Interview with Vivien Roodenko
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Interviewer: Judy Ehrlich and Rick Tejada-Flores
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Interview with Vivien Roodenko, conducted by Paradigm Productions on November 8, 1998 for "The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It: The Story of World War II Conscientious Objectors." Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Paradigm Productions Collection.

Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in bold italics was used in the final version of "The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It: The Story of World War II Conscientious Objectors."

00:00:11:00-00:01:54:00

Interviewer #1:

—introducing yourself.

Camera Crew Member:

No, wait just a minute. There's something else buzzing.

Interviewer #1:

It's the, it's the ca—

[cut]

Camera Crew Member:

— hold it, and rolling.

Vivien Roodenko:

I am Vivien Roodenko Lang. I've been a social and peace activist for, I guess, over 50 years. Maybe my claim to fame is that I joined the War Resistors' League, deliberately, on my twenty-first birthday. Not a day before, or a day later, and I thought that was cute. And—

Interviewer #1:

Let me ask you some questions. When you, could you talk about women's roles, women's role in supporting conscientious objectors in World War Two, and being conscientious objectors—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—in World War Two.

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, most of the conscientious objectors were obviously men, who either went to Civilian Public Service camps or to prison, but there was a bunch of us, of the other gender, who were actively involved. I, for one, actually worked for the War Resistors' League for a number of years. I, prior to that, I worked for the ACLU Committee on Conscientious Objectors when I lived in Washington, the Amnesty Committee. I guess about eleven years, I, well no, is it, eight years, eight years, right after I graduated college, I was working for them.

Interviewer #2:

Vivien—

Vivien Roodenko:

What? Oh, I'm looking, not—

00:01:55:00-00:03:01:00

Interviewer #2:

—what do you think, what do you think that you and the other women were able to contribute? What, what difference did what you did make?

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, I, I guess the big thing is that we supported them. It made, we gave them a lot of moral support, and Igal, a number of times in his letters, wrote that knowing that his family and his friends were with him, made being in prison a lot easier. And, makes sense, if you have a, a cause, it isn't like just robbing a bank. Maybe you're robbing a bank, too. But in any case, the big thing is that the support we gave them meant a great deal to them.

Interviewer #1:

Go back a little bit and talk about you, [background cracking sound] just define, talk about who Igal was, and that you were—

Camera Crew Member:

Right.

Interviewer #1:

—that your brother was in prison for six years.

[pause]

Interviewer #2:

Well, I mean—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah

Interviewer #2:

—a couple of minutes ago you said he was your mentor—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah

Interviewer #2:

—you learned a lot, tell me—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, it's all, rushing through my head—

Interviewer #2:

Talk about that—

Vivien Roodenko:

— and I didn't—

Interviewer #2:

—start there, start there.

00:03:02:00-00:05:42:00

Vivien Roodenko:

Igal, my brother Igal i-, was five years older than I, and I ad-, looked up to him a great deal, and found myself following in his footsteps and in his thinking. And so, when he was faced with the draft, I guess in his middle twenties, he, and he decided he would be a, a conscientious objector because his feelings were definitely pacifist. Before that, even when in college, he graduated college in '38, so for the four years that he was in college, he was a very, very active peace person. Any time there was a demonstration, he was involved. And incidentally, we come from a very labor-oriented family, so Igal would participate in a lot of demonstrations that involved workers. If it was a strike he'd be out there. As a, as a matter of fact, my father got a letter [chuckles] about his grades, because he was really a bright person and, and could be a good student, but his heart la-, was elsewhere. So I absorbed all that activity, and so that in a few years later when he pron-, made a pronouncement that he was definitely a pacifist and to be a conscientious objector, he had my wholehearted support. My parents, who might not have agreed completely intellectually, but they gave him all the love and support anyway. My mother, as a matter of fact, was so in tune with Igal that when he went, he was imprisoned, and incidentally, his prison sentence started April 12, 1945. Which is the day that Franklin Delano Roosevelt died. It was just a coincidence. But in any case, what she did, she fasted the day of the month, the April, April 12th, the 12th day of every month, for the 20 months that he was in prison. And let's see, the, I can't remember now. There were times when it would be two days that she fasted, it's not only, well it doesn't matter, let's just leave it that it was bad e-, it was good enough that she, she fasted, and that was in, her way of supporting him spiritually.

00:05:43:00-00:07:22:00

Interviewer #1:

Could you say that in one sentence? I think we lost that—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—say "when his mother, my mother fasted—"

Vivien Roodenko:

You know what?

Interviewer #2:

What was that?

Vivien Roodenko:

Does anybody see the nonviolent—

[cut]

Interviewer #1:

—talking about your family and how they influenced you and Igal.

Vivien Roodenko:

My family came to the United States and settled in New York in 1917. And from the very beginning, I was born in 1922 but even as a youngster I was aware that my parents were very much involved in the Socialist Zionist movement. Now this is years before Israel became Israel. In fact, we were still calling it Palestine. Perhaps, should I mention about my— Stop. Should I mention about my parents having gone—

[cut]

[background talk]

Interviewer #2:

Yeah, back to their effect on you and Igal—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—and how you got values or principles—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—from them, what you got from your parents.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK. So my parents were Socialist Zionists. Igal became involved in that, and even as a teenager he participated in a lot of activities. He'd go out and collect money, he'd do all kinds of things. But as he got older, he also became active in the labor movement. If there were strikes, he went and helped the picketers, and especially when he got to college. Now, he went to Cornell and there were lots of times that he did not do his classwork because he was busy being a social activist. And—

Camera Crew Member:

Excuse me, can—

[cut]

00:07:23:00-00:09:39:00

Interviewer #2:

OK, but just, they were social activists, Igal got involved with labor—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—and then peace became the most—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—important thing?

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, OK, why don't you just sit here?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, we don't have time. Yeah. Go ahead. [laughs] Go ahead, start again.

Interviewer #2:

OK, go ahead.

Vivien Roodenko:

My family came to the United States in 1917, and from the beginning they were involved in the emerging Socialist Zionist movement. So that here was a great deal of ideology in our household, as well as idealism, and Igal from. very beginning, as an early teenager, was involved in the Socialist Zionist movement. How-, however, concurrent with that, he also became active in the peace movement. And I'm talking about the period from between '34 and '38, the peace movement as well as the labor movement. And his activity meant a, just oversh-, meant a great deal to me, there's no question he was my mentor from the very beginning.

