## PARENTS OF THE FIELD.

***Interviewee: Dr Paul Wahrhaftig.***

***Date: April 28th 2005***

***Venue; Fairfax, Virginia***

***Interviewer; Dr. Chris Mitchell.***

Chris: … it is April the 28th, and we're interviewing Paul Wahrhaftig in Fairfax, Virginia. So… Paul is actually resident - and has been for a long time - in Pittsburgh, where for many years he has been the President of the Conflict Resolution Center, International and has been involved in alternative dispute resolution and conflict resolution for very many years… he's definitely one of the founding parents of our field.

So, Paul, welcome. Thanks for agreeing to come and let us grill you. Normally we'd try to start these interviews by getting people to think back to the beginning, but I'm actually going to start off in the middle - or at least what I think was the middle with you.

And I remember the first time I ever met you. You were just putting the final touches to the book that you and Hizkias Assefa… were writing about the "Move" conflict, and you proceeded to throw a whole set of very difficult questions to me about what conflict resolution had to offer to people who came to the situation with completely different – well, we would call them "world views" these days - with the Move and the citizens and the city authorities of Philadelphia.

So, how did you get involved with the Move conflict? What was the story behind that - because that, I think, is what our students… best know you for.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Okay. Well, actually that was the second time we met.

Chris: Really?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes, yes. I interviewed you back at the City University in London.

Chris: Oh, so you did… Okay, so we're reversing this now…

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes. Well, we'll get to that later. The Move thing. Well, I was running an international resource center for people "…mediating

racial, ethnic, and religious conflicts…" is how we billed it. And let's see – well, I'd been – it was about three years old by that time, and then this horrible thing broke out in Philadelphia where the city authorities assaulted and bombed a Move community group and ended up killing 11 people and burning down an entire neighborhood.

And this was, according to the newspapers – well, it was clearly an ethnic, racial conflict. And my board of directors – they met… I guess…the night after the Move conflict, just our regular meeting, and they just turned to me and said, "Look, if we're dealing with racial conflicts and this happened in Philadelphia, at the other end of our state, we ought to have something to say about it. What happened? What can we learn from it?" So I said, okay. [We had] got a little bit of funding from a couple of Philadelphia Quaker foundations. I had - by coincidence - run into Hizkias Assefa at a party the week before and he had given me a copy of his Ph.D. thesis on –

Chris: On the Sudan...

Paul Wahrhaftig: – [mediation] of the Sudanese situation. So I knew he had the research credentials and know-how, and I talked him into researching it with me. Our skills overlapped nicely – he's a very detail-oriented person, and I… like going out and interviewing people.

Chris: Certainly this book… on the Move conflict is one of the longest-surviving textbooks for the field.

I guess there's a long story of your journey to alternative dispute resolution before we actually met. So I know that you mentioned earlier, when we were talking about your time in civil rights…that you started out as a lawyer. So how did you make the transition from the law and civil rights into alternative dispute resolution, and why did that happen?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, I was running a bail reform program for the American Friends Service Committee. You know, when you get arrested, you have to post bail.

Chris: Sure.

Paul Wahrhaftig: And we put together a black, community-based bail agency and discovered other people in the state doing the same thing. So I gradually developed a network of folks and published a newsletter

and held conferences. So I have contacts around the state and increasingly around the country.

Meanwhile, on my committee – we had a program committee – I had an anthropologist, Michael Lowy, who was one of Laura Nader's students, who had researched the informal tribal dispute resolution methods of - I think it was the Ashanti tribe in –

Chris: In Ghana.

Paul Wahrhaftig: – Ghana, yes. And he came to us with the mission of trying to import this Ghanaian village model into the urban American neighborhoods. I thought it was the dumbest idea I'd ever heard, but then… sounded it out on a lot of people - community organizers and ex-cons and the kinds of folks that we looked at in those days as relevant - and they really liked it, so…

Chris: This was about when?

Paul Wahrhaftig: About 1972. So we… wrote up a proposal and we were going to do a pilot project first, and then I discovered there were three programs already in existence, and they didn't know that each other existed.

Chris: Which – were these? New York? Which ones –

Paul Wahrhaftig: No. Well… they represented the three models, too. The Night Prosecutor… program in Columbus, Ohio; the 4A program [Arbitration as an Alternative] in Rochester, New York; and the tiny little, community-based one – community assistance program in Chester, Pennsylvania.

So I just started writing up those in my newsletters and… played Johnny Appleseed with this idea of community mediation, and that grew into a national resource center for community mediation called, pithily, the Grassroot Citizen Dispute Resolution Clearing House.

Chris: Good heavens - bit of a mouthful!

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes… I'm not very good at short titles. Our newsletter was *The Mooter*.

Chris: Right, I remember that.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Which was pretty obscure because nobody knew what a moot was in the informal mechanism. So that was the basis of my networking domestically until about 1980, when I ran out of funds – or the service committee interest went elsewhere, so I was out of funds.

So [we] sat around and did some strategic thinking and came up with the idea that if you can't get funded to do a national resource center, do an international one.

Chris: Reasonable, yes. Did the idea work? Must have done - for a while.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, yes, for 20 years, and that's about the stage where I met you. And it really amazed me, because at that point I was on unemployment insurance, kind of wandering around talking to big names in the field like Roger Fisher and you and John Burton.

