

Patricia Adams (Part I)

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Vanshika Bagaria

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript – Patricia Adams

Interviewee: Patricia Adams (PA)

Interviewers: Roxanna and Theresa Downs (RT)

Interview Date: 28 November 2018

Location: James A. Cannavino Library

Roxanna: [00:02](#) Good afternoon. This is Roxanna and Theresa Downs on the 15th of November, 2017 and we are interviewing lovely professor Adams. So professor Adams, what was your childhood like growing up in North Carolina?

Patricia Adams: [00:18](#) Well, I grew up in the mountains of western North Carolina in a town that's now become very well known, Asheville, North Carolina. But when I grew up there, which would be in the 50s, it was still a small city, rather sleepy and they never did any, urban revitalization. So that means that the old buildings that were the old library, the old theaters that were built in the 30 state, and that's one of the reasons it's become a very popular place for people to move today. But growing up in the 50s, the thing about growing up in the mountains, it was southern, but it wasn't southern the way the deep south was. I did grow up in the segregated south, but the mountains, many of the people, mountain people were Republican and they didn't have a history of plantations and that kind of thing that in the other parts of the south.

Patricia Adams: [01:09](#) So I feel like I grew up both with a southern influence. My parents were both from the south. My father from, the Piedmont of North Carolina. My mother's family had a farm in the mountains. My grandchildren would be the seventh generation that has that farm. So I felt like I had an experience of, of mountains and, and actually my father was in the US Forest Service and loved the wilderness. So he did a lot of camping and hiking. And I remember

growing up hearing him often say, oh, can't you hear the wild it's calling you. So I, from early on I had a great sense of the outdoors and nature.

RT: [01:42](#) Well, that is profound in the wild. Okay. Moving on then. What did you know about the civil rights movement growing up and did it impact you or your family in any way and the community around you as well?

PA: [01:55](#) Well, I went to, and I'll talk about this a little bit later, but not extensively. I went to Duke University in 1960 so that I was a freshman in 1960, 1960. And I'll talk about that more when I'm speaking to the group. Things were very much like they were in the 50s. Things had not started to change, but there was certain rumblings about things going on. Now I did grow up, as I said, in a segregated town. I went to a segregated school and my contact with African Americans, which was small and population in the mountains actually tended to be typically, we had Sarah who worked for us and she was an older lady that, came once or twice a week and the buses were segregated. And I remember once, actually I knew it was wrong, but I didn't verbalize what was the, cause it was all I knew. And I remember once wanting to give my seat to a woman, she was clearly coming home from work cleaning and she, uh, she said no, I think she was afraid she would get in trouble if she sat in the middle of us. So without verbalizing it, even as a pretty teenager, I knew things weren't quite right. So then when at Duke, that's when the green spore is sitting. Some of the early protests were starting, then I participated. But I can't take any credit for making any difference or doing anything particularly brave.

RT: [03:15](#) Okay. Well, how will you describe your college experience at Duke and all the other various, institutions that you were enrolled in?

PA: [03:23](#) I can call Heinz 57 cause I want so many different schools. I started at Duke and I was here for two years, which was a very tough, but really a good school. The people in the south call Duka Yankee school because it wasn't all

southern, UNC was the southern school. But I was lucky I went there on a full scholarship. But I remember the first semester taking zoology and taking some other courses, I was terrified that I was gonna lose my scholarship because it was so tough. and my first exam I had in zoology, I didn't fail, but I made, you know, like 65 or something. And I knew if I didn't do something about that, I would lose my scholarship when I couldn't stay at school. So it was kind of terrifying.

PA: [04:11](#) So I do remember being very, challenged and I figured out how to study and I learned and did to, I actually met the man that I eventually married John Adams. He was in law school and I was a freshman. So there was an age difference. So, that also impacted my stay there, but I felt like I had a wonderful education and a good start. The Asheville public schools were fine, but I would say mediocre really in terms of, intellectual thought and challenges. Then I spent a year in Heidelberg on my own. I didn't go with the program. This was the sixties I was sort of rebelling and going off, you know, had visions of hitchhiking and being barefoot in Europe. But I did go to Heidelberg and took all my courses in German and tried to stay with German students cause I wanted to learn the language.

