Bill Arney

Interviewed by Eirik Steinhoff

The Evergreen State College oral history project

December 11, 2020

FINAL

[Begin Part 1 of 2 of Bill Arney on December 11, 2020]

Steinhoff: Today is December 11, 2020, with the second part of our oral history conversation with Bill Arney. [My name is Eirik Steinhoff.] I think last time we barely got you to Evergreen.

Arney: That's the way I feel every day. [laughing]

Steinhoff: You're still arriving. Let me see if I can remember, and then maybe you can build on what I remember, or fail to remember, and we can take it from there. You were hired from Dartmouth as a professor of statistics for the MPA program.

Arney: No, I'm a member of the faculty. Still am, and I'm proudly so.

Steinhoff: Thank you, member of the faculty, but they wanted you to teach in MPA.

Arney: That's correct. It was for a job that was in the program.

Steinhoff: Got it. This was '81-'82. That was that school year.

Arney: Right.

Steinhoff: But if I'm remembering correctly, your first year at Evergreen wasn't in the MPA program.

Arney: That's correct.

Steinhoff: Health and Human Behavior, a team-taught program.

Arney: Right.

Steinhoff: I think it would be really helpful, as we re-start for the second episode of this conversation—and I think we touched on this a little bit last time—I would be curious to hear your impressions of coming to Evergreen, whether it's in relation to the campus visit or in relation to that first year, those first two years. I think we got a bit of it down last time, but as just a way of kicking off, I think that might be an interesting way to build into the second part.

Arney: I have a technical question first. Should I be sitting closer? I notice that most people I talk with are bigger than I am.

Steinhoff: I think you're fine. I'll say this, it looks dignified and distinguished.

Arney: All right. I'm sitting here with the sun coming in from over here, and at one point in my seminar this quarter, I looked, and I said, "Oh, my gawd, I'm really turning white." [laughing] I was well illuminated here.

Steinhoff: Sure. But it must only last for half an hour.

Arney: Yeah, it does do that. It goes away. So, back to several decades ago. Coming here. I'm not sure what exactly you're interested in. I knew enough about it not to be terribly surprised. I knew enough about it, like I told you, from the job at NCHEMS. Everybody knew about Evergreen there, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. So, I had some knowledge of it.

Steinhoff: That was in grad school, right? That was a job you had when you were in grad school.

Arney: That was in graduate school. That was before Dartmouth. After going to Dartmouth, I heard about it a little bit, but not much. But I got fired from there, and it seemed like right away, I saw an ad for The Evergreen State College somewhere. I saw this ad and applied. I applied around at other places, too, but I got this job.

Steinhoff: I hear that. I think what motivates the question, in part, is the first impression. The energy that comes with first impressions. Of course, you perhaps had a different perspective, in part, because of that NCHEMS work. Even just what you were able to see from that earlier NCHEMS work, I think, would be of interest, even if it's just a sentence or two.

Arney: My biggest memory of the interview was sitting with students who were in the graduate program. I remember talking about a paper that I had written called "Statistics as a Language." They seemed to like it. Did I mention the story about going to my first son's wedding? A woman came up to me and said, "Oh, I remember you, father of the groom. I was on the student committee that hired you."

Steinhoff: You did mention this, yes.

Arney: She was very nice and very generous, surprisingly. But the fact that they put some emphasis on students being an important part of the hiring process, I was impressed by that. What else? Not a lot else. People seemed to be pretty nice. I don't have a real strong feeling or impression or memory of that first—where the memories start are with teaching in the fall program. Also, I mentioned before about the MPA program, getting together and being more professorially oriented than the other folks I'd been meeting around, at least from a member of that group. They had in mind more of a curriculum than anybody else that I could see. Certainly, the team that I was on didn't have a curriculum. It was just like, here we go. Grab on, Bill. [laughing]

Steinhoff: That was a four-faculty team. As I recall, you had done team teaching at Dartmouth. You'd taught with Donella Meadows. Was it also with Bernie Bergan that you taught together?

Arney: Yeah, it was Bernie Bergan. Bernie and I taught two summers, I think, a class of Sociology of Medicine. We did it in order to get our book together, *Medicine and the Management of Living*. That

book came out of that series of lectures. Yeah, I was team teaching and co-authoring, all going on at the same time.

Bernie later tried to do a summer program when he was writing a book about the Holocaust. It was his last class because seven weeks into this summer class, he said, "This young thing stood in the back of the room and says, 'Dr. Bergan, this Holocaust that you keep talking about, what is that?'"

He said, "Bill, I folded my notes, I went back to my office at the medical school, I made a call to the college. They sent a boy and a spreadsheet. Made it good for me, good for the college, and I retired." [laughing] He got the book out, though, by himself later on, so it wasn't a complete bad ending. But it was very funny.

Steinhoff: Absolutely.

Arney: But we taught together, and every Friday, we came to my house and had a wee dram of Glen Moran and sat around and talked about the next week.

Steinhoff: You had the reflex, the repertoire, the experience of team teaching before you came to Evergreen, so that wasn't an unusual element. But like you were saying a moment ago, the memories really began in the classroom, in the teaching. I'd love to hear some about that. You've got this wonderful document that you wrote for Joli's (Sandoz) project on your experience on team teaching. There are really good stories here.

Arney: Do you see it turning white?

Steinhoff: About 50 percent.

Arney: But when you put your bald head down near the screen, you light up a little bit, too, man.

Steinhoff: I know. I was having a meeting with a dean last week at some point, and the sun was going down, and so the back of the room disappeared, so by the end of our meeting—"I know this is off topic, but it looks like you're on the cover of a Queen album." [laughter]

Arney: Okay, so you want to go back to what? To that first year?

Steinhoff: Anything at all. That coming into Evergreen. There's already a kind of structure of that first year in the undergraduate curriculum by comparison with the MPA. I'm not sure how long you lasted in the MPA, so maybe there's something there.

Arney: Not long. That team was a great introduction to Evergreen because there was Jim Gouldin, an architect, and Barbara Cooley was a nurse, and Burt Guttman was writing his biology textbook already and doing his thing in order to pursue that. But he was the one who said, "Look, Bill, the way we do it here is if I give a lab, you come to the lab. Do the lab." I said, "Cool. I can probably learn some biology, usefully or not. I don't care. It sounds like fun."

It was just what I came to understand to be a classic Evergreen thing, a whole year round on a big theme. I was going to say more or less good colleagues, but more of less involved colleagues. Jim wasn't so involved. I think Barbara felt a little bit on the outside because she was actually in the practice of biology and medicine, and that's not where Burt was. But even that's instructive, where you've got team members that feel on the outside, or like they want to be in charge, or something like that. But that was a good group to learn all that. It was great.

Steinhoff: Because you're coming from Dartmouth, an Ivy League school, and then you're coming to Evergreen, a "Moss League" school, shall we say.