And I was amazed that almost all of them spent lots of time with me. I had a long interview with each one, except John Burton. John –

Chris: He always tended to be laconic…

Paul Wahrhaftig: And you all took me seriously - and I took off from there.

Chris: Michael Lowy – his name crops up [with] several people now. He sounds as though at least his idea was very influential. What sort of a person was he? … was he just somebody who had this idea and… dropped it into a fertile field, or did he continue with his interest? What happened to him?

Paul Wahrhaftig: He approached social change from a different perspective than I did. He tended to prescribe, "This is what a program ought to look like, and let's go sell it out in the community!" And I approached it as, "Here's a concept; let's give it to a community and together, we'll develop it".

So he and I – well, he got pretty angry at me. He sort of thought I'd stolen his idea and distorted it. And the lesson he learned from that was not necessarily the real life lesson, but the lesson - as he saw it - was that people listen to folks with a law degree and not anthropologists.

So, he went up to Stanford and got a law degree and did public interest [law] out there. And I've lost track of him since then.

Chris: …Well perhaps it's somebody that we ought to get in contact with and interview him.

Okay, so the major thing that I knew about you before you actually came up and interviewed me – I guess it was at City University, wasn't it…[it] must have been in London when you were on your travels.

…. if you'll forgive my… injecting a little…personal reminiscence here, I think you were perhaps the second person to come through City University and talk to me about alternative dispute resolution. Of course, we'd never heard of it before in Britain… the other one was this Australian lady called Wendy Foulkes. Did you ever come across Wendy?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes.

Chris: She was a wind from Australia blowing through the land - and a wonderful woman.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes - she floated through Pittsburgh, too, and we corresponded for years afterwards, sharing information and she really got the Australian movement started.

Chris: Right… she did indeed. Yes, that's another person we have to talk to. I remember her bursting into my room at City [University], from her university at Sydney. She came into my room in London and said something like… "Hi, I'm Wendy Foulkes, I've talked to all these people in the United States and they're doing these interesting things. What are you doing?"

And the answer was "Absolutely nothing in Britain at that stage"

And the other contact that brought us together again was the work that you and Hezekiah – Hizkias - Assefa were doing about the Move conflict… your book came out of that, and it's still something that we assign to our students and, I think, many others. How did you get involved in that? I mean, that was not [in] Pittsburgh, of course, that was [in] Philadelphia. How come you and Hizkias actually got into that one?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, it was a lot of stuff coming together. By that time, I was running the international center that I'd proposed, and my board met the day after the bombing. It happened to be our regularly scheduled meeting, and they strongly suggested that if our business is helping people deal with racial, ethnic, and religious conflicts,

here was one in [our own] state that ended disastrously and we ought to find to why and what lessons we can learn from it.

So I got a little bit of funding from a couple of Quaker foundations in Philadelphia, and I met… Hizkias a couple of weeks earlier, and had read his Ph.D. thesis on the successful mediation of the Sudanese civil war – at least it seemed successful at that time.

So I knew he had the research skills that I lacked, and so I talked him into joining with me in researching it.

And it worked out nicely, because he's a very thorough, analytical person, and I like to just kind of dab and get in – well, I'm the kind of pack rat for information. Organizing it is another problem, but he was an organizer of information and between the two of us, we managed to get a good, readable book out of it - and a preliminary report to the city of Philadelphia, which we put on a seminar…You were part of that seminar.

Chris: I was part of the seminar, yes.

Paul Wahrhaftig: So we wanted to be more than just a textbook. We wanted to really feed something back into the city with the problem. And I think we changed the analysis. Up until then, the analysis was; "These people were too crazy to negotiate with, so what level of violence is appropriate for people that are too nutty?" And I think after our seminar and distributing that, the conversation changed to; "How do you deal with people who we perceive as too nutty?"

Chris: Well, in a way, it was a book that was well ahead of its time… because in a way… it actually took up the issue of what we call now… [very trendily] "competing worldviews" - and how do you actually do conflict resolution with people who have totally different frames of reference?

The tragedy of it is… it doesn't seem [that] the lessons… . have been learned much further afield than Philadelphia. If you think about Waco, for example, and some of the other things that have happened since]. But do you think it did have an impact on Philadelphia and the way in which they organized their relations with protest groups? Because that's what I think Move was.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes, yes, yes. Well, I don't know about protest groups in general, though they haven't bombed any since then. But I do know that the remnants of Move, which still exist in Philadelphia… that the city had assigned from the Human Relations Department a liaison person who has read the book, and they negotiated some things

that seemed totally impossible earlier, like a home-schooling program for the kids that met both the academic requirements and Move's requirements.

I haven't followed the developments there. The people…expect me to be up-to-date on Move when that's 20 years ago.

Chris: Yes. Well, it still remains of interest. I sometimes say to my students… we're always talking about peace-building…after the violence…[but] what's happened as far as the Move people [are concerned], because they haven't all gone away or anything like that. So it is an interesting question.

… a bit more about your international center in Pittsburgh. How did that get started… I mean, you actually ran for… about 20 years [as] one of the livelier… regular journals in the field. And that, I think, has been very, very valuable.