Interviewer #1:

That's good, that's good, keep going. Talk, describe a little bit about what the peace movement was like in that period. What, what was it like, was, was there an active peace movement?

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, there was a peace movement called the American Student Union, which had a composite of Christian church anti-war people as well as secular anti-war people. Among the secular anti-war people, there were Socialists and also Communists. And I still remember, Igal went to a convention at Vassar, and he came home and, came back from it, and whereas just a year before they all took the Oxford pledge, the Communist students withdrew from that. And Igal continued with those with the Oxford pledge, but he was very, very disappointed, he was very crushed by it.

Interviewer #1:

He, he was crushed by what? By the—

Vivien Roodenko:

By the fact that—

Camera Crew Member:

[clears throat]

Vivien Roodenko:

—the students, that some students gave up their opposition to war—

Interviewer #2:

Tell, explain, yeah—

Vivien Roodenko:

—which was the Oxford Pledge.

Interviewer #2:

—explain for people who don't know it what the Oxford Pledge was.

Vivien Roodenko:

I really—

Interviewer #1:

Explain why they quit at that time—

Interviewer #2:

[unintelligible]

Interviewer #1:

—was it because of the politics?

00:09:40:00-00:11:53:00

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, it was, as soon as the Soviet Union and the Nazis had that, the pact, that's when some of the students left. Now, the Oxford Pledge, I'm not exactly sure, but it seems to me it started in England, and the whole purpose of it was to denounce war, not to participate in war. And it came over to the United States, and you know, people in the early movement also took the Oxford Pledge. Now, so the American Student Union, for those who still wanted the Oxford Pledge, they, was started the Youth Committee Against War. And I, by this time, I was in college, and I belonged to that, and, and the very first person outside of my brother that impressed me was somebody named Bill Sutherland, 'cause he came and spoke to our group. And, so I became also involved in the War Resistors' League, of which Igal was already a member, and as I mentioned earlier, I joined it on my 21st birthday. And after a few little jobs that were commercial in nature, right after college, I graduated in '43. I became,

first I went and worked for the Socialist Party, the Norman Thomas Socialist Party, then I went to Washington and worked for the ACLU, the CO Committee, and then the Amnesty Committee. Then I came back to New York and worked for the War Resistors' League. And, but all the time I was very active. Any time there was a demonstration, I participated. There were, I don't know how many times I went to Washington. And it meant a, well, I got the, the same thing happened to Igal. Igal said that he'd go to a demonstration and he'd feel exhilarated, and I did too, so—

Interviewer #2:

Vivien—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yes.

[cut]

Vivien Roodenko:

It was really a very, very—

Interviewer #1:

Start again, start again, please.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK.

Camera Crew Member:

So, should we start?

Interviewer #2:

OK, go ahead, yeah.

00:11:54:00-00:14:13:00

Vivien Roodenko:

When I look back to the '40s, I feel very good about it. I feel that it may have been difficult, but it was worth the struggle. And I know Igal's being in prison, not, not only was it what he wanted to do, but I think it helped the cause. Because these were people who sacrificed their time, and, and so, I would s-, definitely, I was very, very, I feel good about it.

Interviewer #1:

When somebody says to you, describe, talks about World War Two as "the Good War" how do you respond to that?

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, it's difficult. Because unless they understand a, an, a pacifist, nonviolent position, it's like, it's almost impossible to discuss it. And I feel pretty much like Igal did. I mean, if, if the wa-, it, it had been a g-, a good cause in a certain sense—

Interviewer #1:

When you, would you say this again,

Interviewer #2:

The war.

Interviewer #1:

—but instead of it, say the war—or World War Two.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK, all right.

Interviewer #2:

Go ahead.

Vivien Roodenko:

World War Two, if there was ever a war, maybe this was the war that was justified. However, there were so many bad components about the war. On the side, we were selling oil to, to the Nazis. We didn't allow the refugees, we sent them back, I mean, we, so many things were done that were wrong that, and in the end, twenty mi-, million people, there were six million Jews, and twenty million Russians, the catastrophe was horrible. And as Igal says in one of the tapes I just heard again this afternoon, is one of the horrible things, is that when you have wars, we insist on unconditional surrender. [background noise] That unconditional surrender was the horror of the Versailles Treaty, because that gave rise to the Nazis in the first place. And so I can't, I myself do not think it was a good war at all. But if I have to discuss it with people, unless it's, they can understand what I'm talking about, I don't even try.

00:14:14:00-00:16:38:00

Interviewer #2:

And especially now that you have generations who didn't experience the war, [background noise] it gets romanticized.

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, so that's why it's good we're having this film, to romanticize our side.

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Do you feel that it has become harder to explain the position of being a pacifist in World War Two, than it was at the time? Is it harder now?

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, I really don't have that many occasions to discuss it, and again, it would be hard, again, it's hard to discuss World War Two with somebody who is, remembers it either, remembers it completely differently than I do. So—

Interviewer #2:

But you know, but part of what our film's trying to do is, is grapple this, with this basic moral issue, how do you confront evil? What is the response? You know, which I'm sure all the CO's and all the resistors and all the supporters agonized over. It's a difficult—

Vivien Roodenko:

Well—

Interviewer #2:

—question.

Vivien Roodenko:

—again, apparently this has happened every time there's been a war, and I like Igal when he states, people say, oh this war I'm gonna participate, but it's absolutely the last time, I won't do it, I won't do it anymore. And the horror of World War One, when a lot of the, there was a Second International of Socialist, Socialist Workers who said that when the countries go to

war, we will object, but when the war came, they all capitulated. And this is, it's, war itself, itself is the big horror. And, and we actually have to sort of practice nonviolence on, in our everyday lives in the United States it's to keep after the Congress, hopefully get some people in like Senator Wellstone and Bernie Sanders. It, I, it's a difficult, it really is difficult, because the whole world is geared that, you know, the only way you can solve something is bang, bang. And we see the horror in the United States right now, with the kids killing teachers, killing each other. I think it's, it's all related to the war ideology to begin with. Oh, how was—

00:16:39:00-00:17:45:00

Interviewer #1:

In the tape that I did with—

Vivien Roodenko:

Did I answer your question?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, that was very good.

Interviewer #2:

That, that's a wonderful answer.

Interviewer #1:

In the tape that I did with Igal years ago, he said, night after night, when I was confronted with the draft—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—night after night—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—I tortured myself—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—about what I was gonna do—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

—and has he said this, he's probably said this before.