Arney: I'm going to say this, but you may not appreciate it. I don't care too much for students. If somebody screws their face a little bit, like Burt would, I'd usually say, "Students require teachers, and I'm not very good at that, so I don't like anybody that approaches me as a student. I'd much rather have somebody approach me as a colleague." Of course, that became Don's (Finkel) and my book on collegial teaching and inviting students in as colleagues.

But that was just my impulse from the beginning, so if you ask me about the students, I have no idea about the students. I, in fact, have very little memory of the students in that class. I know there were a lot of them because there were four faculty and 25 per faculty. We had about 100 students in the class and the labs and all that kind of stuff.

I have, forgive me, literally no memory of any of the particular students from that time. But that's not just a memory problem. It's a kind of philosophical filter, if you will, that I've honed over the years. [laughing]

What else do you want to know about things I don't think about?

Steinhoff: Here's maybe one place where the rubber would meet the road, and that is, you're not giving grades anymore. You're writing narrative evaluations. I actually don't know what that would have been like before the day and age of computers and copy/paste. But I'm imagining that that may have been a transition in terms of institutional culture, in terms of your own workflow.

Arney: It did take longer, and the story that goes with that was I was with David Paulsen at some point, and I said, "I had this dream last night that I took one of these four-page carbon-sheeted student evaluation forms and I rolled it into my typewriter, and I centered it all up, and I typed A-. And I rolled it out and signed it."

David looks at me just nonplussed. He says, "Took you a long time to have that dream." [laughter] Then David was one of the first ones to get a word processor and a printer and all that stuff, and I got one about a year or two after he did. Things started easing up around that time. Here we are

now, where one of my communiques this morning was with the techno crowd so that I can get the number decoder—what do they call it? Multifactor identification system—so that I could load my evaluations onto the system. Different times.

Steinhoff: What year would that have been, getting those word processors? Roughly speaking, if you could guesstimate it.

Arney: Roughly speaking, it was probably '86 or so. I think it's actually still under a desk in my office. It had places for two floppy discs. I wrote the obstetrics book on that, and the statistics book, too. When the manuscript went to Chicago finally, the editor said, "We'll get it copyread now." It just took a long time.

Finally, I called this guy, Doug Mitchell. He's now still the head of the Press of Chicago, but he was sociology editor at the time. I said, "What's going on with my book?" He said, "Oh, well, mm. How to say this? The copyeditor said that the I's on your printout are not acceptable. He can't read it." To which I, the editor, said, 'That's nice. What's going on?' And the guy said, 'All this stuff about obstetrics. I bet you he's in favor of abortion, too.'" Doug looked at him and said, "Feel better now?" He said, "Yeah." Doug is telling me this on the phone. I'm sure it was a little bit longer. But he said, "Yeah." He said, "Can you do the editing now?" He said, "Yeah, probably."

It was those sheets of paper that were this long. I cut the sides off, but it had these funky-looking font. There was only one font at the time. They looked weird and put this guy off. Anyway, that was a word processor story.

Steinhoff: But that is early, '86, and I can only imagine how that does change once you can copy/paste with a narrative evaluation.

Arney: Oh, don't get me started.

Steinhoff: Okay, so you had a great experience with that first faculty teaching team, and then you're in the MPA because that's what you were hired for. You were saying a moment ago, it sounds like that was a bit more of a set curriculum.

Arney: It was. There was a statistics thing, and there was a policy thing, and we had specialists in all of those areas. Yeah, it was a more structured curriculum.

Steinhoff: How long were you in the MPA?

Arney: I can look. I was in it the second year. The third year, I was back in Human Health and Behavior with Don Finkel and Willie Parson. My fourth year was in the MPA program entirely. My fifth year, I taught quantitative methods in the MPA with Pete Bohmer and did independent contracts in the fall and

spring. The next year I got a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to write a book. It looks like I was out of the MPA by that time.

No, I went into the MPA in '89-'90, it says here, with Lucia Harrison. Then on to the Masters in Teaching program, which was a real gig there. It was fun.

Steinhoff: Actually, I'm very interested to hear about that year, entering into the '90s. But that leave without pay that we're looking at here in '86 to spring of '87, was that for the obstetrics books? Was that when you were in England?

Arney: Um. It might have been, although I think that was earlier. I don't have my bibliography on hand. Excuse me. I'll go find the book and look at the copyright.

[Bill leaves and returns 00:21:18 through 00:21:49]

Yeah, the copyright was early '80s, so that was not the one. What did I do for that one?

Steinhoff: Did you write the statistics books?

Arney: I think is when I went to . . . yeah, I had a fall and winter leave where I went and went to Scotland. I think this is where I got the medicine book with Bernie wrapped up, and then got onto the systems thinking. That's what I'm remembering.

I think I got a sabbatical leave at Dartmouth—before they fired me—to go to London and write the obstetrics book.

Steinhoff: Got it, and we did talk about that last time, where the librarian introduced you to the manhole cover behind her desk or something.

Arney: Exactly. [laughing]

Steinhoff: This is good to have this as a placeholder, which we can maybe circle back to systems thinking as a thing to touch on.

I'm noticing as we look at this timeline of teaching history that Human Health and Behavior repeated, but you were the only faculty member that was consistent between the '81-'82 and then '83-'84.

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: Don Finkel and Willie Parson you would have been teaching with.

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: I have a perspective from a student who was in that class, namely, Nancy Koppelman.

Arney: Right. She ended up in our book.

Steinhoff: There you go. When I spoke with her a month or so ago, we were just talking through some of the oral history stuff that she and I are both working on, and I think this idea of sociological

imagination came up. She said, "Oh, you want to hear a story about that?" She told the story of being a student in this program, reading Foucault, learning about Illich, having herself been in various—I forget exactly what her work had been. Was she a home health aide? Somehow involved in medical stuff, hospital stuff, maybe mental health stuff, I'm forgetting right now. But as she was going through the weeks of the program, she draws in the margin of her notebook a lightbulb. The lightbulb goes off.

Then she's talking with you in office hours and expressing some of her insights. I think this is her story. You handed her a book that you had just finished reviewing, and I think your statement was, "I think you might find this book of interest," or, "I think you might be ready," or something like that. I'd be curious to hear your experience of that program. And you say Nancy shows up in the book. It would be nice to hear a little bit more.

Arney: Yeah, and in the collegial teaching section of the book, basically the argument at the end of the book is—and this goes back to the problem of students—students have to renounce the privileges of being a student if they want to be a colleague. Don and I talked about that.

Anyway, we gave her an early draft of the book to look through and she got to that section, and she said, "I remember when that happened for me when I gave up being a student." "Oh, really? What happened?" She said, "Well, I remember lying awake all night and fretting because I had a question that I wanted to ask you. I think I was fretting because I knew it was not a student's question. It was a real question, so I was really afraid of asking it." I said, "What did I do?" She said, "You answered it."