But how did it all get started? …you decided to go international, and then what?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, okay [We] decided to go international. I interviewed people like you to see if there was anything quite like that, and it was clear that there were international resource centers, but they're in either the academic or diplomatic level, and there was nothing at… the citizen, non-professional level.

So, my next step was to see if I could get into a conflict area and see if people would see me as a resource or just an interloper. So we were vacationing in England when I met you, and took a side trip up to Northern Ireland, getting lists of people who were… in the middle, from Quakers and from historians.

Chris: Yes, okay, historians.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes, and then met an Irish history professor in Carnegie-Mellon and he had relatives, and, you know - people know people. And it turned out that's an amazingly easy one to get into because it's been [going on for] so long, but everybody knows where everybody stands.

But people were glad to talk to me, and quite willing to have a resource center that they could draw on [and] that wouldn't impose stuff on them. So… I went back and just started it up in the upstairs front room of my house. I had a mailing list from my pre-trial days. I went to the first National Conference on Peace-Making and Conflict Resolution, partially to get the list of the attenders.

Chris: Now that was – when was that?

Paul Wahrhaftig: 1981 - in Georgia.

Chris: Okay, yes.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes, I think it was Georgia. So, that gave me a reasonable mailing list, and I started another newsletter. This time not *The Mooter* but the *Conflict Resolution Notes* - I'd learned to make a more understandable title - and sent it out to them. And that became the basis. And then I organized, I think, by the iron law of serendipity.

Chris: Always works.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Just…, you know, connections just take place. One of my board members was active in Partners for Productivity, I think, which was a relief – or economic development - project in Africa. And because of those connections, a South African came by – Harvey van der Merwe - I met him at the Pittsburgh airport… because my board member thought I could fill him in on what's happening here in the [United] States, which I did.

And he was traveling around the world trying to identify conflict resources, so that made a bridge, going one way. And the other way with the bridge is when he got back to South Africa he wrote a directory of all these organizations and he sent me a copy. And about two days later, somebody called up on the phone asking if I knew some conflict resources in - I forget what country it was - and I said, "Well, of course, we're an international resource center for these sort of things."

And I picked up Harvey's directory, went through it, and there was somebody to refer to. And that was the beginning of my international [contacts].

Chris: It was a clearinghouse function. I didn't realize that you'd actually met Harvey at that time.

And from that point onwards, people would do that sort of thing? Ring you up and say, "Hey… tell me somebody to talk to in Germany or… Latin America or whatever?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes - there was that and some kind of seeking out. I rapidly built up contacts in England, because the movement was coming together there anyway, and they were pretty well tied in with [the] Quakers - pretty much. I then wanted to move out onto the Continent [of Europe].

Chris: Bit more difficult.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes. Yes it was, but I got some funding from… gee, how did it work? Oh… I remember. It was a follow-up to the Move book. There was a group in the Netherlands who were doing a book on crisis intervention…and then they brought all the writers together for a seminar in Belgium to sort out style and have fun, I guess, and… that gave me a chance to shop around Europe a little bit. I got, I think, names – people to talk to - from Adam Curle.

So I – well, it was a little more proactive. I went out and sat on people's doorsteps there. It just sort of expands like that. One of those was Juan Gutierrez, who worked in the Basque country, on the Basque conflict.

Chris: Juan became a friend of mine as well as yours, and… first came down to George Mason following the NCPCR conference in Montréal. I remember it was a terrible, snowy day, and this strange Basque figure suddenly appeared on campus saying, "Jim Laue has invited me down !"

Of course, Jim wasn't on campus; I was the only person in the Institute at the time, and so we had him home here, and… put him up for a couple of days.

But the NCPCR conference seems to come in very clearly to your activities. I mean, the first one down in Georgia and I remember…it was [at] the third one in Colorado that I met some of your Irish contacts that had come over. So how did you… get involved in NCPCR?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Actually, I – looking back, I was involved in it before it existed. Peg Herrmann, who really founded it, had done a previous conference in New Jersey that was sort of a regional one. And I … sort of Mau-Maued them –

Chris: You'd better explain what that means for the younger generation.

Paul Wahrhaftig: I "raised issues" around doing a community dispute resolution conference in a fancy hotel and [with an] extensive format, etc. And - well, there's some funny stories on that - but they interpreted that they needed to have some community-based piece on the program, so they put me on as a speaker.

And I'd show up at all these planning meetings with my little backpack and my bushy hair and the beard etc. So knowing that they were only going as far as having maybe a token community

person, I showed up at the conference with my hair cut, in a three-piece suit.

Chris: Did they recognize you?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes, grumblingly. Anyway, Peg has never forgiven me for that. So when first NCPCR came up, I attended, and actually I gave a little presentation on networking and…[that] they eventually were going to have to face the issue that it was basically an all-white movement – a predominantly white movement, and predominately white male. And that, of course, took a few iterations of the conference to get there…

Chris: It was a constantly recurring theme, I remember, when I was on the Board [of NCPCR].

Paul Wahrhaftig: So, yes, I served on boards and program committees…, all the way through. Rather than develop my own conferences, I sort of latched onto them as the vehicle to get the face-to-face exchanges going.

