaragua Sandinista Revolution. I had not been a member of a solidarity group, and so technically speaking, they could just throw me out. I had to use my connections I'd made the year before with the Cuban government. They wrote a letter for me. That was pretty funny. But at that point, I was desperate to get anything, so I could stay there. By the way, there was a lot of crap going on. If you sleep with the right person, you can get whatever you want, but there's that stuff that goes on in any situation, some of that was definitely very messy. Anyway, I was volunteering for awhile at the Sandinista Propaganda Department. It was called a [inaudible 00:08:04] , and helping them with some materials I had collected about the CIA. Then I gave them, of course, a copy of our film. A lot of it was originally in Spanish, so we had both the subtitle and a diversion that we'd used here because they wanted the original in Spanish, so that's what I gave them.

Then I had been working with a guy who had done a very interesting documentary about the CIA called, On Company Business. It was at that time they were making a copy of it dubbed in Cuba at the Cuban Film Institute, but they were taking forever. The Sandinistas wanted this film. I had the text and I had the film, and so I said, "Well, I can help you." Who knows when they were ever going to get finished with it. I said, "I'll help you if you wanted to do your own dubbing, and I'll wait for them." They said that was fine. That was my most interesting time in Nicaragua where I spent, I don't know, a month or two going to the SSTV, the Sistema Sandinista de Televisión every day, as if I were an employee. I wasn't getting paid

and supervising the actors who dubbed this film. That was very, very fun and it was also fun observing and in everywhere I went in Nicaragua, there was tons of Cubans and tons of Mexicans, as well as live Americans and Europeans.

But, it seems like the people in the most important positions were mostly Mexicans and Cubans. I definitely idolized the Cuban Revolution. That was true at the television station also. This was pretty interesting. Some also had mostly put American stuff on the television station. They didn't really have very many trained actors or people who had trained in anything to do with theater or television. He had just used all this American stuff, and of course, that's not what they wanted. Well, they wanted to stop that. They had these criteria, they were very interesting, it had to be respectful of women, had to be not imperialistic. I don't remember what they called everything. There were some problems at the time there were two systems of doing videos, and one was done in the US and one was in Europe. I can't remember what they did in Mexico and Brazil. There were things that had to be either transferred or they couldn't use, I can't remember the details.

But there were these limitations. The one reason they had all these Mexicans is because, they came in and they were directors and actors, and they were training the local people. Of course, they wanted to get the local people trained to do these jobs. But there is one guy who was sitting in a room all day long, and his job was to look at programs, mostly ones from the US or I guess some cases Europe, and decide whether they were politically correct basically. I remember going in one day, he was watching The Incredible Hulk. Yeah, they look at that. They would even look at individual episodes and decide. It was pretty funny. They did have a very entertaining soap opera from Brazil that I guess they had that either dubbed or subtitled. They had a little trouble finding enough content that they approved of. I'll never forget the guy watching The Incredible Hulk. That was very funny. That's what he would do. Sit there all day watching TV, and deciding what could go on their TV and what couldn't.

Anyway, and the other, memorable time I had there was when this former CIA agent, named Philip Agee, came and brought a German friend with him. The German friend didn't speak any Spanish. He was very fluent in English, so they hired me as a translator to go with him to the Atlantic coast, so that was really interesting. I think we went to Bluefields. We may just [inaudible 00:12:59] and up pretty close to the border. There we learned about some of the problems they were having with the different indigenous peoples. That was very fascinating. I'll never forget when we were at the jungle somewhere and I said, "I go to the bathroom." They said, "Well, we don't really recommend it because around here there's a snake, it could be anywhere, you don't know where it's going to be." We actually just saw one that they'd run over, or somebody had run over. They said, "If that snake bites you, you're dead within a couple of minutes. You don't want to be just going off the road and then squatting down and peeing." You had to hold it until you got back to where there couldn't be any of these horrible snakes.

I guess another thing I just wanted to mention was, I felt like they were copying the Cubans in a lot of ways. The women's organization was when they had the exact same name, just put Nicaragua instead of Cuban. The women's organization in Cuba is very oriented toward what the party's goals are, not what women's goals are. So they were doing the same thing, doing what's good for the party, not good for women. Of course, that wasn't very effective because most of the women were not stupid, they noticed who you're really helping. There was just a lot of copying because they really revered the Cubans.

Interviewer: So there was a little bit of disillusionment with you?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah.