PA: [04:58](#) I have no German background, but I was in the American field service, I was an exchange student and I was sent to Germany. So that, that my interest was there and I knew some people there. Then John and I did marry, and we were living in Manhattan and I went to NYU and I finished at NYU going at night. So it took a while. In fact, I didn't finish my undergraduate work until our second child was born. So as a mother and going to school at the same time, and then I had, didn't have enough yet. So I went back to the City University of New York and got a master's in comparative literature. So each, each school was different. And I think all in all I had a really good educational experience.

- RT: [05:45](#) Okay. So, you mentioned something about the civil rights movement so the next question is where you a part of the social and political movements of the 1960s, the civil rights, anti-war, feminism, any of those that ring a bell or might have impacted your life.
- PA: [06:02](#) Well, I'll tell you, I'll also talk about those movements that were sort of growing as I was growing and I will be honest with you. As I said, I didn't, I did, I did march on Washington Square. I did some, but I didn't, I can't pretend to be particularly avantgarde with that or particularly brave. When the movement was really started and the Vietnam war started and things were very active in and around New York. By then, I was a young mother with two children. So I can't say I did, I actively participated in, I mean I did in it, but I can't take credit for doing anything particular or special during those years or during that era. Now, women's movement again. I mean, I, I attended what was called consciousness raising groups. I did a lot of personal things, but I didn't do anything that would count as something particularly public or political or active in that sense.
- RT: [06:56](#) Okay. you mentioned your husband John Adams, and so just, you know, did you always share similar politics at the time or, you know, were you at conflict with each other at some point?
- PA: [07:11](#) Well that's interesting because actually we did and I don't know if we instinctively were attracted to each other because we both came from very liberal democratic family backgrounds. And, um, I think it's interesting, this is an aside, I grew up in a, in a home where my father thought that Franklin Roosevelt Hung the moon because he, according to my daddy, saved everybody from the Great Depression and he helped start the forest service and things that were very important to my father. But he clearly was a very strong Democrat in our home. But I'm one of five children and two of my sisters became strong Republicans. So you never know what's going to happen. But now I've been wandering, so I forgot your question exactly. Did you always share? Oh, share things with John? Well, I

mentioned earlier how my father loved the Wilderness and I spent a lot of time out of doors and close to nature.

PA: [08:01](#) And John grew up on a farm in upstate New York. So, he also felt very close to nature and, and lived an out of doors life even though he was born in Manhattan, his family moved up to the Catskills when he was very young. So, in that sense we shared, an interest. And I would also say this, a family tradition in both families was, I don't know a better word than just cause oriented. John's father was a great supporter of trade unions and the worker, I mean his, his mother and father were immigrants from Ireland. So, they work very hard here and they supported the worker. And again, my father was a wilderness person. He was also, my parents were actually very liberal in thought they weren't out on the streets protesting, but I think they really did believe in human rights. That was the atmosphere in which I grew up. And so John and I did have that very similar base love of nature and the outdoors. I am being committed to a cause. I didn't want John, although he was in law school, to join a Wall Street law firm and make a lot of money that really wasn't what I was in. And he wasn't either so it worked. He did work on Wall Street for three years, but even that he knew he wanted, he wouldn't stay. He wanted to, to move on to other things.

RT: [09:15](#) Okay. Well that actually transitions really well into our next question, which is how did you come interested in environmentalism?

PA: [09:26](#) Well, again, that partially is because, well not partially, but I think the base of that would be because we both grew up loving nature, believing in the out of doors. And as I said, John started at Cadwallader I was still going to school. I thought of being a teacher. I majored in Comparative Literature, so I'm a literature person. Um, but I think we both felt that we wanted a life of a purpose. And that's not to denigrate anybody other's choices. But that was what we wanted. John left the US attorney's office to work at, I mean, the Wall Street law firm to work at the U.S attorney's office where he was a prosecutor and he found that in the

long run, depressing. He felt bad. He was in the drug enforcement era and he just got, so he, he felt bad for the people he was arresting, you know, and it was something he didn't want to continue to do.

PA: [10:19](#) Some people in that field stay as prosecutors or they end up as defenders. I mean they, but they stay in court, so to speak. He loved being in court. He loves standing on his feet. He loved arguments, but he knew he was quite unsatisfied. And I'll say this later as well, environmentalism with an ism didn't exist in the 1960s. So I'll go in to how the NRDC got started. It has to do with storm King. Um, and he knew and we both knew. I don't think we ever doubted for a second that this was something we both could dedicate our lives to this work for the environment. So that was good.