Chris: [NCPCR] for a while, was *the* conference in the field. I mean, everybody went there. I remember being very surprised in the Colorado conference at just the huge range of people who were there. You know, diplomats [because the State Department was getting interested in this field] and… people from grassroots in Ireland… for a number of years, you know, it was the place to go and meet people. But then it seemed to decline and… it's gone out of existence now...nothing seems to have replaced it, either. Why do you think it…did not continue and go on from strength to strength?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, I think the times were changing. It needed to change in the mid-'90s. Well, a national conference is very expensive, both for the people putting on the conference and the people going to the conference. Airline rates were going up, state associations were forming and putting on better and better quality conferences.

So there was competition, the field was changing – I just don't think that that one mode of programming which they were locked into could have lasted any longer.

What happened was that we went through an integration/ diversity process leading to an inclusive organization, which means the culture of the organization changed, and [there was] much more interest in diversity issues than conflict resolution

issues, and [it] took off on a new direction. And that organization, under – it's gone through two different names now. It still exists; it's a small diversity conference and resource group.

Chris: Well, I do think maybe the field does need… some kind of a focal conference, but I agree they're terribly difficult to run and terribly expensive.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, while I was going, it was wonderful. I mean, [some of this] went back to Juan, I had funding to bring him over to the NCPCR the year you met him, which was in Toronto - in the snow.

Chris: Was it Montréal?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes, it was Montréal. And his reaction was interesting, because through most of the conference, he was very skeptical about whether mediation would apply to the Basque situation at all, and through most of the conference he was, you know, he couldn't quite understand why I'd brought him over there to sit through workshops on dealing with conflicts in dormitories and that kind of thing.

But I put him on a panel with the Irish, and…. they'd been running mediation programs for about five years by then, and were talking about what we now call building "a culture of peace". And that was beginning to take hold.

And all of a sudden, the lights went on in Juan's head and he saw the connection with the Basque stuff, and took off and –

Chris: Yes - well, when he went back from here, back to Guernica and to the peace center at Guernica and worked on that idea of a culture of peace there for a number of years, it certainly had an effect… on some of the thinking in the Basque country. It's amazing how you put little seeds out and they suddenly find a tree grown.

Okay, so here you are in the international center at Pittsburgh, you're doing work with NCPCR. And then Bill Headley at Duquesne University starts bringing some academic activities into the city. I know you had some connections with the Duquesne program, which Bill started. Was there ever a strong connection between that program and your center, and the grassroots movement that you were building up in that part of Pennsylvania?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Oh, gosh, yes. Well, that started the way a lot of things do in Pittsburgh, anyway. Bill came there with his idea of establishing a

center for mediation and peacemaking at Duquesne, and everybody told him to go talk to me.

Chris: Sensible.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes. So I gave him lots of contacts and took him seriously, as my mentors had done for me. And so we were never formally in alliance, I guess, or in …?

Chris: "In cahoots" is the word, I think.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, yes. There's no formal programmatic connection, but we just consulted with each other continually. And two things grew out of that, one just in terms of the community. He and that department teamed up with the Pittsburgh Mediation Center to train in our central black area, the Hill district, to train some trainers there to move the skills out into the community.

And they ran into the cross-cultural problems that you would expect. The training workshop sort of blew up as the black, streetwise trainees were saying that this is a middle class model and it doesn't fit us. I think they called me in to… mediate that, and then they ended up inventing a model for that neighborhood, you know, collaboratively.

So that was one kind of relationship, and the other was, of course, that I think I managed to talk him into sponsoring the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution in 1997. So it was held at Duquesne University, and we worked very closely on that one.

Chris: Now, one of the interesting things about Bill's program - and I don't know whether it still does this - is it actually started out establishing some very strong contacts with Africa, with many African countries. I remember being at a conference that I think you were there, as well, with Hezekiah and a whole series of African bishops that they brought over. And I think they had a lot of students as well from Africa who did local work in Pittsburgh.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah. I think each one of those bishops… was given a scholarship to parcel out in their country. So [with] 29 bishops, they had 29 African students for the next year.

Chris: Very strongly African for a while, that one.

Okay, this is a rather unfair question, but it's… one that a lot of people ask… about alternative dispute resolution as a field in this

country. It's most strongly put, I guess, by Baruch Bush and Joe Folger in their book about mediation [*The Promise of Mediation*] but it [ADR] all started off very much as an attempt to empower grassroots movements and to let people find a way of dealing with their own problems.

And reading some of the literature about, you know, what has happened to ADR since those early days, I mean, I think even including your own book there's a sort of note of regret about the way it's gone, that it's become professionalized, it's being taken over, it's being institutionalized, it's being taken out of the hands of local people. I don't know whether that's true or not; but certainly, a lot of people feel sort of disappointed in what happened. Do you share that, or do you think it's gone the only way it could go?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, that's a whole book, which I just happen to have written.

Chris: Well, I thought we might get some of your reflections on, and then we will make sure that people know about the book.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, in the first place, you refer to alternative dispute resolution, and that's a term that I am very uncomfortable with, because it implies that lawyers and courts are the main way of doing it, and everything else is an alternative.

Some people use appropriate dispute resolution, but the imprecision of our language has been a constant problem here.