Interviewer: About what [inaudible 00:14:49] revolution, maybe noticing limitations?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah, right.

Interviewer: Revolution.

Molly Dougherty: Well, the other thing is, instead of us having Fidel, which is one person running things, you have these nine guys, and the nine guys, who are they? For one thing, they're all guys and mostly very young and with no experience. I mean, the guy who, Walter Ferretti [inaudible 00:15:13], is he's a hero of the fight against Somoza. So they name him head of the National Police Force. They were just creating. Well, he had no idea how to run a Police Force. I mean, he went to Cuba and got some training on how to run a Police Force, but a lot of them were really good-hearted people trying hard to do a good job, but they really didn't have a lot of training. Then the people that were running more like the hardcore intelligence forces or the army or whatever, those people were also [inaudible 00:15:56] human models. When the Cubans took over, the Fidel and the communists took over, they really did kill a whole lot of people that were their opponents and they didn't do that so much in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas did put a lot of people in prison. There were things I was seeing that weren't really into the freedom of the press. There was a lot of things I was seeing that were disillusioning, beginnings of being disillusioned.

Interviewer: Did you return to the US after Nicaragua for a little bit?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. I returned to the US because, some of the things I was involved with in denouncing the CIA, there was a law that the Congress passed, it's called the Naming of Agents Bill. It said if you were American and you were responsible for exposing a CI, then they think you could be a felony. It was aimed at people like Philip Agee who are abroad. That's why you can never go back to the US. From before he couldn't go to the US, but definitely, now they made it hard for anyone. I was just advised by a lawyer who came through. He said, "If you want to stay out of prison if you want to go back to the US, it's probably good that you go home now because this is not a good thing for you to be involved in."

Interviewer: How long were you home for?

Molly Dougherty: Well, never, but I didn't go back and live in any Central American country. I started going to El Salvador in the fall of '84. That was like a year and a half later.

Interviewer: After returning from Nicaragua to Austin, then you went to El Salvador?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah.

Interviewer: What made you want to El Salvador?

Molly Dougherty: Well, what I did in that year and a half. That was when I was distributing the movie about the CI. Yeah. Because when else it would have been or 1980. I'm a little bit confused about when I was doing what. That's one that was 1982, when I got home I was helping my friend distribute the movie about the CI. I met a Salvadoran refugee. It's a long story, but basically, it was another film that was being made about a Salvadoran who had been in the army, and he was living in New Orleans and he was

the same guy who made the CI movie was making a movie about him because he was a source about the death squads and how they operated and who they were, and he was willing to talk about them, so this guy, Erin Brockovich filmed him. Then there was this Salvadoran refugee that heard about me, that I was involved in helping this guy raise money. He contacted me and then we just became friends and he invited me to go to El Salvador, and he said he knew people across the political spectrum, right and left, and he said, "Look, if you don't want to know El Salvador, don't read about in the book, you can do that." But he said you go there and you meet everybody. You meet the rich, you meet the poor, you meet the people on the FMLN, and you meet the army, you meet the death squad, you meet the landowners.

He even found somebody to go with me, so I don't have to go alone. He invited me and he couldn't go because he was a refugee, but he set up meetings for me with somebody from the army, a rich guy. He introduced me to somebody, he said was in the death squad, although recently I met that guy Stanley said, "I don't think so." I think that was a little stretching it. A very conservative guy anyway. Then from people from the FMLN. First trip was pretty incredible and he said, "Oh, and you've got to meet this doctor because she's a childhood friend of mine and maybe she could start a hospital and you could do this hospital while you're meeting all these people."

Interviewer: Is that all you had collected [inaudible 00:20:34]?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. The doctor was Vicky Guzman and that was it. She immediately informed the hospital was a very poor idea. His idea was, he hadn't been there in several years because he'd had to flee. His name was Leonogo Messi, he said, "You could treat the wounded from both sides," she said, "Yeah, if you want to get killed by both sides, you treat the wounded from both sides." She said that he didn't realize how things had changed since he left.

Interviewer: It's better to pick a side.

Molly Dougherty: Well, no, you just stay away from it all. He said you don't treat war-wounded, and plus she said, "A hospital is not the way you really reach people. The way you really have impact is preventive health care, health education." That's what she'd done before the war, she was from El Salvador, from Santa Ana, and back then they didn't let women in the medical schools. Unless you were really rich, you buy your way in. But they had very few women and so her family's middle-class, and they send her to school in Mexico in Michoacán and that's where she got her training. But she expected to go back to El Salvador and become a doctor with a white coat.