We just put it in the book that way because the implicit statement is I decided that I'm free. That's the whole point is that colleagues have to be free with one another. You're collegial. You're sitting around the same dinner table instead of the high table and the plebes out there in British colleges. That was a big step for her, obviously, but also an interesting anecdote. We put it in the book then. [laughing]

Finkel and I were sort of playing off and with one another in that program, and Willie was doing a lot of science. A very thoughtful guy. Terrific team there. That was a good one.

Steinhoff: What kind of science did Parson teach?

Arney: Biology, as far as I remember. I don't remember a lot of it.

Steinhoff: This was your first time working with Don Finkel. It would be nice to hear a little bit about that relationship, because you guys were colleagues for several years. You had that first experience in '83-'84 teaching together. Then you're back and forth with the MPA. Then you're teaching the Respect class, which I do want to hear more about. But then you're in Classical and Modern, an Integrated

Approach to Education—Finkel, Thompson, Taylor and Nisbet, and you've got a story about that as well. Was it Finkel lecturing on Meno?

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: I'm just curious to hear about that relationship, about that experience. I'm just also happy to observe that for you, team teaching and writing books sometimes go together. Not always, but you've got a kind of momentum at this point, so I think that would be of interest.

Arney: That was the program where, in the second week of the program, he gave this lecture on Meno. I sat there starting to frown—I may have told you this—and just scribbling madly in my notebook, thinking all the time, this is not right. This is not the way to understand Plato.

He was a Harvard guy, but I had one class in college on Plato's *Republic* from Ed Miller. We went through a book a week of *The Republic*, so I really knew Plato, I thought. [laughing] Cocky enough to think that I knew Plato. Enough to know that Don was certainly wrong.

We had our faculty seminar and I said, "I'd kind of like to give it a go to say something about Meno, even though we're moving on a little bit next week." They said, "Okay, fine." I gave my lecture on Meno. Long story short, these two lectures are in the middle of the book, but they're not Don's lecture and Bill's lecture, they're A's lecture and B's lecture. The reason for that is as we were getting to that point in the book in writing, Don brought me his lecture, and literally threw it on my desk and said, "Make it better." Perfect.

Finally, in the end, we couldn't claim Don's lecture and Bill's lecture.

Arney: They're literally in the center of the book, and everything pivots around that experience and those two lectures. It's basically a book trying to say there's lots of ways to fashion and think about student-teacher relationships, but at Evergreen, we have the chance—and sometimes we take advantage of it—to do collegial teaching. Collegial teaching is not just to colleagues or three or four or five but can include the students if they're willing to go there.

I don't think we say it in the book, but there's really no reason for them to do that because we've all been students and we know the privilege of being a student, that you can't be forced to do much of anything. But and so, all I can do is dangle an invitation out there. The invitation usually comes through—fortunately or not—in the form of what they sometimes think of as invasive questions, or intemperate questions. [laughing] But basically, those kinds of things for me are probes to see if they're ready. When they're ready, cool. Let's go.

Steinhoff: It makes sense that an originary scene of this collaboration would be Plato, and what you're describing is the discursive, the character of the interaction, the character, the quality of the

conversation of asking questions that provoke, but that also invite. It's not about domination. In fact, the very opposite.

Arney: Oh, yeah. We go through all the stuff that Socrates uses—belittling people or laughing at them or a certain eroticism charges the scene and all that kind of stuff. That's all part of, in my view, good teaching. I try always to remember that it's the student who gets the last work, too. There's this little guy, Plato, over there writing down whatever he wants to write down. Right?

Steinhoff: The longest narrative evaluation ever.

Arney: Of a faculty member. [laughing]

Steinhoff: Of faculty. Exactly. Also, I really appreciate what you just said a moment ago about how, at Evergreen, there's an opportunity to do things differently.

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: I remember the first time you and I had a conversation—this was years ago—we'd just moved here, and you came over to our house and we had dinner together. You told me about this. It was Miranda and you and I, and I remember thinking, that's really interesting, and that's great for somebody's who's got tenure and who's getting income from student tuition. What was really on my mind at that time, I'd just received my PhD and I had a big pile of debt. I felt provoked, I would say, by the thesis, but also invited it. It hasn't left my head since, to be honest, Bill. It's been on my mind because I hadn't been teaching at Evergreen at that point. This would have been probably winter 2013 is my guess, because I started teaching in fall of 2013.

But the way it's shown up for me more recently—slightly different—is I start to rankle when faculty colleagues talk about "my" student. "My" student. The possessive. And I've gone out of my way for probably 10 years to not use that grammar to talk about students I've worked with or someone that was in a class I taught. Circumlocutions.

The other place it's come up, is in relation to prison stuff. I've done a bunch of teaching in prisons, and for probably 15, 20 years now, there's been a fairly successful movement—initiated by prisoners—asking that we not use the word "inmate." "Please don't use this word 'inmate' because it has a whole set of connotations. Foucault would be able to teach us more about that.'" It's a euphemism that's preferred, "incarcerated individual."

Arney: Too many syllables. [laughing]

Steinhoff: You run into some issues there, right. But I remember having a thought in conversation with somebody who's experienced being locked up, to use monosyllabics, and just thinking through this idea of if "inmates" is verboten, why isn't "students" verboten as well? Or could you imagine in 25 years, we

look back and say, “My gawd, can you believe we were still using this word ‘students’? Knowing what we know about the potential for a liberation education, for freedom, education as a practice for freedom?” But I really appreciate what you’re saying as well about there’s no requirement that the students accept the invitation.

Arney: Yeah. They’re free. You’re free to put on whatever change you like and enjoy our life. Just don’t rattle around me.

Steinhoff: Maybe this is a place where I could ask about Ilich, because *Deschooling [Society]* comes out in ’72, as I recall, right around the time of Evergreen showing up on the landscape. Illich drops that incredible provocation. I wonder whether Illich was part of your constellation before you came to Evergreen. I’m curious to hear about coming into that relationship.

Arney: His work was, certainly, but I didn’t know the extent of the work. I certainly didn’t know the guy. But I think it was important. It wasn’t of cardinal importance, certainly because I didn’t understand the depth of what he was doing, or what he would come to do.

A month of two before *Deschooling* came out, he asked the *Saturday Evening Post* if he could write a rebuttal to *Deschooling*. He said something like, “I was barking up the wrong tree.” I think that was part of the title. Maybe it was “After *Deschooling*.” I don’t know. Oh, yeah, it was “After *Deschooling*, What?” I think is the way it came out in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He said later on that with *Deschooling*, he had been barking up the wrong tree. The part he was quite happy with was the *Rebirth of Epimethean Man*, the epilogue, basically.

A number of people have called that his standpoint. This place here. A number of people have called that chapter his standpoint. It’s basically about hope, the end of the book. He wanted to reserve hopefulness, even though he might renounce a bit of the stridency of his analysis. But the form of the analysis spilled over into all the other institutions that he took on, too. But he never lost the hope part.

I think I was ready to hear that just because my sons of students. Being a student is hopeless. All you can do is look for a better one, a better teacher, next time. That’s all you can do. You can’t be hopeful about anything. It doesn’t occur to you. But hope and freedom, they cozy up to one another pretty well.