Chris: It's like private accounts or personal accounts, isn't it, as far as Social Security is concerned.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, whatever. Anyway, I wrote the book *Community Dispute Resolution: Empowerment and Social Justice* and more subtitle from the perspective that you just laid out. I was concerned that at least the community part of the movement was founded by people coming out of the civil rights and peace field, and with a sense of providing a good service but through that service promoting social change.

And we mainly had a community organizing orientation at the start, so it was a way for communities to learn about problems in their community and get together and do something about them.

I think there's sort of a natural progression in organizations that the founders have a vision, and then when that process evolves into an

organization, the leadership shifts over to people who are organization maintainers, who the vision tends to fade and keeping the organization going becomes primary.

And I think the field has been going that way. What I discovered when I researched the book is it isn't quite a black and white thing like that. First place, we're talking about real community-based organizing, dispute resolution programs, was always the minority in the field, anyway. But even within that minority, there's a whole range of activities that are social change oriented. It was not just community organizing.

So to make a long story short, if you look at what's happened to training in community mediation programs, when they first started out, you trained people so you have a roster of trained mediators who are training your volunteers. With a lot of programs, it's shifted now so that the service is both providing mediation to people on the street and training people in conflict resolution in the hopes that they'll go into their institutions and use those skills and it'll spread through society like the measles.

Chris: Well, hopefully more beneficially than that, but yeah, okay.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, yeah. So, and that's a social change model that may be more consistent with our **[inaudible]** society.

Chris: **[Inaudible]** society, yeah. Disintegrating. We could spend a couple of hours on that alone, I think, yeah. Yeah, I sometimes think that we've contributed – we being academics, you know, have contributed to this by the whole process of what one of my colleagues called certification. You know, the sort of need for degrees and certificates and pieces of paper that you hang on the wall, one thing or another. And that's growing, you know, **[inaudible]**.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yes, I don't qualify for a lot of things, maybe, because I don't have any degrees in conflict resolution.

Chris: Well, that's right. Yeah, but you've probably got more knowledge and skills than, you know, most anybody else in the field, so yeah, so much for certification.

I shouldn't say that, of course, because my students are going to get up in arms and say, well, why are we bothering with this degree?

So what now? Where are we going? What's going to happen to the field? Can you put on a crystal ball and look into the future? What do you see happening? What do you see as an opportunity or as a concern?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, I see plenty of opportunities. And well, I've been impressed with the staying power of this field. I mean, it's grown and expanded through a period of economic retrenchment, government funding retrenchment. In the early days, when we were looking at, like, the Conflict Dispute Resolution Act of 1980, for some major federal funding coming in to really boost this field.

It never came, but the field just grew, and it seems to continue. I think there's the danger that you hint at; that it's **[inaudible]** consumed by professionals and become more service-oriented rather than change-oriented.

On the other hand, with our society becoming increasingly polarized, there's a sort of a wide open field of promoting dialogue, facilitating constructive conversations, getting the silent – I hate to use the Nixon term – the silent majority in the middle, helping them have a voice.

Our society is in desperate need of talk. And who has the skills to promote that?

Chris: That's certainly a big job, yeah. What about internationally? I mean, you went into the field and decided there was a niche there for an international center. And as you look at the world of the 21st century, which we are now well into, what sorts of things do you think might be done in this country?

I mean, you started the center, it became a repository of information and help, and now that's come to an end, regrettably. And so what do you think we can do in the unofficial sector, if you want to call it that, to help doing something about conflict resolution or conflict mitigation or whatever the words are that we're using now internationally?

Because it seems to me that anybody from the United States is in a very awkward position at the present moment to do things internationally. So have you got any thoughts about the future in that sense, and what would you be doing now if you and I were 30 years younger?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Based on my philosophy of serendipitous planning, I have a hard time projecting. I was intrigued by the – there's a Global Partners in Conflict Resolution, I think it's called, project, which I'm not sure whether it's – I think it's going. It's the brain child of **[inaudible]**.

Chris: Oh, okay. At the European platform.

Paul Wahrhaftig: The European platform, and I think it's a promising direction, although it seems to be going slower than he had expected – not slower than I'd expect. And the idea was it's tied in with the United Nations. He's formed regional conferences with a supporting structure all over the world. I mean, he's had an Asia-Pacific one, an African-European. And he's purposely having all the other regions meet before the North Americans to try to equalize the input into it.

And it's supposed to culminate in a world conference held at the United Nations this year, but since I haven't' seen any publicity on a world conference at the United Nations this year, who knows?

That looks like a promising network form, and tied in with a somewhat stable international organization.

Chris: Yeah, something along the networking lines. But it is interesting that Paul's decided to sort of do us last, which I think is an interesting strategy.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah. Unfortunately, I think he's also decided to do the mediators last.

Chris: Well.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, we won't get into that, but.

Chris: I don't know about you, but I'm getting to the point where I start looking back and thinking, ah, well, it's been a longish journey, but an interesting one, but I wish I'd done something different at that

particular point. Have you got any thoughts on if you were doing it all over again, what would you do differently? What would you do in addition? What wouldn't you do? I can think of several things I wouldn't do.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, I guess one regret is that when I retired, I had to close the center. Because I never built a structure to replace me.

Chris: Well, that's something that many of us share, incidentally.

Paul Wahrhaftig: And that's partially related to the fact that I never raised enough money to even support me. More attention to structure would have helped, I think. Or it may be that the need for the kind of service that I was providing was pretty well filled by then.