But in Mexico, they have this thing called where you're paying back your year [inaudible 00:21:46] when you give back for your state-funded medical education. She was in some rural area and just basically learned how to do things from just the folklore. These herbs will treat this, and if you don't have a test for diabetes, so you have people go out and pee outside in the courtyard and you count how many seconds it takes the ants to show up and that's how much sugar is in the pee, and that's how you tell if they have diabetes or not. This is not something she learned in medical school, that says she learned from these people. She just loved it and decided this is what she wanted to do in El Salvador, and she ended up staying a second year because she loved the work so much and she was assigned to in Mexico. Plus they have health care for prostitutes, which you think about it makes sense because you don't want them spreading diseases, and so she was one of the doctors who was examining them and treating them for the government. She found out that these prostitutes were basically prisoners in this one area. This was in Michoacán and in the city and they couldn't leave. They weren't allowed to leave, they were

displayed, the pimps had them as theirs. Also, she started encouraging to organize, and of course this wasn't popular with the local authorities that she got kicked out.

Interviewer: What kind of work did [inaudible 00:23:21] conduct in El Salvador, was it similar?

Molly Dougherty: She ended up going back to El Salvador and having this passion for doing this rural health, there's no one doing it. The government wasn't doing, they were doing occasional vaccination programs so basically nothing in the rural. You go in the rural areas and they haven't even seen a doctor much less a woman doctor, so she would ride around by horse or on the back of a truck. Anyway, she could get around and she started treating people and also training them to treat each other so that she would have these rural health promoters in the villages that she had trained. They would pay her with eggs or with chickens or with whatever, and if they had any money. They called her doctor. Well, people thought that was her nickname, they didn't think she was really a doctor because they've never seen a doctor before and especially wouldn't seen a woman doctor.

Interviewer: Did you follow her around these trips?

Molly Dougherty: No. This is way before, this was before the war. This was in the '70s before I met her. Yeah, that would have been fascinating to be there then.

Interviewer: What was your role with the organization?

Molly Dougherty: Well, what happened is then when the war started, some of the people that she trained as health workers, some of them got involved with guerrillas and people started getting killed. She just had to stop doing this rural work. It became way too dangerous for her and for all the people that she was training. She just started working in Santana just as a doctor but still doing a lot of prevention and a lot of education. When I met her, she'd had to pull back. But she said, "When I go out again, I don't want to be alone, am too vulnerable." She said, if you want to really help me, you need to get me money. Not only need money, but I need you and then Leonardo's guy who had sent me said, "You have to go tell everybody that she's not involved with one side or the other. You have to go talk to the military and you have to go talk to the FMLN and tell them she's neutral." This was the tricky part.

Interviewer: You were like public relations in a way?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah, I guess. But here's the thing, I mean, [inaudible 00:25:39] would tell me you've got to really play a role. He said, "First I'd go to Neiman Marcus and buy this really expensive wardrobe." I said, "That's a lot of money, where am I going to get that kind of money, and plus, why spend it on that, when she's desperate for money to get going?" He said, "Okay, buy a Rolex watch." I said, "That's also expensive." He said, "Well, it could save your life or it could save her life." Finally he convinced me and my father who was in Copenhagen and got some real good deal for Rolex. Of course these days you would buy a fake one, but we didn't know about that back then. Sure enough, they always looked at it right away and I realized he told me you're playing a role, you're Ms. Rich Texan. I am not a good liar. He said, "If you can't lie, at least exaggerate." My family became much wealthier and more better connected than they actually are. Personally knowing the governor into this and that. My father who just died, he was a fairly well-known lawyer, but definitely not wealthy. But it was like implication because I'm not a good liar, but I'm trying to really exaggerate who we knew and how you dress and the Rolex.

I mean Lionel explained to me that what they're thinking is they might lose in this war, I mean, they might end up going on trial or whatever and they need a place to go to and they're going to need friends in the US so you're one of the people they might be able to call if they get in trouble. Meanwhile, you want them to know that this is not a communist front because they're suspicious of anything that's humanitarian, because they think that's bad for this union organizing all these poor people. Then other people were the ones who really want more to talk to the FMLN. I didn't really talk to them that much. We had to neutralize both of them and just say, "We're a health program, we're empowering poor people," which not everyone likes, but actually, neither side liked it because both sides wanted to control it. We would run into these military people I'd say this guy, Casanova, what's his name? [inaudible 00:28:04] He's the cousin. He's the one involved in killing the nuns. He was accused of killing nuns.