Steinhoff: Yeah. I think that piece you’re talking about in the *Saturday Evening Post* is the prelude for *Tools for Conviviality*.

Arney: Exactly. That’s right.

Steinhoff: That book is ’74 or ’75, I think. Then it just cascades. Like you’re saying, he really does start moving through the institutions.

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: This was in the air for you. It was, as you were saying, not front and center, not a cardinal point, but it was informing.

Arney: Right.

Steinhoff: And offering a texture. When did you begin your own relationship with him? When would that have started?

Arney: It was the year that the systems book came out, in the *Experts in the Age of Systems*. I think that was '86 or something. Let me go look that one up.

Steinhoff: Why not?

Arney: There's no reason you should believe me, but I had it right in my mind. '86 was when that book came out. Do you want the story of meeting him or getting hooked up with him personally?

Steinhoff: Yeah, I think that would be helpful.

Arney: It's pretty easy. My first wife and I were at home, and she answered the phone and talked to somebody. She said, "Ivan Illich is on the phone for you." [laughing] I said, "Hello?" the best I could. He said, "Dr. Arney, may I call you Bill? There's no way you can know this, but you're an influence on a number of us here. We would like to invite you to our house to give us a lecture on whatever you're working on." I said, "Fine. Where is your house?" [laughing] He said, "Oh, right now, I'm at Penn State. I divide my time between Penn and Penn State, but we would like you to lecture at the house on Forest Avenue in Penn State College."

I had no idea what this meant. He did not know about the systems book. He invited me, I'm quite sure, because Barbara Duden knew my book. Barbara was and is a feminist scholar in Germany and had written on the history of childbirth in German. I think she's still kicking and doing some of that still. She knew the obstetrics book, and then, I think, got into the *Medicine and Management of Living*, and talked Ivan into giving me the call.

Unbeknownst to me, this was a regular thing for him at this part of his life. There was a small core group of five or six people that traveled with him when they could. Then they would set up a series of seminars at whatever house they were in, and invite whomever they wanted to invite, and just carry on for four, five, six days. It was terrific.

I went there and he said, "whatever you're working on," and I was working on this book on the guys who built the atomic bomb. "Emblematic" is not strong enough. They were icons of the systems age and representatives of systems thinkers—not thinkers but people who were trapped in systems. Illich was not there for my lecture. He was teaching at Penn that night.

But I lectured to this table of 20-some people. I went down to breakfast the next morning and he came down and he said, "I heard about your lecture. It was great." Then we started talking. At one point, I said, "Could you pass me the milk?" This has never happened to me before, but he picked up the milk, looked at me kind of this way, smiled, and handed it to me. I've never felt a kind of mystical connection with anybody more than in the moment of the passing of that pitcher. [laughing] It was like, okay, you're going to fall in love with me, too? He was quite a presence.

The long story short is I got invited to a number of different seminars—I've never counted them up—over the next several years in Germany, and Oldenburg, Mexico, and State College quite a few times. It was quite funny. The book that I did called *Thoughts Out of School*, when I sent it into the editor, the address was like 108 Foster Avenue, State College, Pennsylvania. I called her up and I said, "Is this Illich's house?" "Oh, yes. You're not the first to ask." She wasn't associated with Illich, but they had bought the house after he decamped mostly to Germany.

Steinhoff: That's incredible.

Arney: Yeah, so weird kinds of connections.

Steinhoff: He wrote a forward or a preface to the systems book.

Arney: Yeah, to the *Experts [in the Age of Systems*] book. He talked about systems, especially with David Cayley, when he couldn't write a book near the end of his life because he was in such pain. But David Cayley interviewed him for a big project, and he talked in there about his turn toward systems thinking. It was going on before I met him. I claim no responsibility for educating him. He was thinking about him before I got there. I think I just gave him some little examples of how to think about what it means to be part of a system.

Steinhoff: Wonderful. This would have been mid-to-late '80s?

Arney: Yeah, '86 is when the book came out. The University of New Mexico Press published it, I think, because it was about the atomic bomb, and New Mexico is the place that they turned it partly to glass down there.

Steinhoff: Was his preface to a reprint?

Arney: No, I hadn't published it yet.

Steinhoff: Got it.

Arney: Just one time I went there, and I said, "Would you mind writing a preface?" I think I told you, he just grabbed a couple of guys and went upstairs and came down an hour later and had it.

Steinhoff: Amazing. Bill, I'm looking at our time, and I'm remembering our plan of taking a nice 10-minute break about every hour. Does this seem like a place to pause?

Arney: It's fine with me.

Steinhoff: Sounds great. Why don't we come back at eight minutes after 1:00? That would give us 10 ½ minutes.

Arney: Can do.

Steinhoff: Great. See you in a sec.

[End Part 1 of 2 of Bill Arney on December 11, 2020, at 00:51:51]

[Begin Part 2 of 2 of Bill Arney on December 11, 2020, at 00:51:55]

Arney: I've been waiting for you to come to this place.

Steinhoff: We found each other. What's striking me is the story you just told, about Illich, and the fact that where the exchange occurred, or the encounter, wasn't on campus, but rather in the house. His own peripatetic character of engagement, of instruction. But the idea of seminar happening at that dinner table, it's reminding me of your experience in college.

Arney: Oh, yeah.

Steinhoff: I'm forgetting his name, but I've got it here somewhere.

Arney: Walter Weir.

Steinhoff: That seminar on Greek and Roman history material, and how he gave you a ride out to his house.

Arney: Yeah, when Illich invited me, he said, "We have no money to pay your way to get here, but if you tell your university, they will pay your way." [laughing]

It was a great association, I was thinking over the break. It was quite amazing. One of the first things that Pam and I did together was go to Jerry Brown's house in Oakland when he was—no, he wasn't in Oakland, he was in Pacific Heights when we got there—thinking about running for mayor of Oakland.

Illich sent me and a woman from Germany and somebody else to talk to him about his third presidential bid and his healthcare policy. We got there, and he owned an old firehouse in Pacific Heights and it was outfitted in a beautiful house way. He said, "You two stay in our bed. I'm going to go sleep with my girlfriend, Anne," who turned out to be the first lady of California and is still his wife. [laughing]

Jerry just abandoned his house. He never talked about health policy at all in the three or four days that we were there. It was mostly about yoga and running, and whether the two mixed, and how much you have to do.

Steinhoff: This was when he ran for governor the first time?

Arney: The first time. Later, he became mayor and then governor again, I guess. He was a very good friend of Ivan's. When he moved to Oakland, he bought a warehouse, and outfitted it with 30 dorm rooms for seminars, and literally a table, the Oakland table. I think it was about as big as my house here. I think it was 16 or so feet in diameter. A round table.

