**Transcript of Bill Jenkins Interview with Milena Wuerth,**

**an intern at the AFSC office in Greensboro, NC.**

Background and introduction to AFSC: I’m Quaker and that’s because in 1861 a Quaker woman became the nurse for my great-grandfather’s regiment, the First South Carolina Volunteers which was the first black regiment in the Civil War and then after the Civil War she continued to work with the men and their families and started a school in 1866 and so for generations we went to this Quaker school but the state had taken it over by the time I came along but it still had that Quaker influence because all the teachers were taught by Quakers. Within three years of the state taking over my mother decided to send us to my father’s family church school which was a Catholic school. And going from a Quaker school to a Catholic school -- there were some differences. But the bottom line is, I had known about the Quakers since I was four but the first time I think I heard about AFSC was during the Civil Rights Movement. I worked in the SNCC office in Atlanta and there was at least one Quaker person there and I think she mentioned AFSC at the time. So I finished college, went to work in Washington DC and at some point I decided to work with young men in Lorton Reformatory right outside the city and the program was an AFSC program, so I became a volunteer with AFSC at that time. And then I went to school and picked up some degrees, you know, you have to have these little pieces of paper to, you know, support your parents. I had finished at least two or three degrees and I was working at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta doing some statistical work for the state of Georgia and I met this white guy, who, meaning no disrespect, I call guys like that that I went to school and work with “cool white guys”, so he was one of the “cool white guys that I knew”, I didn’t know he was Quaker until much later but I think he had told me about the South Africa program in the Atlanta Regional office, I think that’s how it started and then it got reinforced because one of my students at the Morehouse School of Medicine Public Health program was the brother of Stephen Biko, who led the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa during the terrible period of apartheid and he was assassinated and his brother had to leave South Africa and he ended up a medical student at the Morehouse School of Medicine. So somewhere in there those two things came together and I volunteered to work on the South Africa program, again with the American Friends Service Committee with [name unintelligible] and I got very involved in that for two or three years. We were working on the Coke Campaign, you know, Coke was supporting apartheid, so we went to demonstrations and meetings and Reverend Tutu’s daughter was at Emory at the time so it became a community of us who were pretty committed to doing something about apartheid in South Africa. That’s how I got really involved with AFSC and then they asked me to be on the Regional Board. But I always thought Quakers were so “angelic” if you will, until I could never see myself as a Quaker because I was definitely not angelic. And so the board decided to lay down a material aid project in either Angola or Mozambique, I can’t remember which. And these people, at the time they were called “weighty Quaker women” and they came to the board and raised hell. And I said “Oh, Jesus! I can be a Quaker!.” So I got involved, became clerk of the South Africa committee and stayed with that for a while. And then of course my daughter came along and when she got to first grade, the only school I wanted her to go to was a Quaker school. So I sought to enroll her in the Atlanta Quaker school and at some point in that year I went to a Quaker meeting and there was Burt! The thing that got me was I felt so comfortable. I had been disillusioned with the Catholic church since the Civil Rights Movement and I just felt at home in the Atlanta meeting, I still so. Every time I walk into the Atlanta meeting I feel at home, not that I don’t feel at home in the Chapel Hill meeting but not like the Atlanta meeting, the Atlanta meeting just feels like home. So that’s when I decided I would write my letter, and I did. And for some strange reason, despite that letter, I was accepted as a member. So that’s how I found out about AFSC.