Interviewer: [inaudible 00:28:11] ?

Molly Dougherty: No, not him. That's another story about that guy. But no this is in Santana. He was head of Santana at this point, but he was charged with being responsible for killing the nuns, this Casanova guy. We were talking about this health thing we were going to do so he takes us to this little village. Also takes us to [inaudible 00:28:31] , which is now the center where the main gang and the drug cartel is located, the Texas gang. But anyway, that wasn't there then. He takes us there and he said I want you to put your health program there. Well, that was right by the war zone, it was too close. I mean, Santana, Alachapan, Senante were all relatively peaceful. I mean, this was '84 the war was going on. But the western part of the country, there really wasn't much war going on. I mean, you'd see burnt buses and you'd get stopped by patrols, but there wasn't war going on. The whole idea was to put the program there so you wouldn't have to deal with the war. That's why Vicki got very good at saying no but kind of saying yes. Because she mostly had to deal with these people. We had to go smile [inaudible 00:29:30] and act like we think they're wonderful even though they're killers.

It was strange and I had one time when a guy I had gotten to know Dr. Mason, who was very good friends, he was this Casanova, who was the minister of defense, whom I'd met. This was another person in order to meet the landlord, so I'm meeting this guy. I'm having dinner with this guy and he says, I'm just sitting there. This guy is like good friends with these killers. He says, "Molly, tell me about your Black Panther experiences." Of course, I wanted to completely crawl under the table because I was like he's going to get me in a lot of trouble. I just said that was back in my youth, back when I didn't really know much about anything. I mean, that was one of two times that I had something where I had to really think fast for what to say. Another time I was with a guy that Lionel had told me he was with death squads. Now I think he wasn't. But he was definitely a real conservative guy. Those days when you went to Cuba, you always said, "Don't stamp my passport," because you'd get in trouble. One time they did stamp my passport by accident. This guy wanted to see my passport. I don't remember why. This was when I was in El Salvador and he is, looks at that and he sees this Cuban stamp. So he's like, "Well, what's this?" and I said, "Well you know, you got to know the enemy." That was a pretty good line.

Interviewer: This is a lot of maneuvering that you had to do with what a fine line, toeing the line, I guess.

Molly Dougherty: Yeah, and I was playing a role, but I was basing it on like not finding out what I've done in the past. Then this guy apparently had gone, this landowner, when he was in Washington because these guys went back and forth all the time. He had gone to the, I don't know if it's the FBI or the CIA and asked them about me. He was trying to investigate me. I mean, I thought about that later,

that whoever told him about me, I would've loved to have sue that guy. Because he put me in danger. I mean, he had no reason to tell this Salvadorian guy about me.

Interviewer: So you were afraid for, were you afraid for it?

Molly Dougherty: Well, yeah. I mean, these situations made me a little afraid. I felt somewhat protected by being an American. But I had to be very careful because the Salvadorians that I was working with were the ones that were really vulnerable. Vicki especially, and she was the one in charge of everything. I felt like I had to do everything I could to protect her and the people that she worked with.

Interviewer: It's like your citizenship, the fact that you are an American could protect you a little bit because the Salvadorian government saw you less inclined to do anything but the people that were connected to you?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. That would be easy to make them disappear in the middle of a war. Me and Vicki eventually got to be so prominent. Now she has tons of friends in the States. I mean, I don't think they would do anything to her these days or even later, but yeah, I mean, her story is incredible. I mean, she'd had been under house arrest by the army and by the Gorillas and then imprisoned by the army. I mean she's just been through everything in her experiences.

Interviewer: Did you have any experiences close to that?

Molly Dougherty: No, not really. I just mainly heard about them.

Interviewer: What was the one of the scariest moments besides having someone informing basically on you with the government, the Salvadorian government for you? Or was that kind of the one that was, you felt the most danger?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. I think that was probably the scariest. Because most of the time I was in the Santana area visiting the programs and rural health work that was separate to what I was doing. I early on would take different people. I took several different people down to El Salvador to meet Vicki and to see what was going, including Bob and Kathleen Krueger. He used to be an ambassador to Mexico and he was briefly a senator from Texas. But anyway, took him and his wife down and the guy who now is the president of Georgetown University, at the time was the Dean of Students. I just took different people down. Oh, I'll tell you my scariest time, my most difficult time. Lionel was kind of our guide to what do and he, well, just to not go into it. Just too much detail. But he advised Vicki to hire these two guys who were ex FMLN, who'd gotten really disillusioned with the guerrillas.