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, right. He says it in every speech.

Interviewer #1:

He says it—

Vivien Roodenko:

"And it was good, and it was good that I only had thirty days, otherwise I would've agonized." I mean, I know it word for word. "I would have agonized and I would've been a liberal into my old age."

Interviewer #1:

Oh, no! That's not what he said to me.

Vivien Roodenko:

Oh.

Interviewer #1:

That's interesting. He said, yeah, but the beginning's the same, but the end is different. Hey, were you aware of him agonizing about that, and did you agonize about your position, or how did—

Vivien Roodenko:

Oh no, listen. I didn't agonize because I got it sort of on a silver platter. I mean, it was gi-, I mean Igal gave it to me, so I didn't have to. Listen, somebody give me the magazine that has, that says "Round Table" on it.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, it's right over here.

Interviewer #2:

Cut for a second. And the other, the other issue that always comes up, there's you know two issues, what would you do about Hitler—

Camera Crew Member:

[unintelligible] about getting to the red.

Interviewer #2:

You're done futzing.

Interviewer #1:

[laughs] You're practicing, we're recording.

Camera Crew Member:

I'm not futzing.

Interviewer #2:

OK, you're on. So now let's practice, "Being a Jew—"

00:17:46:00-00:19:10:00

Vivien Roodenko:

OK. As a Jew, I certainly was one hundred percent against Hitler. To the point, and certainly was opposed to the Japanese militarism. To the point that I wore, didn't wear silk stockings, I wore cotton stockings. I boycotted Germany, boycotted Japan. There were all these nonviolent ways that we could show our opposition. But knowing, to a large extent even then, before it became public later, that Hitler was actually bolstered by the West because they thought Hitler and Stalin would annihilate each other. So that, it was the anti-communism that led the United States government to, with England and France, to do a lot of

supporting of Hitler. And if I go back, Hitler came to power after World War One, and then we bolstered him. So even though as a Jew I was very much opposed to Hitler, the nonviolent pacifist position made sense to me, even though it hurt.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewer #2:

That's good. That's a very good answer—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, that's good. That is good.

Interviewer #2:

—you want to go back to Sutherland now?

00:19:11:00-00:20:58:00

Interviewer #1:

Oh yeah, just a little bit more, 'cause Sutherland's in the film too. Just a little more about having been influenced by him, and how he made an impression on you.

Interviewer #2:

You have anything else to say about Bill?

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah,, well, I have to say that the biggest impression on me was, he was f-, just fantastically good-looking. I mean, he's good now, but when he was in his twenties, oh! So, you know, I heard him that day, when, you know, the Youth Committee Against War had about two and a half members. I was half, or one, but he was marvelous, and then I realized that he was really connected, I didn't realized he was connected with the War Resistors' League. So I followed, you know, I, I didn't have really much personal contact with him. Actually, I don't know if you want this, but my husband when he came to New York City, went to work for Church World Service, where a lot of CO's went. Actually, my husband had been in the army, he, but he was close, he was, had his lesson, he was close to the pacifist position. So he worked there with Bill Sutherland and a lot of other CO's, and the big thing is that they tried to form a union. And, I think I still may have it, I have the, the contract signed by Bill Sutherland and Chuck Lang. So, and then, of course, I've saw, have seen Bill when he comes back from Africa. Saw him at, I, I think I mentioned that there was a Philadelphia, city gave an award to

Morris Milgram. And [clears throat] Jim Farmer was there and Bill Sutherland came, so I, I've seen him from time to time.

Interviewer #1:

Tell, you're good at kind of putting the connections between people together—

Vivien Roodenko:

Mmm.

00:20:59:00-00:22:30:00

Interviewer #1:

—but when you look back on that period who stands out to you as the real, who really made an impression on you, and were the leaders of the organizations that really seemed like they were defining what it was to be a nonviolent activist in that period.

Vivien Roodenko:

You mean in, in addition to my brother? [laughs]

Interviewer #1:

Yes. Well, including your brother.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK, OK. Igal, Bayard, Dave Dellinger, A.J. Muste, Roy Finch, oh, they were just a, just a beautiful set of people. Did I leave anybody out?

Interviewer #1:

George Houser, maybe.

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, George Houser, yeah—

Interviewer #2:

I think we need to change tapes.

Vivien Roodenko:

—George Houser, I hadn't seen him for about forty years and when I saw him at Bayard Rustin's memorial service, and we recognized each other immediately, because he looks exactly the same, except his hair is white. But all, everything is the same. But that's—

Interviewer #2:

Let's stop a second, we need to change the tape.

Interviewer #1:

We have to change tape. I noticed that, I just saw some pictures, I haven't met him yet, but when I saw him in those, in that fil—

[background discussion]

[cut]

Interviewer #2:

—why that was important, what they did in prison. [pause] Go ahead.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK? [deep breath] OK, stop it a minute. You know what? My throat got so dry.

Camera Crew Member:

OK, how 'bout—

Interviewer #1:

You've upset her now. Turn your shirt inside out.

Vivien Roodenko:

No I really, I love Paul Robeson, but I also wanted them to like A. Philip Randolph, who was more of a peace person—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm, mm hmm.

Vivien Roodenko:

—so, but A. Philip Randolph, eh. So, that gives you a—

00:22:31:00-00:24:27:00

Interviewer #2:

OK, so talk—

Vivien Roodenko:

OK.

Interviewer #2:

—a little about what Igal, and Dave—

Interviewer #1:

That's kind of—

Interviewer #2:

—and Bill Sutherland were able to do in prison.

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, well, the first prison, while the men were in prison, there was a lot of, same idealism going on. So, OK the first big action occurred in Danbury, Connecticut, where the lunchrooms, the dining room, was segregated. The blacks ate in one section and the whites in another, and so since all these guys wanted a desegregated society, you know, then this is a good place to work. So they went on strike, and they were on strike for many, many months. I don't know, must've been 12 or 13, or 14 of them. And we on the outside supported them. And there were plenty of, I never myself went to Connecticut, but I know a lot of other people went to Connecticut for different reasons, to show their support. And of course they knew support from their letters, so OK, that was Danbury. Then there was action in Ashland, Kentucky, and the, my friend who put me in touch with you, Esther Horowitz Bankoff, her brother Morris Horowitz was involved in the action in, in Ashland. And Bayard was there at that time, and I understand what happened is the, the authorities thought Ashland was bad, so they had to cut down. So they sent Bayard and some of the others to Lewisburg. Incidentally, in my letters as I went through them, I apparently wrote to James, James Bennett, whatever. Bennett, the director of prisons—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Vivien Roodenko:

—and there's one letter where he talks to, writes to someone else in authority and he says, you know, these guys call themselves pacifists, but they're really very belligerent.