Chris: Well, I'm not sure about that at all. No, I don't think there's anything that has replaced what you did. No, I think the field is poorer for not having you, very definitely. Yeah. I just want to go back to one thing that you said earlier on, because, I mean, my own experience of working in this field is that there are –

**[Part 2]**

Chris: Okay, well, picking up on that question about groups and people who've helped to push the field forward here. Several times, in some of the things you've said, you've mentioned the Quakers. And my own recollection of the Quakers in Britain is that they were absolutely crucial in getting the field started there. Do you think that they played a major role over here in developing what we've agreed not to call ADR, or conflict resolution, or whatever?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, kind of a funny role. First place, they sponsored me. So –

Chris: That's one up for them, yeah.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah. Well, everything leads into a story, but going back to Michael Lowy, who was not a Quaker, one of my follow-ups to his coming up with that idea was to put on a statewide conference on pre-trial justice **[inaudible]** and Mike was supposed to be the speaker that summed up at the end, but he had a commitment or something and so he ended up the keynote speaker.

And we had this agenda on pretrial justice, and he just blew everybody's minds of this concept of community mediation. So we

stopped the conference and brought some jugs of wine and replanned it for the rest of the weekend, to talk about community mediation.

At that conference were people from 1**[inaudible]** project in Dover County, Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia yearly meeting, and I think that's where they picked up the idea and started a mediation program, and very rapidly they developed a training capacity and they trained a good bunch of mediation programs in the middle-Atlantic area there, often for free – usually just for **[inaudible]**.

And so they really pioneered it. And if you looked at **[inaudible]**. But by about 1980, **[inaudible]** other areas, and **[inaudible]** and they established their center in Akron, Pennsylvania, and dominated the field ever since. At least dominated kind of the community and peacemaking end of the field.

Chris: Yes. I mean, it's interesting that Bill Headley I think had something of a struggle to interest people in his own church of the idea of sort of, you know, peace and conflict resolution. And I remember he had to, you know, fly a lot of what he was doing under the banner of peace and justice, which was a very sort of Catholic thing.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, you had that problem with the Quakers, too, particularly the service committee. A lot of peace people felt that the way you get to peace is to figure out who's the oppressed party and you strengthen them to find out **[inaudible]** to get peace.

Chris: Right. Yes, I remember sort of having a long talk with Adam Curle about this in the 1970s. He came out of that Quaker background, as well, of course.

Going back to Michael Lowy, he was an anthropologist, of course, and an academic. And, you know, one of the things we're interested in in this particular series of interviews is, you know, the influence of particular ideas. Now, he seems to have had a major initial idea on – sorry, a major impact from his idea on the development of ADR.

Anybody else come up with useful ideas in the early days, do you think? Or was it all let's try and imitate the Ghanaians?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Ooh, well, there was this whole stable of anthropologists who were saying basically the same thing as Mike. One academic that really influenced me and sold me on this was Richard Danzig, who was at Stanford Law School – a professor there. He went on to become undersecretary of the Navy, I think, or something pretty high-ranking in the Navy.

He developed a model for community justice, an independent community model for taking over most of the functions of the justice system – very idealized – and community mediation was one of those pieces.

And one of the points he threw out in his talk was what he referred to as the liberals' dilemma. And the dilemma was that liberals are wonderful, and particularly liberals dealing with the criminal justice system are wonderful at analyzing the problems, but they also are wonderful at coming up with solutions that are dependent on the people in the system agreeing with them.

So, like, the bail reform program – all the program can do is in some way or another tell the judge that it's okay to release this guy. And if the judge agrees, he's released; if he doesn't, he isn't – I mean, that's what it boils down to.

And he pointed out that with the community-based mediation, you have the potential – at least the theoretical potential of saying okay, we in the community are going to handle X, Y, Z kinds of problems and we'll let you and the courts handle A, B, C problems.

I tried that concept at a seminar at Harvard Law School and practically got scalped.

Chris: I'm not surprised.

Paul Wahrhaftig: But that really hit me, and really became my major inspiration for getting into this field – having that community empowerment potential.

Chris: Yeah, yeah. I've always had the impression over here, possibly, a completely false one that, you know, one of the major figures from academia who influence large numbers of people **[inaudible]** is Roger Fisher.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, of course, yeah.

Chris: You know, I mean, all of my students used to come in, when I first came over here, clutching their copies of *Getting to Yes*, thinking that they had all the answers because they'd sort of read about, you know, sort of win-win solutions and separating the people from the problem.

Did that have an impact, you do you think, on grassroots people in the same ways that I think it had on my students, or was it – I mean, Roger always said that he wrote that for people at the grassroots, and I've always wondered whether it had any affect on people at the grassroots. Certainly it had an effect on its sales.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, yeah. I'd always felt the language was a little complicated for grassroots, but at least that first generation of mediators, you know, all carried around their little bible there. And then his ideas were built into the community mediation training, so the ideas spread farther than the book.

But I think most of the trainers used to assign *Getting to Yes* as a basic text to start with, yeah. He's influential. John Burton.

Chris: Really?

Paul Wahrhaftig: I think –

Chris: Well, that's interesting.