RT: [10:54](#) Okay. So, what role did you play at the founding and the initiatives of the natural resource defense council also does the NRDC

PA: [11:05](#) Right. Well, I will also expand on this during our talk, my talk, um, I know I didn't go with John into the office so to speak, but when NRDC was first founded, he was the first employee. And, I'll refer to this to the, the group that hired him knew that it was very important to start a public interest law firm, which means the lawyers would represent individuals who had concerns about the environment or groups, but they wouldn't charge. So, where's it that they're going to get money? Well, people like John would have to raise it. I mean, you have to go to foundations and go to individuals. So, we had, we had just had our third child, our third child was born December 31st John Started January 1st. And so with three children in a one bedroom apartment in New York City, we agreed we'd take this chance and see what was gonna happen.

PA: [12:00](#) And, with this idea, it was still just an idea and John was told, we think you should make about \$30,000 now go out and raise it. Meet people. I mean the people who had this idea had wealthy friends, they were connected to Ford

Foundation in a way. But, but we just, you know, I let people often say, how could you do that with those three children and you know, and you didn't know what was going to happen. I think part of that is just being young and ready to try things and I didn't feel guilty or bad for missing out the question you ask about women's movement, civil rights not being that active in them personally, I felt this was an area that I love, could be committed to and I could really help in. And although John was a professional, he was on the letter head, we've got to make that clear.

PA: [12:45](#) But he and I were partners from day one and we had, one of the ways that John developed the organization raised money, got donors, was to bring them home. And I had guests and people, and friends, children. And it was that kind of our relationship, that kind of partnership. But again, I wasn't in the office and I wasn't on the letter head. So it was a partnership that we worked together to build NRDC.

RT: Okay. You mentioned that at that time is when you had your third child. So how did you manage motherhood and this activism and you know, joining the environmentalism cause and all of that and you know, could the children be involved in the NRDC in any way and were they involved in the environmental issues that you were facing

Well, our daughter was five and then the second child was three and Ramsey was just born.

PA: [13:37](#) So they're a little babies really. And um, I actually went to school and I did work part time at the UN for, I don't know, now when I look back, I don't know how I balanced all that, but we, I will say John's mother and father lived in New York City and she helped me with the children. I went to school at night primarily. So I could do those classes. And then, you know, we didn't have an AU pair [unsure] and we didn't have anybody live in. We we hired, you know, when I look back, I remember there was a wonderful young woman. She was all of the fifth grade, but she was our babysitter, you know, in the afternoon, take the kids to the park. So, I would say I was juggling, uh, different

things and uh, um, but, uh, but it, it worked out. I don't, you know.

PA: [14:26](#) Okay. So, how was it working so closely with your spouse, especially at the NRDC? Were there any challenges? Any advantages? And these [endeavors? inaudible] that, of course there were a lot of challenges. John and I have been married now 54 years. So we've survived. And in some ways, one of the biggest challenges was when John was asked to write a book about his experience. That's the, I brought an extra copy if you don't have it, the forceful nature that we wrote together. And John said, well, I won't do it unless Patricia and I do it together. And that was sort of emblematic of our life together. So, that was a challenge because it, you know, writing together and deciding what should go in, what should be kept out, how it's going to be worded. But we worked pretty closely.

PA: [15:10](#) I did most of the interviews and we discussed how we were going to do the book. Now over the years, I will say in great complements to John, even when he was on Wall Street and his coworkers were staying until 10 or 11 o'clock at night, he just didn't do that. Jonathan was always was home to be with us for dinner and to be with the children. He did a lot of traveling, but that was understandable. And, I think that we, we were partners, not just in building, an NRDC came very high on our priority list, you know, that was the, what we wanted and needed to do and things related to that. But I think that the combination of commitment to that and commitment to family got us through and the challenges and the good times and the bad times. There are hard times as well. But that's true in anybody's life. I mean that's not unusual that it's true.

RT : Okay. What were some of the most memorable cases you've had at the NRDC and how were you and your husband involved in these cases?

PA: [16:11](#) It's there. I would say this, there are more interesting cases and then also memorable cases that went on for 17 years with corporations that aren't there or memorable. Important

but not interesting to talk about cause it was years in court. But um, the, the first case and, and again I will go into more detail is, is, is the talk going to be recorded? Cause I'll go into storm king and things like that or maybe not.

RT: I don't know. I'm not sure.