But there were definitely still leftist, they just didn't want any part of FMLN. Because they'd seen them murder some people who are just rivals within the organization and so they were like, "Wait a minute, this is not what we believe in." Raul, who was one of them, he was camepsino leader, a real natural leader. He'd been told don't bother to read and write, learn to read and write, just follow orders. He's like, "No, I want to learn to read." Supposedly it was a organization for the camepsinos. They weren't trying to empower him, they were trying to order him, tell him what to do and use him and so he got really dissolution. He was just a great guy. They brought, we hired these two guys to work with Vicki, which is a very poor idea because they were really suspected by both sides. The army didn't believe they'd really left the guerrillas, and the guerrillas thought they were traitors. Willy brought both up to the US, they got some paramedical course at Georgetown University, and then went back and Raul

probably disappeared and it took forever to find him. I mean we think now, we eventually found out, we think it's FMLN that killed him. But nobody ever found the body.

Interviewer: He was a campesino that wanted to read.

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. He was the campesino. It was just so sad because he was such a natural leader.

Interviewer: Earlier you had mentioned some ideas or feelings of disillusionment in Nicaragua. Oh yeah. No. Go ahead.

Molly Dougherty: Okay. Well, I got a little ahead of myself. When Vicki first wanted to hire these two guys who were recommended by Lionel and I went down to El Salvador and I was going to meet with them. I had met with them one time before. Then I get there, and I find out that Raul has just been arrested and he was in prison from the Policia Nacional, it is one of the different groups. I think it was that one. This was really bad because he could be tortured and disappeared. Fortunately, he was being held by the National Police. That was fortunate because I just had a meeting through Lionel with, do you know who [inaudible 00:37:00] was? He was briefly in the government, there were these young colonels that took over in the late 70s, because all the different groups came in. He was briefly one of the group of young colonels who took cover so he's briefly head of the government in the late 70s. Then he had to run and go into exile because he wasn't hardcore like the other military people.

I had met him. He originally had the guy Rodolfo Rubello. The head of the National Police had been Mahanos' personal secretary so they were friends and I had just met. Tejano and had a letter from him to take to his friend Ravello. It was the perfect guy, if you have to have your guy in prison, you better have him in prison with this guy because I had some connection to this guy. I make an appointment to go or just walk in and meet in with Ravello and I say, "Greetings from your friend Mahano, we just saw him in New York and he's fine. He says to tell you hi." He said, "Great, and what are you doing here?" "Blah blah blah. I'm working on this health program," completely neutral and stuff and I said, "And by the way, the guy that we just hired to be one of the main people in this program is in your jail right now." He said, "Oh, well, why?" And I said, "Well, because he used to be in the guerillas but he's not there anymore." I said I know this because I know the guy pretty well and I know that he's got thoroughly dissolutioned and just wants to do this health program. I said, I'll look into it and so he looks into it.

Every day, I'm going to the national police headquarters to try to find out what's going on and talk to this guy and of course be very polite and be very friendly. He eventually finds out that the guy has been accused of something but he said, I can get him out of here, but we have to get him out of the country because I think it's not safe for him here, which was an understatement. I said we can get an invitation to go to Georgetown and take this course and so he did eventually get out of prison. But then the next aspect of that was, how do you get him a visa to go to the US? Well, I go to the US Embassy and say I just want visas for these two guys because Israel and the other guy Von, who wasn't in prison but he was also wanting [inaudible 00:39:45] , these guys, we hired them for our health program but it's not safe for them right now and also we wanted to get this training up at Georgetown that they've been very nice to arrange for us.

Well, this guy at the embassy was so awful he was your stereotype of an obnoxious American working on these countries. Well, I know you just want to take a gardener back with you, and I feel like saying, if I wanted a gardener, do you think I have to go to El Salvador to get them? They're all over Austin. I don't

need to come to El Salvador to get my gardener. It was insulting. It was really awful. Eventually, I can't remember all the back and forth about that. There was some tricky aspect to that which I can't remember but eventually, I guess I went to get the visa and he was like, "Well, why are you here to get the visa for this guy?" I didn't want to tell him he was in prison because that will look bad. I had to say, "Well, he can't be here right now." This whole thing, it could have been a movie, like that movie Argo, not that quite. I actually got him a visa and they actually then got out and came here and then he goes back and gets killed so that was very sad. That was I think one of my biggest accomplishments to get the guy out of the country and get him that visa. But it was also one of the diciest.