Specific memory with AFSC: It’s hard to pick out just one, there were so many. Part of it was that I brought my friends along, Davida Allen, Helen Yale, Walter William, there was a whole group of us, so all of us were young docs of different types and we all got involved. I can’t remember anything specific right now except that it all centered around those nights we spent with Tande Gibachi(?) and talking about South Africa and what the next steps would be in terms of getting divestment from Coke and demonstrations against South Africa. We had a lot of speeches, Bishop Tutu came, his daughter was there but not as active. It was a process rather than a specific event. But certainly the fight for Coca Cola divestment from South Africa was fairly intense. I do remember, we had worked with students at Spelman College to take Coke machines out of Spelman’s campus and the student body was with us and everything and then the president at Spelman, a famous African American person at the time, Johnnetta Cole, came out in support of keeping those machines on Spelman's campus and then a couple of months later she was appointed to the board of Coke. So that showed me this was definitely going to be a fight. Because Coke had money and resources. But that process I do remember as the thing that solidified my commitment to AFSC. And back in DC I got a more narrow sense of the work that AFSC did and I was impressed. I was impressed with Quakers that were connected with AFSC at the SNCC office. But like I said I always thought of them as sort of angelic. So there was never this connection because I always thought of them as being a little too perfect for me, but in Atlanta I got the experience of Quakers as real people.

How Quakerism tied into AFSCs work: Well, there were several things. The struggle for equity I think is a major continuing struggle. AFSC is one of the few organisations I’ve been involved with that really struggles with that issue. I was on the board of the American Red Cross for a while and first of all, there was only one brunette in the room. The American Red Cross does a lot of good work, but they are ruthless. I could not believe how they functioned and they were just scary. When I grew up there were seven Quaker testimonies, not just the five that people talk about now and the one that people tend to leave off was discernment, the process of waiting until God moves us to consensus on an issue. I think all of us who are Americans we want things quickly so there are two things I struggle with as a Quaker: the peace testimony and discernment.

How has the experience with AFSC changed you: Maybe my ego is too big to say that I was changed by AFSC but I came to see that my beliefs fit with AFSC and as I resigned from boards like Carolina Friends School and a few others that I’m on, there’s one that I want to continue on and that’s AFSC, although there’s a lot of work I need to do because the complexity of AFSC is far more substantial than I thought. I thought I just had to have a commitment to AFSC and to just do what I’m told but it’s a little more complex than that especially now that I’m clerk of the audit committee and then the financial office left and the general secretary left and all of a sudden I find myself on a hot seat that I hadn’t planned for. I thought it was an innocuous little committee that would just meet twice a year and say yes, and that’s turning out not to be the case. But it only makes me more committed to the process. So I find that I am more in congruence with AFSC than I had even realized when I first got involved.

My wife describes herself as a “Quaker with pearls” while I am more aligned with the old values my grandmother told me about. We live in the kind of neighborhood my house would buy a house in; I would never buy a house in this kind of neighborhood, never in a million years. So we are negotiating my need for simplicity and part of it has to do with my farmhouse. It’s not exactly what you would call simple but I like to think that it’s going to give me the opportunity to live a more simple life, at least the part of my life when I’m not with my wife, when she’s in Atlanta and I’m down there. So I struggle with that testimony right now, but that’s not so much with AFSC as with my own personal experience. I think that discernment and peace are the things that I’m most committed to. Of course equity is also something I have a commitment to, even in my professional life as an epidemiologist my focus in the last few years has been less on research methods and more on achieving equity in health disparities.

Suggestions for AFSC: I think AFSC needs to do more outreach. Doing good is good. Doing good and everybody knows you’re doing good is better. I think Donald Trump is turning out to be a wonderful opportunity because - I’m originally from South Carolina, from Charleston, and Charleston is a city that has brought bigotry to a fine art. We know how to do bigotry so smoothly and in such a refined way in Charleston that a lot of people just don’t get it because the bigotry has been developed in such a culturally appealing way. What Donald Trump does is bring bigotry right in front of your face. So I think my grandmother is right, there are always opportunities and I think that Donald Trump gives us the opportunity to clarify the remaining racism and bigotry and discrimination in American society, and if we approach it correctly, his presidency could actually help a great deal. AFSC got its Nobel Prize for standing up to Adolf Hitler, Donald Trump is of the same venue and so it gives us a real opportunity to point out to America the prevalence of remaining bigotry in our country. We need to turn the arguments around on some of the issues and not defend but actually be assertive in our programing especially on issues like immigration. I think we need to take the fight to them, personally.