00:24:28:00-00:26:30:00

Interviewer #1:

[laughs] Well, he says so many amazing things about [unintelligible].

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah. It was just, you know, well, so, in any case, there were actions going on in Danbury ; Ashland, Kentucky ; Lewisburg, Pennsylvania ; and probably out west, but I, you know, and listen, the big one. Ha! How could I forget? Was Sandstone, Minnesota, where Igal and the others, first they went on work strike, and then they, some of them went on hunger strike. The hunger strike were, was for amnesty. Now talk about activity, they got a copy of "The New York Times" every day, and they had a typewriter. And at the Swarthmore Peace Collection, they have all, copies of all the letters that were written to government officials, I think over a hundred. You know, anytime anybody said anything, they took them up on it and wrote a letter, and so the Swa-, the Peace Collection is just fantastic, it's all there. Now, the war was over and at Sandstone, they were still in prison. So from past experience, the prison system decided that they wanted as little compulsion towards pacifists because there would only be a reaction. So quietly, they released some of the men. And Igal was the last one to go. Now, he was the last one to go, deliberately. All, he said, all I had to do was sign a paper, but Roger Axford and, I think, Dick Suzuki were outside the Justice Department. They were camping outside the Justice Department for amnesty, and Igal likes in his various tapes say, and I continued, as I'm very po-, I've always been very political. And as long as Roger Axford and Dick Suzuki were out there, I was supporting them by staying in prison. Because if I left, they wouldn't have the cause anymore. So, he was—

[laughter]

00:26:31:00-00:28:17:00

Interviewer #2:

Something, Vivien the other thing you were saying that I think is important to mention is this issue that it, it was not just what they accomplished, but the fact that they wouldn't stop fighting inside prison. Talk a little about that.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK. To go back to the various actions of the dif-, in various prisons, the thing that I want to emphasize is that whether they accomplished their goal or not, the big thing was that they were active in their idealism. To de-, well, and the big thing was the desegregation. Because eventually, what we want is a desegregated society, which even to this day, we really don't

have. So the big thing is no where, no matter where you are, you do the best you can. Which Igal's advice to me later on in life, he says, no matter what job you have, you can do the best you can. So, that was good advice from an older brother who sometimes, anyway.

Interviewer #2:

So you don't think that what they did in prison was a waste of effort.

Vivien Roodenko:

No. Not at all. I think that it gave meaning to their existence in prison. You know—

Interviewer #1:

What gave meaning to their existence?

Vivien Roodenko:

Their, their actions gave meaning to, it, well, it fulfilled them. I don't, I don't know how else to put it. And then, the fact that they were busy agitating in prison, just the act of agitating, gave, what? Solace to the soul?

Interviewer #1:

How 'bout that? How about for you on the outside, and how you supported the work they were doing in prison—

Interviewer #2:

Did it feed back?

Interviewer #1:

—and the activity—

Interviewer #2:

Did what they were doing encourage you?

Vivien Roodenko:

Oh, definitely. Definitely.

Interviewer #2:

Vivien.

Vivien Roodenko:

Oh, Sorry.

Interviewer #2:

Our, our questions are never going to be in—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—this so you have to say—

00:28:18:00-00:31:29:00

Vivien Roodenko:

I'm sorry, I forgot. And, for my part, and probably, I know for Esther's and other women, whether we were sisters or wives, of mothers, it meant, their action brought out in us, in addition to our being active anyway, it ga-, it inspired us all the more. So, the fact that, instead of, I had majored in psychology. I mean, I never did anything with my college work. To me, working in the peace movement meant a great deal, and taking time off to go to Washington, or to other demonstrations. Or the demonstration in 1947, the Easter I participated in the Easter Sunday demonstration. Which, did, did I refer to it before? No?

Interviewer #2:

No. Tell us a little about that.

Interviewer #1:

No. Not on tape, no.

Vivien Roodenko:

Then you can—

Interviewer #2:

Yeah, this is about amnesty.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK, I, I participated on Easter Sunday, in 1947, the three peace groups: the Catholic Worker, War Resistors' League, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a number of us went in the Easter Parade, but instead of wearing hats, we had signs. And the signs, as I remember, one of them, were very political, and one of them read, "Would Jesus send troops to the Dardanelles?" So it was an anti-war statement, and calling on Jesus as the, as a peace person. And so, we walked a little bit, and then the police came and got us off the street. And, some of us left and some of us stayed, and Igal was out of jail then, and he stayed and I stayed, and we were hauled off to jail, and released. And then, the case draw-, dragged on for quite a bit, and eventually we went to jail. And we, we were given a choice of, ten dollar fine or three days in jail. And Igal was an old hand at this. I mean what's another three days, but for me it was my first experience, and I was housed at the Women's House of Detention in New York City at Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street. And my, the other woman who was the marvelous Marion Coddington, who later on married Ernest Bromley. And so, we two went off to jail. And it was quite an experience. I, well, I had the three days. Now Marion, after we were taken in, she was released simply because she was A.J. Muste's sec-, secretary, and she and Jim Peck, we all got three days. But Jim Peck and Marion got thirty days. So the decision was that w-, enough of us were in jail, and she was really needed on the outside, so she was released, but thank goodness she was with me the first few hours, because I think I would've died. [laughs]

00:31:30:00-00:34:00:00

Interviewer #2:

But do you think-? That was the first time you were in jail, and the first time is a shock. Do you think that gave you any insight into what Igal must have gone through? Did it—

Vivien Roodenko:

Oh yeah, because I, I, I followed in his footsteps, again. I refused to shine the brass. I didn't go on hunger strike, but each cell had a toilet. And at that time, I hate coo-, I hated cooked cereal, so when they gave me cooked cereal, I just flushed it down the toilet. But in any case, I went on the work strike, and, and it was, so I did, I got a taste of what Igal went through, but you know, I really didn't even need my three days to have understood. Because he wrote such clear letters. And incidentally, the letters between us, maybe someday they will publish a, a book of letters, because I was his chief correspondent. I think I wrote, I don't know what the last number, we numbered our letters and I kn-, it was close to a hundred. And I would write to him about everything that was going on in the outside world, and he would write things about prison. And—

Interviewer #2:

We're going to read some of those letters later.