Interviewer: There was a problem on that.

Molly Dougherty: This was a problem because I feel I was really doing something to help this program by helping him survive. Later I was able to talk to him and I said, Well, are you being tortured? They were at that point, at least with him using electric shocks they were using, where they keep you awake all the time, that torture.

Interviewer: By playing music constantly, leaving the lights on, overstimulation.

Molly Dougherty: I can't remember the details, but it was not physical torture, but where they completely wear you down, or just never letting you sleep. We didn't know what was happening with him because it could have been anything but we did get him out. It was just so sad that he eventually disappeared. Anyway, but a separate SAR did take off and it's just one of the most incredible and effective non-profits in El Salvador. They're the biggest eye care group for the poor. Other than the government which doesn't treat poor people very well. They have a clinic in San Miguel and one in Santana.

Interviewer: Do they still have a pretty strong organization?

Molly Dougherty: Yes. They're pretty strong. They never have enough money, but that's normal.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Molly Dougherty: I did connect them with a local high school here. So it seems like the school is going to send kids down to volunteer there in the summers, which is really great. Now there's also all these problems with the gangs. They have a problem with the urban youth. It's alternative to the gangs for a center where they can come and get tutoring after school or before school. They have sports and they have leadership development and health education and sex education and it's really a wonderful program.

Interviewer: The first time you were in this episode, you were there from '84 till when?

Molly Dougherty: Well, I've never lived in El Salvador.

Interviewer: It's return trip [inaudible 00:43:36]

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. I just used to go a lot and then lately I actually haven't been there in four years and I'm hoping to go this year. I used to go once or twice a year. When we were getting the program started, I was going there every other month practically. So I was mostly there in the '80s a lot.

Interviewer: It's a really difficult period.

Molly Dougherty: Yeah.

Interviewer: How did these events change you then? How did going through these, like the loss of a person that you had saved this man's life, at that moment, it seems like we extended it and then to have him come back and face the death squad presumably. It seems like the Western powers are a little more calm but it was still I'm sure a lot. How did that affect you? What was the effect of that on you?

Molly Dougherty: The stories I heard was more than anything. Vicky would talk about how during the war, it was still at war but it wasn't the height of it, she said when the death squads were the most active, when she seen bodies all over the place and you didn't know when you wake up what bodies. I got to remember to tell you about Korea. But anyway, she said people were using the death squads. It was a number you could call. You could report on so and so, I suspect so and so is with the guerillas. She said if people suspected their husband was having an affair, call the death squads, report him. It was being used for all kinds of personal vendettas, just horrible. It just creates this horrible feeling in society because you didn't know who you could trust. And she said you're just suspicious of everyone even within a family. You didn't know who to talk to and you didn't know what was being listened to or what your phone or your who in the house. It was just this horrible time of complete suspicion of everybody.

Interviewer: Feels like a lot of insecurity.

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. Really, really horrible. So she talked a lot about the early eighties as being just the absolute worst. So I was mainly affected by the stories I heard and everybody knew people who had disappeared. Vicky's story itself is just completely incredible. For a while, the guy who was one of her love of her life was one of the leaders of the communist party, and she was personally not that political. But they didn't trust her because she was friends with Lionel and because her sister was lovers with one of the head military people. So it's such a small country. Everybody has somebody who's there on both sides. But basically, the communist party ordered this guy, who was one of their leaders, to leave her. And they told him if you don't leave her, we will kill her. That's the way to force him to leave her, just kill her. So luckily he agreed to leave her, but she was pregnant with his child, and that daughter is now one of the leaders of [inaudible 00:47:17] She's just this incredible woman who's turned around the children's programs down there.

Interviewer: Did you have a question? It seems like you had an intermediary role. Do you think your heart was still probably with the revolution or maybe with what they represented?

Molly Dougherty: Well, what they represented but not what they become because I heard too many stories about them killing people who were broken out and then the different stories of them.

Interviewer: It goes back to the disillusionment that it's like the ideals and some of the values are there but maybe not solely the application. Did you lose ever hope in people?

Molly Dougherty: No.

Interviewer: Did you think it fortified maybe your result because seeing many people in spite of all the tragedy, still hoping for a better world?