PA: Well that was one of the first cases we're going to build a Con Edison. What's going to build a pump storage plant down? Do you know where storm came in? Oh, are you from the Hudson Valley or in New York or, (reply) I'm from Nairobi. Kenya. Oh, so and, and you Teresa from New Jersey, New Jersey. Well, storm King is a beautiful mountain in the Hudson Highlands, just south of here. And Con Edison Electric was going to build a pump storage plant there to pump up water and during the night and then let it race back out and turn the turbines.

PA: [17:03](#) Well, there was without, I'll go into this more at the, in the talk, but that was the first big case. And NRDC represented syndicates and, and people that lived in the valley as well as the Hudson river fishermen, and they were able to stop that plant. That was a very big case, obviously. Other cases that are interesting. In the 1980s, there was an effort to prove, to establish a nuclear test ban, this doesn't sound like it's environment, but it was in Russia under Gorbachev and the people from NRDC became friends with the scientist in Russia. And we agreed. I say the we, the loyal, we, everybody involved, not just me and John, that you could show the difference between an underground nuclear bomb test and an earthquake. The Americans said, we're not gonna sign any treaty cause there's no way to monitor this.

PA: [18:02](#) And without going into a lot of detail, this went over a long period of time and we believe Paul would say, what? This isn't even an environment. Where is NRDC doing it? The answer was if we have a nuclear bomb or war, we won't have environment. So, so they weren't, it was during Reagan's administration and they did not just because of NRDC, but because of a combination of things. The nuclear test ban agreement was signed. What will happen in

the future? I don't know, but that was a very important case. I'm going to talk about this as well. It's a case of [unclear spelling] alour, which got a lot of attention in the late eighties as well about a, a chemical used on apples that was particularly dangerous for young children and toddlers. That was a case in NRDC is known for. I could go on more.

PA: [18:51](#) But a lot of these cases had to do with, with air, water and food, you know, pesticides on food and safety of food. Those are the, the areas that they were interested in. And NRDC has a lot of scientists as well. It's not just lawyers, it's law and science there. Wow. (Reply - So combination of the two biggest things.) Yes. And I was just with John, again, this is interesting. I don't know if it would be highlighted as the most important that thing NRDC has done, but we were out in, in southern Utah where there's an area, it's actually a million acres called bears ears in the Canyon lands in southern Utah. And President Obama nominated that for, or chose that to be what is called a monument, a national monument. Presidents can do that. And Trump has said, no, we want to cut that, shrink it way back. We think it's too much. We want to have oil and gas drilling there. So that's the case we're involved in right now. And in fact, there are, I think 15 or 16 lawsuits filed since Trump became president to try to protect the air. I mean the various agencies that protect the air. And I'll mention that too. And I'll also mention the fact that they're 20 lawyers in that department, which is much bigger than it ever was. And 15 a women, women are great litigators by the way.

RT: [20:16](#) Great steps towards equality right, Okay so, speaking of women, were there any women in the environmental movement that you looked up to and will you tell us about any of them that you particularly found very strong and that really influenced you.

PA: Well, again, I'm glad. I think we're on the same line cause things you're asking now like elaborate on when I talk because that's one of, I'm gonna start off by talking about

the women in the environment. You have women who were older than me when, uh, in, in 1970. I mean, I was in my thirties, but had not what they would do in terms of looking up to them in terms of environmental causes or activity. There wasn't much. However, I will talk about a woman who, and Franny Reese, who I also mentioned who was part of Marist College. But Beatrice Duggan wrote a letter initially to the New York Times saying that the destruction of storm king was, was horrific.

PA: [21:12](#) And it was a beautiful landscape known throughout America. And that, and what she did, and I'll talk about this, she signed her maiden name to protect her husband. She was afraid if she put her married name and he was a lawyer on Wall Street, he would sort of be, get into trouble, maybe fired. She wasn't sure. I looked up to her for her bravery. She wasn't a lawyer, she was a woman probably born, you know, around 1910 or, you know, so she was older, but, it was very brave of her to step forward. And then the other women that I admire were six years younger than me. Usually they, these were women in the, in the, in the year I would've graduated, well, I graduated from 64 would have been my class. And women who graduated in 70, 71 things had changed tremendously already in college and more and more women were lawyers. So the new lawyers that came to NRDC during that period who were a little younger than me and were lawyers, did amazing work in the early seventies and then more and more women as scientists and lawyers have come to work in the environmental world.