Whenever you had a seminar at this house, Lee Hoynoski would give Latin lessons at 6:00 a.m. Jerry would get on phone calls to NPR and places like that a while. Eventually, we'd have seminars. He also had a room that was a yoga studio that fit 200 people. But in one corner of it was Illich's room. It was on the second floor and two stories high. A little thing. That was the inner sanctum of the whole house. That's where he would say Mass, for those that were inclined, at 4:00 in the morning. And smoke his opium for the difficulties with his jaw.

Steinhoff: Yes, the tumor that he did not seek treatment for.

Arney: Right. He died without a diagnosis, which was one of his demands in a paper, *New Perspectives Quarterly*, or something like that. "The Right to Die Without a Diagnosis." [laughing]

Steinhoff: Just incredible. What strikes me is what a different era, what you're describing, and yet, Jerry was Governor very recently, and Illich himself didn't die that long ago.

Arney: Yeah, 2002, December.

Steinhoff: You ended up staying in quite close relation—you were obviously separated by geography, but from '86 to 2002, it sounds like that was a fairly close relationship.

Arney: It was a big part of my life. It's quite amazing. One of the funniest stories. I was at Penn State, and somebody picked up the phone, came back to the dinner table, and said, "Ivan, you have a phone call from India." He goes off and starts chatting in whatever dialect this guy required, and you hear him bang down the phone and he comes back in, and he says, "That idiot. He's called from India to tell me that the next time I'm in India, he can indeed make an opium connection for me. He is doing this over transatlantic cables, which are always monitored!" blah blah blah blah blah

The end of that story occurred nine or 10 months later where he was coming through Heathrow Airport from India. He had a suitcase that went through the screener and this Indian guy, who was the London baggage security checker, says, "May I open your bag? You have no knives, do you?" Ivan says, "No, it's just my opium pipe." The guy said, "Oh, okay." Then he looks at his tag and sees "Ivan Illich" and he says, "Are you the Ivan Illich?" Ivan says, "Yes, I am. That's my opium pipe in there, and there are no knives." "Would you mind if I open it up?" "No."

Opens it up, takes the pipe out, starts showing it around to all the other Indians in Heathrow. "Look at this beautiful pipe. Antique from my province in India. My friend, Ivan Illich, it's his pipe. Isn't this beautiful?" [laughing] Then he says, "Thank you very much, Dr. Illich. Please, be on your way. Go with God," or whatever the Indian thing was. That was quite funny.

When we stayed then in Jerry's house in Oakland, Ivan would smoke his opium in that tower room, and put the foil in the bottom drawer of his dresser. A couple of us were with him one time and we said, "What is that about?" He just said, "They check the mayor's garbage for drug residue," so he had to ball up the foil and dump it in the river or something. I don't know what he did with it. [laughing] It was just crazy the way he got along.

Steinhoff: At one point I remember you telling me a story about—there's two things I'm remembering. One was what he had to say about Evergreen. I'm not remembering the details. The other thing I'm thinking about is that you brought some of your Evergreen colleagues into this circle as well.

Arney: Yeah, for the seminar on gender, it was. I don't know what he said about Evergreen. I don't have any strong memory of it.

Steinhoff: It may have been something about refuseniks. I think you sent it in an e-mail. I can dig it up.

Arney: Okay. I'll agree with whatever you find [laughing] or make up. I don't care. When he organized a seminar on gender—do you know a little bit of the history of the book *Gender*?

Steinhoff: Yes, but give a sentence or two of context.

Arney: He wrote this book, *Gender*, and basically, he wrote a small paper—like he usually did, kind of, here's what the book is about—called "The Sad Demise of Gender." You can imagine the kind of reaction that that would gather in the academy, which is organizing itself at the time around the study of gender. So, he writes "The Sad Demise of Gender," and he writes this book that has 124 footnotes in

it. Each footnote was designed to be the basis of a PhD dissertation. At last count, there were two that were done. Two different footnotes got PhD'd.

We had this seminar and Jutta Mason—another story. She is married to David Cayley, so they've been very close with Ivan forever. She took the book, *Gender*, xeroxed it—it's a little, tiny book—she xeroxed the whole thing, cut out all the footnotes, and reduced the 124 pages of *Gender* down to 60. She put them all together and xeroxed a footnote-less version for the participants in the seminar, so that was our introduction to *Gender*.

Don Finkel came, and Rita Pougiales came to that table. Susie Strasser was there representing the capital G *Gender* side of things. She was welcomed, and she was very smart, of course, and had done all the work on *Gender*. She was not that far off from Ivan's ideas about women not just being people, but that the world needs this—genders—in one way or another because you've got to keep things going.

I still remember Jean Robert, Swiss architect. I don't keep up with these deaths very well, but he's in the atrium of death, I think, down in Mexico right now. But he did a beautiful, beautiful talk about Hermes and Hestia at this thing. He said, "This is the only pair in the Greek pantheon that are brother and sister, so there's no question about them mixing, so to speak. [laughing] They form a house, this gender pair."

You need both in order to have a house. Hestia is the goddess of the hearth and Jean Robert would say, "The smo-o-o-o-ke." It was great. He played his accent whenever he could. "The smo-o-o-o-ke coming out of the chimney. This is the center of the house. But you know Hermes. He flits all around. He circles everywhere. In fact, he defines the circle at which you bury the dead from this village, this house. So, smo-o-o-ke and the guy running around. You need both to define a home."

People that are in favor of gender, they don't want to hear complementarity and things like that. To my way of thinking, that's kind of a major split in this regard; that Illich thought that life was built out of complementarities in important ways.

Steinhoff: That was a seminar that your colleagues participated in at Penn State.

Arney: Yes.

Steinhoff: Did he ever come to Evergreen?

Arney: No, he had no reason to, unless he was on his way to Japan or somewhere. Lee Hoynoski came. He did a couple of lectures in some of my classes. He was terrific. Classic old guy.

Steinhoff: What would those lectures have been on?

Arney: Too bad you asked me. What did he talk about? I remember one talk where he demonstrated how to use an Indian toilet. [laughing] I think it was on fitness, that wherever you are, you have to fit. You have to become fit, and you have to be fitting for the place. He was just playing with the word. I think you're seeing it, if I'm judging by your face correctly. Once you start playing with that kind of a word, you can gain a realization that fitness talk does not convey. "Of course, we'd all like to be fit. No, it's not the point. Let me show you what it takes to crap in an Indian crapper." And Lee demonstrated it on the floor of the lecture hall. [laughing] It was a lecture hall at the time, but it was one of those big rooms.

Steinhoff: Amazing.

Arney: He would do things like that.

Steinhoff: I'm glad I asked.

Arney: I think it's really important to laugh at a lot of the stuff, because if you start taking it seriously, you can get yourself in a world of trouble.

Steinhoff: Yes.

Arney: The thing that I wrote you this morning about humor, George Harrison humor, first and last resort. I think it's important to be able to listen and laugh at what you're actually hearing and not wanting to hear and so on and so on. Call it learning.

Steinhoff: Absolutely.

Arney: That's what I would do.

Steinhoff: I think it's Tom Stoppard who says, "Laughter is the sound of comprehension."

Arney: There you go. Right.