Molly Dougherty: Let's say it just made me less naive because I'd been pretty naive about believing what different leftist groups were saying. Then as I started putting things together, because I saw things. I met some people. There was two people who had a really big influence on my perspective. One is a guy who's a pretty well-known journalist named Stephen Kinzer. He's written about the Nicaragua Blood of Brothers. He's a really good friend of mine. He'd written about Guatemala. He's really bright and really well-informed. He told me a lot of stories about the Sandinistas, but he was definitely no friend of the Contras. I got a lot of perspective from him. Then I also met a guy who was a Trotskyite and he was from Honduras. He was plugged in with leftist circles in Central America. He told me stories about what the Cubans thought of the Sandinistas, which is something of course, I never would have heard. He said they really thought they were a joke. He said Humberto Ortega would go to see Fidel and to see Raul. I don't know. I can't remember the stories but he said they just thought these guys were play acting.

Interviewer: So it was the visions among the [inaudible 00:49:34] .

Molly Dougherty: They were just trying to be revolutionaries but they weren't serious, and they didn't know what they are doing, and they weren't very bright in some cases. The Cubans just really didn't take them seriously, they used them. That was what this guy told me, but he told me a lot of stories. He said these guys, they're not really for the people, they're for themselves. Of course, we've seen that with Ortega, who's become so totally corrupt. It's really sad what he and Rosario have done with that country and how they get back in power. This is really sad. I started putting things together, things I've seen and heard in Nicaragua, things from El Salvador. Raul, of course, he had a big influence on me because he told me stories about the whole thing, about him not being told he didn't need to learn to read. That's awful. That really impacted me.

Interviewer: That's not really a change. That's not really a social change that they're trying to.

Molly Dougherty: It's like just follow orders and it's like an organization run by young upper-class people from the city and telling the campus he knows what to do. What's new about that? I believed in the ideals they have, but I certainly wasn't going to be supportive of the army and what they were doing because I knew the horrible things they were doing.

Interviewer: It seems like your role in the revolution, correct me if I'm wrong, which is my observation, mimics almost your ambivalence with both. I think it seems like because you were working between both sides. It doesn't sound like you were ever in line with the army, but it's like you had a little bit of skepticism about the revolution but it seems like your role was to bring both worlds together in order to move forward with this organization. It seems like a balancing act and maybe there's a little bit of balance in that role as well as agreeing with the values but then also not seeing it completely come to fruition or really applied. I don't know, but I like that role. I think that's a good role to have.

Molly Dougherty: Then I also had to be careful because Lionel, he was trying to expose some of the corruption and some of the death squads and some of the stuff in the army at the same time, probably play this neutral role. Of course, those guys didn't want their corruption exposed and they didn't want their violent deeds exposed. That was a little tricky. I wanted to mention I did meet, what's his name? Ignacio. I remember his first name. Ellacuria, one of the Jesuits who was the head of the UCA, who was killed. I met him not long before that. I was taking him some of the information from the we presented to the Congress about some of this corruption. I can't remember the details. Some of the things that was some pretty important information. I said, I think we really want you to have this and Lionel knew him,

so I could use his name to get an appointment. I was really impressed with him. Of course, I was really sad when he was murdered. That was so awful.

Interviewer: I visited the room actually on a school trip years ago. It's just the way of walking in there to know what happened there.

Molly Dougherty: I know it's strange just to see that place.

Interviewer: The green walls with those couches.

Molly Dougherty: We went there too with the St. Stephen's group, and it was so creepy to be there.

Interviewer: It's difficult. You said you wanted to mention Ellacuria.

Molly Dougherty: Well, that's why Ellacuria.

Interviewer: That's the room.