RT: [22:15](#) Okay. So you said that Beatrice Dugin signed her maiden name too, you know her project so that they wouldn't come after her husband. Did you by any chance, encounter any situation that you had to follow that specific route?

PA: [22:32](#) You mean in order to protect John in that sense? Yeah, I don't know that I did any, I can't think of anything in specific enough to relate that. I felt that he, that Johnny, he's a real scrapper and I don't think he ever felt he needed protection other than times that worried what might

happen. There was one, actually this is a little off, but not totally. One of the things we were concerned about was overdevelopment of wilderness or areas that were wooded. And there was a lake near where we lived up in the Catskills and it was privately owned by a small hotel and the hotel basically went out of business as a hotel and it was, I don't know, I don't even think it was 108, I think it was like 20 or 30 acres and they were going to put in 400 homes in that area.

PA: [23:23](#) And we, and John and I both said what 400 little houses on this tiny lake, which was a private lake that, like drained into a state lake that drained into a river. So, and they didn't have any plans for any kind of septic system or anything United. So we work to stop that and what we, what we got then was a big reaction from local people there. I, the one person looked at me and said, you have ruined my friend's children's life because the friend had owned the property and wanted to develop it, that the hotel owner and a, we weren't physically threatened, but we were worried. We were sued, familiar dollars. And I remember sitting in the kitchen with the children, these little children, and this would be in 1971. Um, we were literally eating Bologna sandwiches. That's what I remember. And I heard on the radio that John Adams is being sued for \$1 million.

PA: [24:16](#) And I thought, well, might as well be 10 million. We don't have a million. What are they going to do? But that was definitely hostility. And looking back, I realize environment was new and people needed extra money. It's not that different today in many areas. You know, they saw a source of income, New People coming in. The destruction of the environment was not taught, but this was progress. So I would say that that was one area where we both felt a bit threatened. We turned out okay, we're still there. And that the property was bought and rezoned so that there are some houses on that lake, but not 400.

RT: [24:53](#) Okay. Okay. Well that's a good step towards you and the environment. Okay. So you mentioned earlier that, while you were writing books and stuff like that you, your

husband said, I'm not writing it without my wife's presence and contributions. So when did you start writing and you know, when was your first publication published? Were there any challenges, any ups, any downs, all the nitty gritty?

PA: [25:21](#) All of the above. Yeah, but we started in 2008, I believe when we were asked to do the book together. And I sort of joke and said he spoke, she wrote, Hey John, it was John's story. And so, he talked to me a lot about what it was like, sort of the same things you're asking me. The things that I would ask him. He knew and was participatory in every case and supported people. John's theory about work and organizing, NRDC was hire the best people you can and let them go, let them do what they can do and support them. He was not a micromanager. So, I would interview these. I did 150 interviews. I interviewed a lot of people. It was wonderful. Most of these people I knew, I had seen, I had seen them more on a personal level and they told me about their professional life and their cases.

PA: [26:13](#) But John's narrative followed through. We've talked through every chapter and, and we had a very good editor to help us the do it because John is so generous. He wanted to thank everybody I've ever seen. And I said, you know, nobody's going to read a book with just lots of, thank you. So, we've got to figure this out. So, we worked well together, I think, and it was published in 2010, and it's called a force for nature. And, it's, I, understand it's a thick book with a lot less, not that thick under 300 pages, but it's a lot of cases and law. But each chapter is a little story to, you know, so I think it can be interesting.

RT: [26:51](#) Oh Wow. That's lovely. Then. So, we talked about a few, presidential administrations that you ran into that gave you a few challenges. So, over your years in the environmental movement, what presidential administrations have been the best and the worst when it comes to protecting the environment? Elaborate how as much as you want.

PA: [27:10](#) Well, it, well, I'll start with Nixon. He was president and you know, Nixon doesn't get credit for doing much and he was opposed to a tax-exempt organization that litigate. That was something only the NAACP had done that. And they even have notes and letters from Nixon to his, the people who working with like, stop these guys, you know, that we don't want this going on. But it could cause also at the same time there was the civil rights, Huey Newton, other things in court that were, it was Apollo until time, [inaudible], you know, looking back. But in the end, under Nixon when NRDC was formed, the Environmental Protection Agency, the clean air act, many things that are still valid today are, even though they're challenged and I'll always be challenged, we're done. So, you know, in that area of environment, Nixon I think was a good things happened.