Paul Wahrhaftig: His needs analysis got spread fairly wide.

Chris: Yeah, I sometimes wonder whether that – you know, I had that impression, as well, but then, you know, John was my professor and I've always been brought up in that sort of tradition, but it's interesting you say that it did have an impact – a wider impact than I thought. Wow.

Yeah, I mean, the other thing that – the other person that more recently seems to have had a big impact, and I don't know whether you'd agree, is some of the writings of Jean Paul Lederach. You know, particularly his idea – I think Jean Paul goes back to the original roots of the idea of community empowerment and, you know, this whole business about eliciting from people their ideas about how best to handle their problems instead of sort of coming

in with a – you know, maybe like Mike Lowy, you know, here's how you do it sort of business.

But again, Jean Paul's a friend and colleague of mine, so I may be exaggerating his importance and his influence.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, I don't think you are at all. He regularly would appear at NCPCR state conferences. His writings were broadly spread about. I think people get a lot more out of talking with an idea person, and no, he's widely known and at least his elicited model of training is really accepted by a good part of the field now, yeah.

And I – well, anyway, I think we're at a stage now where when we first started this stuff and latched on to getting the **[inaudible]**, you know, we had the answer – okay, this is how you do it. And we talked that orthodoxy, with some exceptions, for years.

And now we're at a fascinating stage where it's kind of revisionist. We're going back and looking at his inter-space negotiation, the D model, or are there models – plural – and when do you use which? I think it's a wonderfully fertile time now.

Chris: Confusing for my students, but I try to tell them that the job of the professor is to confuse them and get them to think about things, and it's not an argument that they're very comfortable with.

Okay, you've looked back – you can look back, as I can, at the sort of way in which the field has developed and grown. As you say, it's been exponential. And I'm still trying to see –well, you know, I think you have the same expression in this country – it's difficult to see the wood for the trees. I can see, you know, individual trees, but sometimes it's difficult to see how they all fit together to produce a field.

You know, we've talked about individual people, we've talked about NCPCR as an umbrella organization. We've talked about your role in the center of Pittsburgh as a node. Who else do you think – where else do you think we're essential organizations or events that push the field forward?

I mean, looking back, what were real turning points for you in the development in the field? I mean, you saw this – a lot of it – from the NCPCR point of views. And so, you know, my colleagues sort of say well, that – I think it was the Colorado conference at

NCPCR that everybody remembers as being sort of a major step forward, but maybe they're exaggerating again, I don't know.

What were major steps, and what were the thresholds, do you think, looking back?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, let's look within NCPCR and then outside. And this is my perspective – each one of those conferences left a mark. I think the pivotal one – particularly from the international perspective – Colorado. Because we had Peter **McLachlan** there, who –

Chris: From Northern Ireland, yes.

Paul Wahrhaftig: From Northern Ireland. He gave a plenary talk on cross-cultural mediation.

Chris: Yes, I remember that, yes. Looking at the unionists and the republicans.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, yeah. And it's a wonderful model. I've used that in divorce mediation. You know, you're thinking like a **[inaudible]** and you're thinking like a **[inaudible]**.

Chris: Well, you've got to use the labels.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah. It takes them out of their own conflict and they can see the dynamics in another one and then apply it back.

I think the Montréal conference was, at least for me, the most pivotal.

Chris: Why's that?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, I was already bringing two or three people over from Europe, and there had been people at – Europeans at the previous two conferences, and the word had spread that this was interesting. So there were a good bunch of Europeans, and the Canadian aid – you know, the foreign aid department came up with $15,000 in expense money for people from the Third World, which the NCPCR asked me if I would find them – get them there in six weeks.

Chris: Sounds a bit like NCPCR.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, and this was before email and all that – in fact, before I even had a fax.

Chris: How did you manage?

Paul Wahrhaftig: I conned the library into letting me use their fax. And they're used to, you know, going from branch to branch, and I was faxing Sri Lanka and India. They never figured out how to bill me.

Anyway, so we had, you know, a mass of Third World people. It was in that conference, in sort of a follow-up session that I had with the foreign visitors that the idea for the European Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution was born. And just built contacts in Africa and India, particularly, that lasted for 20 years or so.

So that really kicked off – it deepened my international work, it established NCPCR not an international program but a program that attracts internationals.

What else would be pivotal? I'm running a blank. Well, Jean Paul's work, which we just talked about, is major.

Chris: What about outside NCPCR? I mean, you just triggered something off in my memory about the European – you know, ECPCR. And one of the interesting things is that that went for two, three conferences and then seems to have petered out. The Latin Americans have tried to do –

Paul Wahrhaftig: It went four conferences, I think.

Chris: Four, was it? Yeah, I can't remember. And then, you know, a lot of people from – one of my students who come from non-North-American or European backgrounds say well, this is all very well, but, you know, we've never really made much of an impact on Africa or Latin America – particularly Latin America or the Middle East or Asia. So I think it's been slow progress there – I think. Or maybe you're more optimistic than I am.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, you kind of combined a whole bunch of things there. It sounds like with the European conference, that you're seeing that tailing off is a symptom that things don't go, or?

Chris: Well, I'm curious. You know, because it sort of – if anything, European governments are becoming more interested in conflict resolution and more willing to sort of support it financially, whereas that doesn't seem to be the same sort of surge of interest and activity in Europe as there was here.