Steinhoff: I'm sitting here thinking, where am I going to lead us next? I want to think about fitness, I want to think about squatting, I want to think left and right hand, I want to think complementarity. But

I'm actually going to pull on the Jerry Brown thread and talk about presidents. Dan Evans would have been the President when you arrived.

Arney: That's right. The first thing out of his mouth at the convocation was, "Well, there's another Bill in the House to close Evergreen down, but this one I think we're going to have to take a little bit more seriously because there's a few Democrats involved." [laughter] That was my first meeting at Evergreen.

Steinhoff: Wow.

Arney: Yeah, the first words out of the President's mouth.

Steinhoff: He would have stuck around until '83 or '84.

Arney: Till he got appointed to the Senate, yeah.

Steinhoff: He becomes the Senator replacing, who is it? Scoop Jackson.

Arney: Jackson.

Steinhoff: Then in comes Joe Olander. I notice on your biographical form here that you were the Faculty Chair, and you say, "I chaired the faculty in Olander's final year," which I take is supposed to mean something, but what does that actually mean?

Arney: He got kicked out.

Steinhoff: I know that, but I'm curious for you experience. How did you even become Faculty Chair? That would have been '90 or so, right?

Arney: Yeah. I don't remember exactly when it was.

Steinhoff: Roughly '90.

Arney: I became Faculty Chair just by getting elected. I hung around with Finkel and York Wong and a few people that were older and had some clout, and they said, "Why don't you just run for Faculty Chair?" So, I did, and got it. There was not too much to it.

Steinhoff: What did that process involve, being Faculty Chair? Agenda Committee?

Arney: Yeah, Agenda Committee, and figuring out how to present things to the faculty, and what to do with them.

Steinhoff: With Olander, what was the story?

Arney: What do you mean, what was the story? He was just kind of a weird guy. He's a classic politician. He nominated me for academic deanships whenever he could. It was obvious to me, even at the time, just to show me that he cared, something like that. It was a classic political move. We're seeing it all the time now. People looking for pardons. I wasn't looking for a pardon, so I didn't have to take any of those trips to try to be a dean somewhere.

I did run for the dean's position one time and David Marr succeeded in getting it, thank goodness. He was very good at it. He was the last dean to keep office hours, meaning he would lock his door and read. I don't think they do that anymore. His final year was just this last year here. He finally got the boot.

Steinhoff: He was kind of run out, right?

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: People discovered that he misrepresented some of his accomplishments on his c.v.

Arney: Yeah. Craig Carlson got the dope on that and revealed it. One of the Trustees had a bunch of papers in the back of her car, which happened to catch on fire. Not the car but the papers. [laughing] I am very happy not to know anything more.

Steinhoff: That you label it as "Faculty Chair," not according to '89-'90, but instead, Olander's final year, I infer that those were some spicy meetings, or they were meetings that had energy above average.

Arney: There were meetings that were kind of dopey. At one point, he borrowed some monks' outfits from Saint Martin's. He dressed up as the friar, and he had me and other people on the Agenda Committee walk in with these monks' outfits on. It was crazy, but it turns out, he probably was, too. [laughter]

Steinhoff: I guess I wanted to ask. It was a noteworthy notation on your form. At least I got the monk's outfit out of it. I know there's a cloud over his name, but he also was the person that got the MiT going.

Arney: Yeah, he was, because basically, "We can get money from the Legislature if we do this, and do it right away, and be first." That's what happened. I was part of that group to start the MiT program. It included—I don't think I've told you this—he gave us—the four-faculty team—money to go on a retreat.

"Go to Seattle and sit around and talk about what you want to walk about, get the act together here, bring it back."

Gail Tremblay was on the team, and we were all fretting about the rules that teaching programs had to follow in the state. There were four or five pages of stuff that you have to do, or the students have to learn, this kind of thing. That's where we got hung up. Somehow, somebody got us some money and sent us to a hotel in Seattle for three or four days.

About the third day, Gail Tremblay is sitting there, and she's got this big grin on her face, as only she could do, and she said, "I think it's probably going to take us eight weeks to complete all these requirements. The rest of the time is ours." [laughing] We said, "Groovy." Whatever we were saying in those days. "Great. Let's do that." So, she got us out or our tailspin and we got on with the program.

Steinhoff: You did that when?

Arney: Right, in '90 and '91.

Steinhoff: That's the prelude to the teaching that leads to the pedagogy book in '92-'93.

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: Part of what I'm observing here is your own relationship to these categories, these systems, these professional formations.

Arney: Right.

Steinhoff: Also, of course, public administration. There are all these different taxonomies that are underway, and if you guys are trying to figure out how to do a master's in teaching that maintains the Evergreen spirit, while also fulfilling State requirements, you're in that zone of, what is a student? What is a teacher? What is a student who's going to become a teacher, even if you are starting to develop a framework that refuses those categories altogether?

Arney: Right, and a big part of that, and partly where the book came from, was we all had to go out and observe student teaching, and comment on the student teaching. That book is just a gathering of essays from students and faculty colleagues, a few by me. But there's an untrivial number of students' work in there.

It's called "Thoughts Out of School." My point was I have to get out of school in order to be able to think. [laughing] And you should try that, too, I suppose, if you wanted to turn it into a song. I think it's a nice collection.

Steinhoff: Yes, it is.

Arney: Don commented on some stuff that I had done in there, too. It was a nice collection.

Steinhoff: I hadn't realized the Masters in Teaching piece. That emerged from reading your piece for Joli's project, and then seeing it on your list of courses here.

Arney: It was a fabulous group with Rita and Gail and Stephanie.

Steinhoff: Oh, and this is actually reminding me that we'd skipped over this earlier program with Marilyn Frasca and York Wong and Carol Minugh called Respect, because that would have been when you were still doing the back and forth between MPA—no, I think that was maybe on your way out? No, no, because you did MPA again in '89-'90. I'd be curious to hear about that program.

Arney: That program was the Native American Studies Program for that year.

Steinhoff: Ah-h-h.

Arney: With this heavily Native American faculty of York Wong, Asian guy, Marilyn Frasca, white artist, and Carol Minugh didn't join this team until the spring quarter. She was the only Native faculty on the team.

Steinhoff: How did that work?

Arney: Well, how did it get started is the good question. Why did that happen? It couldn't happen today. I think Craig Carlson was involved in it behind the scenes. He never told me, and I never asked. Literally, I was talking the hallway of Lab One sometime or other, and David Whitener, who was the head of the Native American Studies Program at the time, their offices were all down there, and Craig's office was the same hallway. I think he had the ear of most of those folks.

David stopped me in the hallway, and he said, "We would like you to teach in the Native American Studies Program in Respect this fall year. Would you like to do that?" I said, "Always say thank you. Thanks very much. Would love to do that." He said, "Okay, so your teammates will be York and Marilyn. Good luck." That was it. A very unusual iteration of the Native American Program. What else are you going to call it? Right? Respect, when something starts that way.