Molly Dougherty: Because that really affected me when he was killed. I thought it wasn't real. The Jesuits, they were pretty anti-American in the reflexive way. They were mostly from Spain and this tradition that came. You get in these, you get involved with these countries, you learn the players and the nuances. It's not all cut and dried. Somebody I definitely admired. It's one of these guys, I think. [inaudible 00:53:55] was ex-leftist. But the other one, he comes to Austin and he was like going down Sixth Street like, oh, well these homosexuals. He could tell he had his own prejudices. I really love being involved with Vicky Guzman and ASAPROSAR because it's such a excellent group that empowers people. They really are run by Salvadorians. They really empower women. A lot of their staff is women. I guess one thing I've learned after the war, and we did get some money from the German government to work with people who had been on both sides in the war and have put them in the same classroom. Neither one had any money or any job skills. There were a lot of people who are in the same boat after the war. El Salvador has healed a lot better than Nicaragua did I think from what I gathered in terms of people. The war's over, we're not going to keep killing each other. We just got to get of course, this now the gangs, and drugs, and it's gotten really awful in terms of all that. But there were some wonderful stories from these classes of people discovering they'd been in the same battle on opposite sides and comparing us. Remember when we took that hill? We were on this other hill, and then we did this and that. This is incredible stories that you just can't imagine happening. There's really were quite wonderful. Neither of us has any money or any job skills, so we've got to work together and build our country. That was really neat. There are some cool stuff.

Interviewer: It's like building coalitions along what you would think would be very different sides, but they see their similarities. It's very interesting.

Molly Dougherty: That was fascinating. I guess now because I'm involved with a lot of people from the US who want to help out with ASAPROSAR, and some of the lessons I've been learning over the last couple of decades have been how to help, and how not to help, and how North Americans, a lot of times, will go down there and want to help but they don't listen.

Interviewer: Paternalistic, right.

Molly Dougherty: They don't listen. They want to give things away, not empower people to do things for themselves. They sometimes tell people how to run their organizations very inappropriately. They'll do things like, they'll fall in love with some little girl or some little boy, and they'll bring them up here which totally screws everything up because then the person thinks, "Oh, I've got a sugar daddy in the United States." Down there, they're really trying to get them involved in their communities and to give them education.

Interviewer: It's like a dependency thing to reproducing that model.

Molly Dougherty: I've just seen people do things that it's so well-intentioned but so destructive.

Interviewer: So bad.

Molly Dougherty: That's been a big lesson. It's hard for people up here to understand unless they're really willing to listen.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to add that maybe you think should be something that you want to be known about your time in El Salvador, or it could be about your time now even just where you think it's going or anything you think that maybe you feel you want to document or to talk about before, to record?

Molly Dougherty: I just think it was such a wonderful privilege to be able to work down there, live down there, and then to go to visit El Salvador often and get to know these people and to really be exposed to people from different points of view and different economic situations. Then to be able to work with someone like Vicky, who's just an extraordinary person. I just feel really grateful because I feel like I've played this little role, but I was able to keep her going. I sent her first donations and got her hooked up with the first church that sent her her first donation, then a foundation that sent her her first major money. It's become this very important organization. But I played a role just by happenstance that I was there and knew her. I was the first American to go down and start working with her. Now all sorts of people help her out. I just feel really lucky to have been and still be associated with that organization.

Interviewer: Seems like 30 years now. Is it 30?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. This year, this October, it will be 30 years.

Interviewer: That's great and fact that it's still going and that it's like you said, it's Salvadorian run, and there's other individuals who are taking care of it. It sounds like it's still going, and that's the legacy of your work.

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. I just heard a story yesterday of another problem with some Americans coming down there and trying to interfere.

Interviewer: With the organization?

Molly Dougherty: Yeah. People don't learn. They know better. I can give my opinion. That's fine. If I don't like a staff member, they don't mind if you're a friend of theirs to give your opinion, but you don't want to tell him what to do, who to hire and fire, how to run their organization. I'm not from that culture. I'm real clear about that. I don't know what the subtle things are, what things really mean, who

might be stealing. There's a lot of stuff that goes on, and particularly now with these gangs and the drugs, they have to be very careful because they're not always sure what's going on with, especially somebody from the outside. That, to me, just shows extreme arrogance and ignorance that you're going to try to tell them how to do something. It's a real lesson to me. I really feel like I need to educate people here about that.

Interviewer: Hopefully, the organization, it seems like they're in a place after 30 years where they can be like.

Molly Dougherty: They do. They have to be because these are sometimes some of their biggest donors. They have to be polite about it but to be firm at the same time. It's like dealing with the killers. They had to be polite but firm. It's always a balancing act. Not easy.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you for your story. It was absolutely wonderful. If there's anything, you would like to add. I think it seems we pretty much covered it from Nicaragua to El Salvador.

Molly Dougherty: I don't really know that much about Guatemala. I've been there, but I don't know.

Interviewer: I love El Salvador. My research is in El Salvador.

Molly Dougherty: Yeah, tell me, I should have reread your bio.

Interviewer: I'm going to shut this off just so they don't.

TRANSCRIPT END