PA: [28:06](#) And then, there was Carter who was very much a friend of the environment, very willing to, he nominated 11 monuments in Alaska. And one of the best trips we ever had was a board member who was able to afford it, chartered planes. And, we visited the various, in 1977 we visited the various suggested monuments in Alaska, which would just gorgeous and quite special. And, that was a daring trip in 1977. Now on Alaska is traveled a lot more than it was then. But that was so, and then Reagan was a battle. Reagan had a philosophy that things were over-regulated and that anything that the federal government did, not anything but should be cut back. And he had James Watt. He really believed the land was here to be used, whether it means for drilling or for building, but it wasn't there to be set aside.

PA: [29:04](#) And his, and I'll mention this in the talk. His, the EPA director who was a woman by the name of Anne Gorsuch, her son is now on the Supreme Court. And she was, I would say anti-environmentalism. She believed that she was from the West and she believed that again, that individual's communities, and this is a question, can take care of the environment. You don't need the federal government to interfere. The NRDC lawyers in general feel that you really do need oversight because an environmental

issue isn't local. What's going on in Utah affects what's going on in Arizona. And it also affects what's going on in New York in terms of whether people can experience wilderness. You take it all away, it's a one-way trip. You don't get it back. You know, and then, who have we got after? And then Clinton was a very, friendly to the environment.

PA: [29:56](#) And John worked in a sub-cabinet position with, I mean, he didn't leave NRDC, but he, he did work with, with Clinton on sustainability was sort of the, the byword at that time. And then, George Bush the first, no, he was before Clinton, I guess. Yeah, no, whatever. Yeah, he was sort of neutral actually. I mean, I think that, that, that things got done. They did. There wasn't the George Bush the second, again, took more than Reagan. You know, big government is not good. You need more space and freedom. And so, there were, more their world. And then there was Clinton and then, um, Obama was very, positive towards environmental issues and every, if things were going extremely well, people were very pleased with what was being passed than done. But Trump is definitely on the other side. And, that's what they're dealing with now, you know, so that would,

PA: [30:55](#) And they're bringing lawsuits. Um, there's a video and I, hope we're able to get it up. The fellow that's head of litigation, I mentioned that they're now 15 women doing it, but as he says, and the theory is this is there is the rule of law in America and it's not politics and it's not propaganda and it's not what you think it is. Facts. You take the facts to court and then the white thing will come out of it. You have to believe in the justice system. So a, that's what they're doing now because Trump really has attacked a lot of the protect what we see, we environmentally as protections, uh, to the American people. He sees his government interference and stopping the growth of you know, businesses.

RT: [31:39](#) yeah. And that, wow, a lot of illustrations. I hadn't really taken into account how many administrations, those are.

PA: [31:43](#) well, it's been 47 years really since in our 70 to now is 47 years. It's amazing to me too, by the way.

RT: Okay, well given 47 years into the environment. So, what is your role in the environment now?

PA: Well John, um, and when you say you to me, you hear me say John Cause it really is a partnership what I do separately, although I did, I have done a couple of sort of more environmental than I've done various public service things and I taught I think, I don't know, but I did become a teacher and writer and I published some books and I taught in the inmate education program and I taught here at Marist for a while and Dutchess county community. But today John still works with NRDC on some of the issues and, together we were just as I sat out in southern Utah hosting a trip with the concerned citizens and some donors who wanted to know what was going on in Utah.

PA: [32:46](#) And then we went our own out to San Francisco where NRDC, the office there had some luncheons for us to talk to people about what's going on with Trump, with the administration, where things are, we represent NRDC in some ways. The NRDC has a new president [unsure spelling] Waysue, a woman and so he's not an official head of NRDC, but we still continue to represent and talk and, you know, cultivate people who want to support NRDC and, in terms of my own personal, activities, environmental activities, I helped found a land trust and in western North Carolina where I grew up and that land trust has grown and is preserved or saved or redirected, let's say a few thousands of acres of, land to be protected. It's down in the Nano Haldon national forest area in western North Carolina. And I also started a, Co-started a, nobody does anything alone. A little organization up in the Catskills that to protect our river and old covered bridge. It's sort of historic and nature protection. So that's still going on.

RT: [33:54](#) Yeah. Okay. Well given all of that, what are some future projects that you want to work on and you know, or

projects or actions do you think a college age student should be involved in when it comes to the environment?