Interviewer #1:

And, but I would like you to talk a little bit—

Camera Crew Member:

[clears throat]

Interviewer #1:

—give us a little more about how you felt when you were sent to prison and what happened to you in that short time that you were in jail for those three days.

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, I, to go back, when Marion and I were taken in, we, for me, and maybe for her too, it was harrowing because I, I had to take all my clothes off, and I didn't know what to do, and they gave us prison garb, and frankly, I was so, I was all thumbs, and it ended up that I got a sort of a kimono. But I didn't have anything else. I didn't have any socks. I didn't have anything except a pair of shoes and this sort or wraparound thing. And then they examined us. And, I was twenty-five years old, so it wasn't like I was a baby, but I had never had an internal exam where they were looking for drugs. Because in those days, most of the, there were no political prisoners, and most of the women unfortunat-, were unfortunates. They were either prostitutes or, I, you know, I used to say, mo-, gambling, playing with numbers, apparently—

Interviewer #1:

Number runners, number runners. Yeah, yeah.

00:34:01:00-00:36:18:00

Vivien Roodenko:

Right. So, there I was in my cell, and I wasn't working, so I was in there. And I must say, the, the women were absolutely marvelous. Since I didn't have anything, I remember somebody lent me a book. I don't know whether I had long hair, but I didn't have any pins, I got some bobby pins. At night, that first night, they all sang, you know, it wasn't for me, but it was just the camaraderie of these women. I mean, they, we always think of people, well, you're in prison, you're no good. But they're all, evr-, we're all human beings, and they were just marvelous. And then all of a sudden the lights went on, and I had a tele-, a congratulatory telegram delivered to me.

Interviewer #1:

Who was this—

Vivien Roodenko:

That was really something. And, OK, so we, I went in like late Monday, I had the three day sentence. By the time we went in, oh, I must say, they wanted to know, just before we surrendered, we had, I had a cheese sandwich, 'cause in those days I was still a vegetarian, and either a cup of tea. I certainly didn't have, I wasn't, I, I don't drink, particularly. I'm a social drinker. So, but I was so nervous that they wanted to know if I had been drinking. But, so in any case, that's backtracking, but I was, spent the day in the cell, and one time the guard came by, and I looked at her hand, and she had a ring on, and it was the same ring that I have, a Hunter College ring. And there we were, and it was like the, talk about between Emerson and Thoreau, "What are you doing here? What are you doing here?" Now she had been a member, I didn't know her in school, but she had been a member of the Newman Club which was the Catholic group. Well, after all, I knew about Catholics, because I know the Catholic Worker people. But anyway, she was very nice, we explained our position. She was, this was a job to her to get her some money to go to social work school, and I was there on a peace mission. So after that, she never even locked my cell.

Interviewer #2:

[chuckles]

Vivien Roodenko:

You know, maybe they'll get her in trouble, now. So, it was a very good experience.

Interviewer #1:

It's too late to get her in trouble—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, she, she may have, she, OK.

00:36:19:00-00:39:45:00

Interviewer #1:

So let's talk a little about Rustin and your relationship to him, and Igal's relationship and just any comments about him and whether he inspired you, or—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, well, you don’t want, you don't, I'm not gonna discuss any of the sex business.

Interviewer #1:

No, no.

Interviewer #2:

No, no, just what he represented as a human—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, right.

Interviewer #2:

— being, and a pacifist—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, right.

Interviewer #1:

—a Quaker, a guy who put himself on the line

Interviewer #1:

I mean, if that's significant, that's fine, but you don't have to—

Interviewer #2:

No.

Vivien Roodenko:

No, it's going, you know, I don't want to, it's going, you know, to Swarthmore and maybe later on, but I mean, I don't—

Interviewer #2:

No, that's not the issue. But you were good friend of Bayard's, and you—

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, as far as Bayard, I just, I adored him, you know? What else can I say? He was just, I mean, it seems to me that everybody in the War Resistors' League was tone deaf, and he was the only one who could sing. [laughs] And that's the first time that I really met him is at WRL conference, and, could he sing. So, thing is, he was a very charismatic person. I really didn't know him, he was really Igal's friend. They both for a while lived on Mott Street in the

East Village, and I, I, all I, you know, when I think of Bayard, I think of charismatic, magnificent, just splendid, but I really had very, very little contact. I, I sort of remember, I think I may have mentioned one time, for a couple of months I actually worked for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. And it was either at that time that we were, I sort of have, we were standing in the subway, like at Grand Central, I don't, maybe like a half hour just chatting, and it was, he was just absolutely delightful. Now, I, he was so impressive that when he worked for the War Resistors' League and Martin Luther King came on the scene, well, Martin Luther King, what, he was like 26, 27 years old? We, the League lent Bayard, by this time, Bayard was the executive secretary of the League, the League lent Bayard down to work with King. Now, and I think that was absolutely the right thing to do. Now, in the end, you know, years later, when he left the War Resistors' League and became, and I, became involved with the labor movement, I understand, I mean, some people, and I too criticized him because we lost such a tremendous person. But one of his goals, besides everything else, was that he wanted to have a good black movement. Black emancipation. And he felt that the best way was to have coalition with the labor movement. And I understand that, because it, it helped. Now, he also got involved with Jewish groups, and I can un-, I understand that because in the beginning, a lot of Jews, including Igal, were very active in the civil rights movement. And, so that there was a, a good element in the Jewish groups that had changed a little bit, but in any case, basically, it was the labor movement. And I understand. And I went to his memorial.

00:39:46:00-00:40:53:00

Interviewer #2:

Back up a little bit. You know, you said, I think it's very important when the War Resistors' League said, we're sending Bayard down to help Dr. King. Do you think he, do you think he really had an influence on this young preacher?

Vivien Roodenko:

I think Bayard had a tremendous influence on King. He, look, he was older, and he knew about Ghandi firsthand, having been in India for awhile, and he was an excellent teacher. And I think he had a tremendously good effect on Martin Luther King. Now of course there were other people in the civil rights movement, so that, well, you know, there, there was some contention, and, in any case eventually he came back to the League. But I do think that one on one, he had a tremendous effect on, on King. And, and, look, Bayard could have an effect on anybody. He was, he was just remarkable.