The end of the conversation happened a few days later, too. I saw David and I said, "I want to thank you again for the invitation, but I'm not sure that you know what I do." He got this big grin on his face, and he said, "We know you'll do your best." I said, "I will. Thank you." That was it. Welcome to the team, to do good work.

Steinhoff: That's respect right there.

Arney: That's respect.

Steinhoff: It does raise the question: what were you referring to when you said, "I'm not sure you know what I do"? What was the referent?

Arney: Sociology. I don't know. Guys that built the atomic bomb. Statistics. It seems like in the academy a conventional enough question. Fortunately, I was not talking to a conventional enough guy. I didn't have to get into any of that stuff, like you're asking me to do here. [laughter]

Steinhoff: Yes. But even what you've offered as an answer, I think when we were talking last time, we established that you more or less stopped teaching statistics at a certain point. That was no longer a part or your—it's certainly not something you're doing now.

Arney: I was actually thinking about that today. To read the newspapers, you've got to have a pretty good understanding of statistics, so I think I'm going to be talking about that with Illich and company. That's next quarter.

Steinhoff: Great. I had to do that when I was teaching in the Gateways program, which, Carol Minugh started in 1996. But the subtitle for the year that I taught it was Critical Literacy and Critical Numeracy. Because when you start reading the literature on mass incarceration, you start seeing that there's this figure called the incarceration rate. It's X per 100,000, and in order to compare different countries, different states, etc., you need to have an understanding of how that measure is established. It wasn't statistics, by any means, but it was a kind of introduction to statistical reasoning, in my own way. I actually had students doing probably 30 or 40 percent of it because a few of them had more experience than I did. That same number now comes up with rates of infection with X per 100,000, with the pandemic.

Arney: There was an interesting article yesterday. I'm not sure I've fully grasped it yet, but the headline was that vaccine is a firehose.

Steinhoff: Yes.

Arney: The question is, if you've got all these infections, you need a really big firehose to have any effect. Had you started some kind of response to the pandemic earlier, you wouldn't need such a big firehose. It's the firehose that puts things into perspective, but it's a basic statistical problem of coverage, in a sense, or responsiveness to a phenomenon. One of the editorialists in the *New York Times* was talking about that. Quite good, but you can imagine that he worked hard to make it so that even I could understand it. You've got to have that nowadays. You need statistics, I think, in order to be able to live without them, and to live together.

Steinhoff: Beautifully put. Because otherwise, we're at the mercy of them.

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: Or at the mercy that's been established according to—this is a refrain that came up at a panel presentation in the prison at Shelton that was put on by the Black Prisoners Caucus probably three or four years ago. I brought a group of students. It was not open to the public, but by invitation, as it were. Huge crowd of people in the visiting room. Just to use a statistic, 70 to 75 percent of the 10 presenters each said, "I'm telling my story about how I got into this situation that I'm in because I don't want somebody else to just become another statistic." It had a kind of powerful resonance in that context.

Yeah, I think, with the pandemic, that really illuminates it. But I remember talking with students about the weather forecast. What does it mean when the announcer says, "Fifty percent chance of rain tomorrow"? We couldn't come to a consensus. I did an actual quiz, and the responses were across the board. It will rain in half the area. What I realized I needed to do was ask, "Are you going to bring your raincoat?" Rather than what does it mean, it's what's your action?

Arney: There you go. How are you going to live? There's a woman also in Bremen. Barbara Duden lives in Bremen, Germany. Cilia Simerski just a few blocks away. Cilia and Barbara teamed up. Cilia was the prime mover on the whole thing. They wrote a book on risk. It was all about perinatal risk. I got involved in this because of my work with the perinatal program, but I was not involved at all in the substance of the matter.

They basically said that all of this genetic stuff that's going on now around pregnancy is a method for training women to think of themselves in terms of risk. Barbara is the most voluble about

this, but she said, "When you're expecting, you're not expecting risk. You're expecting a baby, and there's no way to get past that risk profile approach to having a child, bearing a child, except to see what's going on in all of these risk counseling sessions."

That's what they do is they go into a lot of these risk counseling sessions and see how these women are talked to, and how it is that they almost always get out of there dumb. Can't speak about it—in part because they maybe don't want to understand it, or there's some sort of reflex, like, this is not my life.

In Germany, Barbara wrote a long thing about the kinderpass in Germany. It's literally a passport that you get when your child is born, and in which they start plotting on graphs the growth curve, and all the tests, and the this, and the that. You keep turning these pages, and you have to have this kinderpass, of course, to get into school, to get into any programs, and that kind of stuff. Basically, they mounted an attack on statistics and living.

My first book, the one on obstetrics, was about the fetal monitor and the way it changed pregnancy. It was Foucault. The structure of power around the pregnancy changed. Power did not reside in the doctor. Of course, it didn't reside with the woman, but it resided in the monitor. The monitor disciplined both parties.

The thing that I found out that sealed the deal was that when anything went wrong in an obstectrical situation after the monitor was there, the first thing a lawyer did was subpoena the tape—the monitor's tape—that it was producing, because it showed all of the contractions, the fetal heart rate, and it showed—because they had to do this—they had to write on there any time that they made an intervention in the pregnancy. Where in the timeline, and where in relationship to these other two big things, did they intervene? How did they intervene? And so on. Lawyers didn't even want to talk to the people. They just wanted the tape. Just wanted the records.

We're in a weird time. We're very much in a weird time.

Steinhoff: I'm glad you mentioned the Foucault because it's been also the power of the norm. The statistic produces a norm that actually doesn't exist.

Arney: It exists, but in the minds of those people who know about norms and things.

Steinhoff: Exactly. It's an artifact of the system, of the structure. My version of this in the last two years, I ask students, "Hey, have you ever been in a car that has a broken speedometer?" It's

astonishing the number of students that will raise their hand. Actually, every single time I've asked that question, there's always been a student who could tell me about it. Typically, it's "My dad had a motorcycle," or, "My mom had this old, beat-up car." Part of it's indicating the class status of our students. People who have a lot of wealth don't have this experience. Although I have had this experience, I think because mice had been chewing on our electrical system.

I have students tell the story. We talk through the experience of being in a car without a speedometer. The question is, "How do you know how fast you're going?" Or "How do you know how to regulate your speed?"

The punchline is to think about learning without grades. How do you evaluate your own growth as an individual in terms of what you know, in terms of what you can do, in the absence of grades? And in true Evergreen, I'm dyed in the wool in the Peter Elbow style of writing in our notebooks. We're writing through all this stuff as well, so everybody's got their own tape, as it were, their own transcript of the experience of thinking through this. That's my introduction to narrative evaluations right there.

Arney: That's great. Yeah, got to start living sometime, even in school.

Steinhoff: Or feeling the sensation of speed in your body in the car. For me, that was the index was that I was going too fast because I was taking curves too fast. I was going to go off a cliff if I wasn't paying attention.