PA: [34:09](#) That's what I'm going to ask you all. Oh, the thing about being involved, I mean I think that John and I, as you go get old, we used to live here in the Hudson valley in garrison, which is south of here. It's down south of cold spring. I don't know, you know, what you know about the Hudson Valley. Um, but now we live in upstate New York and we are not really retired but we're based up there and I tend to do more local things rather than thinking about national things. I am on the board of the community college and we are working on things like getting an arboretum and doing sustainability and solar powered unit. So, in that sense, I feel that it's my public service today and John will continue to represent NRDC whenever possible. And in terms of what young people can do, I sometimes ask that question.

PA: [35:00](#) The big issue is climate change and that's a global issue. And whether you believe it or not, I don't think anybody can deny the weather's changing. You follow that up with John and I sort of did a book tour. We talked to a lot of groups after we did the book together and you know, a few years ago, what can you do? What can an individual do? It's frustrating for someone who talks about climate change to say, well, change your light bulbs. Well, wait a minute. Here we're talking about a global issue that can cost thousands of hundreds of thousands of lives. You change light bulbs. It's a thing kind of in the future. And it's big. It's vague and it's very hard to know what individuals can do. And in some ways the most important thing, which I'm not doing is to organize and do political protest do political action.

PA: [35:49](#) I am interested in your generation because I think that, I think it's up to you guys and I think that there's a growing awareness, not just about environmental issues but other issues and the globalization, which is inevitable.[unsure phrase] And I go stop it. And you are the generation who have had real challenges and I think you're going to meet

those challenges. I don't know how, but there is technology. I often say, if you, when you think about computers, they used to take up a whole room and now you've got an iPhone, right? Solar units still take up fields. When are they going to get a solar unit or a source of energy the size of an iPhone? I think technology will find that. And I'm pretty optimistic that there will be a way somehow, and I don't think I, I have no idea how to solve the issue of the dependence on fossil fuels.

PA: [36:45](#) We'll find a way that we don't need oil and gas and coal. There'll be another source of energy. And again, it could be solar, wind, but it'll, it'll, the technology will have to improve. And that is your generation. So I don't know, I mean, I'm going to open that up when we're all together at the top. What do you think? and what do you, maybe you don't think climate change is the issue, but what is the issue or, and can you, how do you, you know, how do you feel about the environmental issues there?

RT: [37:12](#) Wow, there's a bunch of environmental issues starting with pollution. That's usually my biggest concern because there's parts of it all over, but we are definitely starting with solar energy as usual because we have these, you know, these vendors who go from like place to place. I saw one carrying this lab. It looks really pretty, but then he said it costed a lot more than usual lab cost. But then he told me, put it out in the sun, it will soak in the sun, and it'll light up during the night. And I was mind blown for a second there because the last time I saw, a solar panel is enormous. Yes. Yeah. And I don't know it just sparked a little interest in me and that influenced me to take environmental issues, which I took last semester and I got more acquainted with issues and steps to take, you know, to protect the environment and so forth.

PA: [38:10](#) Right. There are other on the ground things like, as you say, pollution. We were in China, I just couldn't wait to leave. I couldn't breathe. It was, so we, I called it the land with no shadows. It wasn't enough sun coming through to make a shadow. That's how polluted it was in [baking? Beijing?]

but I think that as you said, there'll be, as the unit technology, basically we'll help find those, solve those bugs and the, and the issue of water is an enormous issue. I don't know how it is in Kenya, but I just read the New York Times about, India, the rivers that used to flow freely are just sewage lines now. I mean, and you, you, you can't live without water. And water will also be a big issue as the population increases and globalization. So,

RT: [38:56](#) Yeah. Well, I mean we were talking about the PCBs that are in the Hudson river because I didn't realize how dangerous it was until I went down to the river. And on the dock, there is a sign that says be aware of the fish that you fish here because of PCBs. That's when it hit me. This is real.

PA: [39:14](#) This is real. Absolutely. And that's a battle that's been going on for 20 or 30 years. We, you get GM to clean it and there's, and it's controversial and complicated because some say it's better just to leave them down there and not store it all up cause you'll never get them all out. But the other hand is there still is to poison and they're lying at the foot of the river. So that's been, and those things, you know, I don't blame the big chemical companies who did this. It was the era of anything is good if it's progress. And they were never, you know, there were no regulations. That's the reason NRDC and other envir.. don't want to see Trump, let go of regulations because it, you know, you need those to protect our natural resources.

RT: Well, I think we are done. Okay. How much time did we take? It wasn't too bad. Yeah. Okay. Thank you so much.