Interviewer #2:

And that was a, that was a critical mo-, moment in the movement, wasn't it—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—1956.

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

00:40:54:00-00:43:54:00

Interviewer #1:

Could you talk a little about Lew Hill and your job at the ACLU Committee on Conscientious Objectors?

Interviewer #2:

Just what Lew's plans were.

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

And just maybe a little more about what you did there and what that organization did—

Vivien Roodenko:

Mmm.

Interviewer #1:

—and then what Lew did in particular.

Vivien Roodenko:

In 1945, which was just a f-, maybe a couple of months after Igal went to prison in Sandstone, Minnesota, I left the Socialist Party office in New York and went to Washington, D.C., and worked in the beginning for the National Committee for CO's under the ACLU. And the head of the office was the [background noise] fantastic Lewis Hill. And, he headed up the office. He was wonderful to work with. He had been a, he had worked in radio. And I don't know exactly. I mean, I think he probably did more than just being an announcer. But he had a absolutely beautiful voice for radio. And I know Igal had a lot of correspondence with him, and, [pause] there, well, let me backtrack. This is when, the National Committee of

CO's, ACLU, but at the same time there was an Amnesty Committee that was being formed. And so, it, it so happened that Lew Hill planned to leave Washington the end of that year, end of '45. And I have seen correspondence from Igal where he says that he would like [background noise] Lew Hill to head up the Committee for Amnesty, because nobody could do such a marvelous job. So this is. So, I really, I mean, this is all sort of secondhand from letters that I read, you know, that Igal wrote. And I guess in those days, Lew Hill, I, I really can't, I mean maybe it's after the fact, but I think he was dreaming of what eventually became KPFA. Because he went to California, I think he got involved with a little radio station. And an, a, a good co-worker of his was John Lewis? And, and I guess there were a few others, and I really, as I say, Esther Bankoff may really be able to help out more, but that's how KPFA started. And-

Interviewer #1:

And Denny Wilshire, did you know him?

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, right, right, Denny Wilshire. And unfortunately, I know Lew, I knew his wife Joy, in Washington, she was very active. And all I can say is that he died very prematurely.

Interviewer:

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [unintelligible]

00:43:55:00-00:44:58:00

Interviewer #2:

Let's stop for a minute and regroup, don't you think?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, I think maybe we could go on to the letters, huh?

Interviewer #2:

Yes, I think—

[cut]

Interviewer #1:

Go ahead.

Camera Crew Member:

Is it better to leave 'em on?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

Vivien Roodenko:

[whispers] All right.

Interviewer #1:

What do you want her to do, bring it up—

Interviewer #2:

Can you lift the letter? Yeah, that's good yeah. OK, go ahead and read it.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK. This is a letter that Igal wrote to my parents in September of '45. [reads] "My dears. A very happy New Year to all of you. I have been thinking of you often, particularly this last few days as the old year draws to a close, and wondering how soon we shall be together again. [clears throat] That we shall, as together again, surely before another year has passed. That I know for certain—"

Interviewer #1:

Read that again.

Vivien Roodenko:

It doesn't make any sense.

Interviewer #1:

No, I—

Camera Crew Member:

A sip of water, please.

Vivien Roodenko:

[clears throat]

Interviewer #2:

Bless you. You need a, you need a drink, I think you need another sip.

Interviewer #1:

I read it before. How's it read?

Vivien Roodenko:

[reads] "My dears. A very happy New—

Interviewer #1:

I'm sorry, we need to start at the beginning.

Interviewer #2:

Go ahead.

00:44:59:00-00:47:07:00

Vivien Roodenko:

[reads] "My dears. A very happy New Year to all of you. I have been thinking of you often, particularly these last few days as the old year draws to a close, and wondering how soon we shall be together again. That we shall be together again, surely before another year has passed, that I know for certain. What is so uncertain, what makes for so many dark clouds in these days of sunshine [clears throat] is whether this war will be the last. It was my hope for an end of war which brought me here, and is keeping me here. It is also my hope for another end to all war, which will keep me strong in my work to that end when I leave. My being here is no reason for bitterness. I know I have done right, and you know it too. If there is to be any bitterness, it is at that fate which has caused the ugly and useless sacrifice of so many millions of young, and hopeful, and courageous lives. And so many millions of old, and hopeless, and sorry lives." [pause] Stop. I mean, I got—

Interviewer #2:

That doesn't make sense.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK.

[cut]

Vivien Roodenko:

[reads] "—that, at that fate which has caused the ugly and useless sacrifice of so many millions of young, and hopeful and courageous lives." Comma.—

Interviewer #1:

Now comma, yeah.

Vivien Roodenko:

[reads] "And so many millions," this is where I got stuck. [reads] "—and so many millions of old, and hopeless, and sorry lives."

Interviewer #2:

Everybody—

Vivien Roodenko:

I mean, here.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, that was, no, no, I'm sorry, you did—

[cut]

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, OK.

Interviewer #2:

OK, so go ahead.

Vivien Roodenko:

When Igal was in-, now let me start it.

Interviewer #2:

OK.

00:47:08:00-00:49:26:00

Vivien Roodenko:

Igal had been recognized as a conscientious objector, had spent a number of months in a Quaker-spons-, administered camp in Maryland. Then there was a move on, in the, among the CO's, that it was wrong for the peace churches to really administer the camps. And they wanted the churches out, and they set up a few government camps, and Igal was sent to Mancos, Colorado, the government camp. And when he was there, he also began to feel that it wasn't just the camps but conscription altogether, and he wrote, we exchanged correspondence, mainly because he wanted, he was thinking about walking out of camp, and probably going to prison, and I was the go-between him and my parents. So, at one point I wrote him the following, [reads] "It is also extremely difficult for me to just glibly send you off to the clink. Yet, I cannot refrain from viewing the entire situation in a broader sense than the narrow personal one. The pacifist movement is weak enough, and with the percentage of social action people practically infinitesimal, it is all the more necessary for each one to go the limit that his conscience dictates. Therefore, darling Igal, though I hate like hell to say this, I must support your proposal to walk out of Mancos, but remember, if you don't, my support of you will not diminish or retract one iota."

Interviewer #2:

And then he wrote—

Vivien Roodenko:

When Igal received the letter, he, was very moved, and he wrote me the following, [reads] "Your letter was so perfect a reply, and different from those others have received from their families that one of the boys made a number of copies of it. Several of them sent these home. Indeed, everyone everywhere, the answer is the same. You have suffered enough here in CPS, why should you resume, as, why should you assume even a greater burden?"