Arney: I was thinking about our Tesla, which has no speedometer. It has a GPS in it. I can sit in my desk here and watch my wife speeding on the way home past the airport. [laughing] The funny part about that—it was not exactly funny at the time—was one of the times I was doing that, not too long ago, when the car got to the top of the hill up here where I constantly warn her that you have to slow down because there's sometimes people on the other side of the hill walking the dog and such.

At that point, the car turned black on my phone and stopped. I thought, now she's gone and done it. I was on my way out the door when she pulled up the driveway. It turned out that the whatever it is did not register the car moving on this side of the hill. [laughing] The net, right? She got lost in the net. But a very strange phenomenon that we now rely on—just these things—to tell us how fast we're going.

Steinhoff: Yep, we outsource.

Arney: Of course, it needs to know how fast it's going so that it knows when to change lanes for you, too. The Tesla.

Steinhoff: It's a totally next-level system, there's no question about it.

Arney: Yeah, it's right up there. It's very strange.

Steinhoff: Bill, I'm wondering, do you have any more books in you?

Arney: No, I don't think so. Too hard. I don't have compelling interests right now. I'm still more or less enjoying teaching. I don't know how long that will last.

Steinhoff: There's a wonderful shape, though, as well as you now turn to winter quarter and are bringing Illich as the central focus.

Arney: Oh, yeah.

Steinhoff: There's something quite—I was so thrilled to see that in the course catalog.

Arney: Yeah, and it's good to keep me alive, too. I've been running stuff out of my computer. Most of his stuff is available in the ether somewhere, so I've been collecting all this stuff, and shuffling it around my desk.

Then yesterday, this place at State College—the *International Journal of Illich Studies*, I think is what it's called—arrives on my screen, a new issue of this. They've been out of business for two or three years. Here I am trying to get my act together for the next quarter, and they pile on eight new papers that are all pretty good. [laughing] I've got to keep going, and it actually is kind of fun to keep going. See what some of these names that I've known are doing nowadays [unintelligible 01:40:17], how I should be thinking about things.

Steinhoff: It feels to me very like an Illich moment.

Arney: Oh, yeah.

Steinhoff: The canvas feels like it's wide open. I was reading *Tools for Conviviality* at the beginning of the pandemic because it just happened to be on the shelf in the place that we were staying in San Francisco, which is where we were. The way in which it changed my understanding of so much of what we do, it's difficult for me to describe.

I think we've corresponded a little bit about this, but his account of how institutions provide really great value to a certain point. Once that threshold gets crossed, the inverse occurs. He was specifically talking about barefoot doctors in China. That's the first key example in *Tools* is the medical system. I was starting to think actively about contact tracing, and trying to figure out, how does that work in our day and age? Realizing that we don't have that layer of infrastructure, of community health, community medicine, people who trust each other, which I know is a key word for you as well.

Arney: Yeah.

Steinhoff: And what we're going to do for contact tracing is we'll just outsource it to this.

Arney: You've got your contact tracer on, haven't you?

Steinhoff: Exactly.

Arney: On the phone?

Steinhoff: Not yet.

Arney: I'm serious. It's a serious question.

Steinhoff: I know, I don't have it yet.

Arney: You don't have it? Oh! I never go past anybody. I just sit here, I go to the bakery and get some stuff, and come home. But I did turn it on right away. I think those are going to be helpful. And I'm convinced that they're not invasive. Washington just started this contract tracing program last week and it's all on your phone.

Steinhoff: No, this phone is basically like a toaster oven. It doesn't connect to [unintelligible 01:42:54]. It only works at home, basically. I'm about to get a new phone, and I'll update that one.

Arney: Yeah, my son got me an iPhone.

Steinhoff: There we go. I really appreciated the note that you sent this morning with reference to music and to soundtracks, because I think that is actually non-trivial. You may have noticed Eric Stein has started a podcast that he's hoping to continue. It came out in one of these newsletters from the Learning and Teaching Comments. I think the most recent one was a conversation that he did. It's the only one he's done. Was it Russ Fox? I think that's who it was. He said there's a conversation with him.

But for a podcast, you need to have some sweet tunes, of course. And there becomes a licensing issue. Do you really want to have John Denver on your podcast? You're going to have to go talk to the John Denver estate. Anyway, the fact that there is a soundtrack, I think, is significant, and that our lives are not just led through text and seminar alone, but there's passing milk, and there's listening to music.

Arney: Yeah. I assigned my students in the fall—and I'll continue doing this from now on, I think—I told them that they should subscribe to Tracy K. Smith's podcast where she reads a poem each day and just talks a little bit about the poem. I don't know how many of them did it, but I find poetry very helpful. Watching good wordsmiths do their thing and turning my head around.

Steinhoff: You closed out your biography form here with a poem by Dennis O' Driscoll.

Arney: I did. Yeah. Time enough. It's pretty good.

Steinhoff: A lovely coda. Bill, I feel like—something you said in your note this morning struck me as an opening, which was the important of writing as part of your practice. I'm happy to continue this conversation. Maybe the thing to do would be to get what we've done already transcribed—get it into the system—and then I think what I'm imagining for myself is reading a little more of your work. I've read some of it, not a ton. Just reading around a little more.

You and I already have a bit of a rhythm of a correspondence, so I'm thinking that it's possible—not necessary but it's possible—that we might end up with something that could be a little more hybrid. There's the oral history transcript, but we've also got a correspondence now, feeding into and fueling this conversation. It's possible that what we end up with could have an appendix that we include the piece that you wrote for Joli's book, Joli's project. Along with anything else that comes to mind.

As you've indicated, just this kind of conversation opens stuff up, and you'll think about something in three days that's connected to whatever it is that we've been talking about. I'll just say, open invitation. Send me a note, or say, "Hey, I've got some more stuff that might be interesting to talk about," because I'm more than happy to continue in whatever format, whatever mode makes the most sense.

Arney: Great. It's been nice to talk with you this way. I was just looking at the end here. I didn't put down my five-year plan, which was to just repeat the things I'm doing this year. I've got a program—

What's Next?—on the end of capitalism. [laughing] And, Do We Need a Future? I should think about those now. You made me look at them.

Steinhoff: There it is. Thank you so much, Bill. I've really appreciated this. I've learned so much. I think I'll sign off by saying I look forward to continuing this conversation.

Arney: Good. It's been a real pleasure on my side, too. You're a very gentle interviewer. You've done your homework and all that stuff. You seem curious. Whether you are or not, I don't know. Seeming does not make it so, I hear, but it seems like you are.

Steinhoff: I genuinely am. We've got enough shared intellectual commitments or curiosities that—and then, of course, the institutional relationship is there as well. That's why I am really emphatic about the continuing conversation.

Arney: Okay. Cool.

Steinhoff: Because I'm sure stuff will pop up. I'll have questions, you'll have questions, or thoughts, and we'll just pursue them to wherever they lead us.

Arney: Cool.

Steinhoff: Have a great weekend.

Arney: Thank you.

[End Part 2 of 2 of Bill Arney on December 11, 2020]