00:49:27:00-00:52:39:00

Interviewer #2:

That's about, you know, there's something else too, in one of the letters that, that Scott sent us—

Interviewer #1:

There's more to it, isn’t there? Is that it?

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, no, that, well that—

Interviewer #2:

That's it.

Interviewer #1:

Oh.

Vivien Roodenko:

—then afterwards, Scott—

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

Interviewer #1:

Oh.

Vivien Roodenko:

—writes, [reads] "While not alone, Vivien illustrates a gendered—

Interviewer #2:

Yeah, no.

Vivien Roodenko:

—role of wartime ra—"

[cut]

Vivien Roodenko:

The beginning of the paragraph, about the guy with the new leader?

Interviewer #2:

Yeah.

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, I guess I have to, because he says—

Interviewer #2:

Yeah, it makes sense.

Vivien Roodenko:

OK. [reads] "Yesterday, Will Al-," This is, from a letter I wrote to Igal April 27, 1946. [reads] "Yesterday, Will Allen [clears throat] of the 'New Leader and Justice'"—

Interviewer #2:

Start over again, just start over again.

Camera Crew Member:

Lick your lips, it reads a little easier.

Vivien Roodenko:

Where's my water? [chuckles]

Interviewer #2:

Go ahead.

Vivien Roodenko:

This is a letter I wrote to Igal April 27, 1946. It's an excerpt. [reads] "Yesterday, Will Allen of the 'New Leader and Justice', the ILGWU paper, was here. He says he used to know you, and likes you very much. Was happy to know there were more like you," parentheses, [reads] "(that is supposed to be me)" close parentheses "He sends you all, he sends you his very best, claims he did not know what happened to you these past few years and only yesterday learned through Bill Gaussmann that you have been in prison for more than a year. He is all for amnesty. How do you like that that from an SDFer? Of course, we went on to discuss the effectiveness of being in prison. Me taking the, me taking that on to discuss the effectivene-," Oh wait a minute, I'm sorry. [reads] "Of course we"—

Interviewer #1:

Just keep on from there, that's fine.

Vivien Roodenko:

[reads] "Of course we went on to discuss the effectiveness of being in prison, me taking that on, on to discuss the effectiveness-," Why am I reading the same thing over again? [reads]

"Of course he, we went on to discuss the effectiveness of being in prison me taking that"—

Interviewer #1:

"Me thinking that? No?"

Interviewer #2:

Let's look at it one more time. What is it?

[cut]

Vivien Roodenko:

—you. [reads] "Of course, we went on to discuss the effectiveness of being in prison. Me taking that position that is the most effective thing we can do, and he the opposite side. The same old song about who knows you're, you are in, and me explaining that first and primary, we do things because we think they are right, and then we hope that through ourselves and others on the outside, we will get the message across. He kept interjecting the co-, in the, in the conversation with remarks on how he didn't agree with me, but that he would defend my rights to the en-, to the end to have my beliefs, to the end to have my beliefs and that our goals were the same." parentheses "(I don't know about mine)" close [reads] "Although our means may be different, and the highest respect he has for you, and for me too, so—"

[cut]

00:52:40:00-00:53:42:00

Interviewer #1:

—Vivien, I know what you, what is it—

[laughter]

Camera Crew Member:

Work on it. It's good, work on it.

Interviewer #1:

—consistency is the [unintelligible]—

Vivien Roodenko:

Thanks. [laughter] I worked on it.

Interviewer #2:

You didn't change your mind, what was that?

Interviewer #1:

I know what you mean, I, I can't grab it.

Vivien Roodenko:

This was from, from an old CPer tha-, who felt that pacifism was, had no value, and he said, and this is a quote from a writer, that, something like consistency is the avenue of cowardl-, cowards. Not avenue, but to, to, just to be consistent which, the pacifists were, I mean, like other people if you're, you have an ideology, you're con-, look the CPers had their ideology—

Camera Crew Member:

Are we supposed to be rolling?

Vivien Roodenko:

—but he would say to me that I was—

Interviewer #2:

Yes, I'd like to be rolling.

Interviewer #1:

You're not rolling?

Camera Crew Member:

She's got her glasses on?

Interviewer #2:

I thought you—

Camera Crew Member:

You guys, she's looking at you, she's supposed to be—

Interviewer #2:

So, go ahead.

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, I don't want my glasses on anyway, it helps.

Interviewer #2:

Are you on now?

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, we're rolling.

Interviewer #2:

Where were we?

Interviewer #1:

So, say the thing about how—

Interviewer #2:

You, you and Igal were in this difficult place.

00:53:43:00-00:54:59:00

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, yeah, one of the things that both Igal and I encountered, and I think I took it more seriously, Igal probably just let it roll off his back, was that with Communists, they would call me a fascist, because I wasn't going along with them. And among non-Communists I was called a Communist because I wasn't going along, and that I fou-, I found difficult, and I sort of tried to st-, steer clear of it. Later in life, as I met some CP'ers who stopped, who were no longer CP'ers, they, even though they had really been active in a lot of good causes, and I could see, appreciate what they did, some of them continued to misunderstand, and, and not want to understand the pacifist position. And one of them had said, and I don't know the exact quote, is that "Consistency is the path of cowardness." I'm, I'm messing up on the, on the, but, on the exact quote, and I think it was fro-, from some writer.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Vivien Roodenko:

And it—

00:55:00:00-00:57:00:00

Interviewer #1:

Could you talk— oh, I'm sorry,

Interviewer #2:

But that's also, you know, what you said about the people—

Camera Crew Member:

[clears throat]

Interviewer #2:

—who weren't Communist sort of automatically equated the pacifist position with Communism. That was pretty widespread, wasn't it? I mean—

Vivien Roodenko:

Well [pause] incidentally, the Communist who had called me a fascist also equated, and this used to hurt, pacifism, social activist pacifism, with the America First position of, of Lindbergh. So the thing is, you could be anti-war, but there was a difference in where your ideology came from. The same way that even though, with the Communists, I, I certainly didn't appreciate their ideology, but practically they did a lot of good things. They supported workers, they supported the, any good cause. But in the end, we differed, and again, they called me, they were ready to call me a fascist. And, and, and, no, wait a minute. Yeah, a fascist and an America Firster. Now the non-Communists, mainly my relatives, would, and their friends, would often feel that because I, I, I took a social activist position, that I was a Communist.

Interviewer #2:

So at, like, at family reunions, are there certain subjects you avoid, or do you always have a fight?

Vivien Roodenko:

Oh yeah, yeah. Well listen, I, I, I took, I was active in many, many ways, but I took, where I knew that I would have a bad encounter, I just avoided the encounter.

Interviewer #1:

Let's go on, and qui-, because we need to wrap this up, we're all getting tired, I'm sure. Because I am [laughs] and I'm sure you are. We've been at this all day. The, the whole, just briefly, how Igal, while he was hunger striking in prison, how you supported him on the outside, by organizing protests on the outside.

Interviewer #2:

The May 11th stuff.

Interviewer #1:

Yeah.

00:57:01:00-01:00:32:00

Vivien Roodenko:

While Igal was in prison , and as I mentioned earlier, I worked in a lot of good offices, and so, and when in prison, one of the big things is that, I don't know how it is now, but you were entitled to seven correspondents, but you could, I think you could only get three letters a week, so that not everybody could write every week, but I was designated as a, a weekly writer. And I, to this day I can't write letters 'cause I wrote so many. And I would write to him about everything that was going on, on the outside, and he would describe things in prison. And in this way, our, our contact on a weekly basis, I was expressing my devotion and he was also expressing his strength and, and ability to manage in prison. Now, we had a number of, we used to have a, a lunch, a pacifist lunch thing every week, I mingled with the pacifists. And the big thing, actually, before we had planned, the May 11th was a Mother's Day, to have a demonstration. At the same time, Igal and four others went, wanted to go on hunger strike. Planned to go on hunger strike, and the two things were synchronized, and, which was very good. But one thing I haven't told, is that a few months before that, we had just a plain, ordinary picket line in front of the White House. Might have been ten of us. This is before Lew Hill and his wife left Washington. [background sound] And we were walking with our signs and [background sound] two Marines in uniform came [background sound] over and they were mad. And they ripped the signs, and they tore them, and, you know, it was a horrible situation. [background sound] But one of us, Faye Blackburn, who was, for that time a fantastic thing, she was an attorney. And she took one of these guys aside, and she just began to talk very nicely to him. He calmed down, in fact, I have all this written in a, a report. He calmed down, and we invited him and, and a buddy, or anybody else he wanted to bring, to come to Faye's apartment that night, and we would just sit and talk, express our views. [background sound] It was a fantastic experience. He fin-, he came, alone. But we still had a very good exchange. And what happened is we established a friendship with him. And talk about nonviolence, it was a marvelous, marvelous [background sound] example. So, any case, that was our demonstration prior to [background sound] May 11th, and then the big thing came on May 11th, including we did get a hundred people to come down to Washington to not only demonstrate in front of the White House, but I arranged meetings

with their Congress people, and lodging. And my mother was part of the hundred people. So it was an exhilarating experience, and I know it made Igal, you know, having this support on the outside, support in terms of correspondence, demonstrations, sustained them too. Plus the fact that they had their own inner strength.

01:00:33:00-01:02:49:00

Interviewer #1:

Just say what year that was. [pause] May, May—

Interviewer #2:

'46, right?

Interviewer #1:

Say that you were—

Vivien Roodenko:

OK, this was May 11th, '46, was the big demonstration. The one that I talked about getting in touch with the Marine was, might've been before the end of '45, because Lew and Joy left, so it might've been, oh, I know when it was. I went to a, I went to see Igal in Sandstone, the, I think the beginning of '46, and because the others had established a relationship with the, with the Marine, but I left, so you know, I, I just knew it secondhand.

Interviewer #1:

So the war was over right here?

Interviewer #2:

There's one other thing, yeah, that occurs to me, because—

Camera Crew Member:

[clears throat]

Interviewer #1:

You should keep it [unintelligible]

Interviewer #2:

—this came up in another interview the other day. The war ended in a quite remarkable way,

with the dropping of the atomic bomb. And the war, you know, the war being over was good, but at the same time it ended in this truly—

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

—world-changing way. Do you remember your feelings about how the war ended?

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, one of the big demonstra-, demonstrations of opposition to the horror of dropping the atomic bomb was expressed by Vent Andresen, who walked out of camp as, in protest to the dropping of the bomb. And, he was a re-, a, he was an absolutely remarkable person on. He's somebody that I was close to, because he didn't live too far away, just about thirty miles here. And he let, well, this is digressing, but he too, dedicated his life to social activism, whether it was the environmental issue, or, he worked with, I, he lived in the Glen Gardener community together with Dave Dellinger—

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm.

Vivien Roodenko:

—then when he moved to New Hope, he was in, worked for the co-ops, [background sound] environmental in addition to peace. He was remarkable.

01:02:50:00-01:04:36:00

Interviewer #2:

Vivien, what I was getting at was, 'cause I didn't live through it, you know, was—

Camera Crew Member:

[clears throat]

Interviewer #2:

—was there a mixture of horror and relief? Because the war was over.

Vivien Roodenko:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer #2:

Can you talk a little about that? I mean, in terms of how you felt. How did it strike you?

Vivien Roodenko:

OK, just a minute.

Interviewer #2:

Yeah, take a minute.

Vivien Roodenko:

Well, it was, it was, actually, they dovetailed. The war was over, but this was a crazy way, this was a terrible way to end the war, and as we learnt later on, the Japanese had made overtures to, to make peace. The only thing they wanted was to keep the, the emperor. Well, I mean, that was a figurehead anyway. I mean, this, this is that trouble with this unconditional surrender. When you dig your heels into the enemy. [background sound] So that, I think the big thing that I felt was the, the horror of the atomic bomb and the first one, and then the second one? You know, there were, if they wanted to show, they could've done it, I don't know, someplace in the world, that we're capable of doing this. But, so the up-, uppermost was the horror of dropping the bomb, and with that, as we learnt later, we could've stopped the war. They gave us this line about, we dropped the bomb because we could've saved the millions of lives. We know that all we had to do was agree [background sound] to the, they gave in about everything except the emperor. [background sound] And the emperor, as I said earlier,[background sound] I, as far as I'm concerned, he was a figurehead.

Interviewer #1:

Mm-hmm. [background sound] Are we done?

Interviewer #2:

Thanks, yeah. We're done.

[cut]

end of interview

01:04:36:00