And I'm wondering, you know, why that is. Why people can't get themselves organized in quite the same way. Maybe it's the diversity of cultures **[inaudible]**.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, well, one of the theories that I've played up with in some of my writings was that Europe never went through a civil rights movement, or the kind of peculiar peace movement we had in the Vietnam War.

Chris: Oh, that's true, yeah.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Both of which involved a lot of confrontation, but a lot of negotiation. And so people were honed as activists by that experience as a society in general, and it somehow makes them more open to figuring how do you settle these things, as opposed to do it by the rules, which would be my characterization of the European approach.

Chris: What about the – sorry, go on.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, the European conference in some ways suffered from the same problem **[inaudible]** ever did of never establishing an infrastructure. The structure was sort of decided on – look for a volunteer who will organize the next conference. And then they'd have to raise the funds and organize it and do it, and it was just an impossible load to put on the organizer, the parties.

Chris: Yeah. No, I remember – you know, I'm a European but I'm also sort of half American, so the cultural differences don't strike me as forcibly as they do others. But I do remember the – I can't remember whether it was the first or the second one that the Europeans ran at St. Sebastian. Did you go to that one, I think you did.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, sure, sure, the second one.

Chris: Yeah, and I remember the American contingent getting very, very uptight about the fact that the program changed every day. You

know, they would go down to the sort of main hall in the palace up on the hill, and, you know, there would be the changes for the day up there. And the Europeans were perfectly happy with this and sort of laid back and not worrying about it.

The Americans were, you know, they've moved my panel, you know, or something like that. And total disorganization, you know? The Europeans were quite happy with it, they didn't worry about it too much. **[Inaudible]**

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, yeah. Those who were upset with that should have been to the Bulgarian one.

Chris: Ah, well, I didn't go to that one, well. Yeah, well, maybe Eastern Europe is bad, even more. What about involving the Third World in AD? I mean, if you go back to Mike Lowy, that's where it came from. You know, it came from Ghana, and yet it's very difficult to get. And the curious thing is – sorry, I'm talking far too much, and this is supposed to be your interview, but I will get to a question in a minute.

I mean, the odd thing is that there's all this sort of reaction against North Americans coming here with their North American model and doing this, that, and the other when actually if you trade it back it's a sort of Ghanaian model, returning to Africa sort of thing.

But is it just lack of resources, or is it just that people see this as an American-European imposition? Or why is it – why are we making such heavy weather of it? And I'm also thinking of Latin America, because, you know, it's another story.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, I – your example, I think, is right on the nose for part of it. At the Montréal conference, had this debriefing session with the foreign visitors at the end. And everybody was saying nice, polite things.

There was one Nigerian chief in his robes and his hat. And he sort of sat on the chair like it was a throne, and he said, this is all interesting and all that, but we've been the subject of technological transfers that have been disastrous over the years.

And so, you know, he's going to ignore it. Ands o I told him basically what you did in the question, you know. There's some

history you don't know here, but this is our cultural interpretation of what we saw in Africa, and now you're looking at our adaptation.

If there's something in our adaptation that might be useful to you, take it and run with it. And he remained a subscriber to my newsletter for 20 years, so. I think some of it is that kind of hesitancy, and we can also wonder whether the cultural gloss that we put on it is so western that it just doesn't fit over there.

You see articles now – there was one in *The New York Times* recently on forgiveness I think in Rwanda. They're developing rituals so they can reintegrate the people who did the slaughtering with the people who were slaughtered.

And it's just mind-boggling that it happens, that it works – at least it's mind-boggling for us. Whether it's mind-boggling for the people raised in that culture is another question. I would think if somebody came into a Pittsburgh neighborhood and said well, we want you to get together with the person who just shot your son in a gang thing, and we all go walk down the **[inaudible]** and we eat a raw egg and then they're cleansed. So, you know, we think, these guys are nuts.

Chris: Yeah. Yes, yeah, I know. I remember Jonathan Gosling, when he was doing his research in London, was sort of researching I think one of the Sri Lankan communities. And he was, at that time, very enthusiastic about this sort of put people around a table, you know. And he says he discovered after a while that it just wouldn't work. That you could actually get some kind of conflict resolution by settling.

And they – but, you know, they – the chief – this was a sort of family thing – the two families wouldn't meet until there was a deal, and then they would meet over a meal to cement the deal. And that was their model. You know, it wasn't a Ghanaian/North American model, so I guess maybe this goes back to Jean Paul's point about, you know, you need to take notice of the local culture and adapt it and not go in there with a one-size-fits-all thing.

Okay, so let me go back and ask you a question that I've already asked you in a sort of slightly different way, which is if you had a large grant from a benevolent foundation to put some money into

what you thought was the next worthwhile innovation in the field, what do you think it – what would you spend the money on?

Paul Wahrhaftig: In this country, I'd spend it on promoting dialogue at all levels of the population. We're so polarized, rational discussion is – well, the polarization really – there was an op ed article in the *Post Gazette* yesterday or so, in Pittsburgh, of drawing parallels between where we are and pre-war Germany.

Chris: Really?

Paul Wahrhaftig: That the right and left were so far apart in Germany, there was nothing in the middle. Just totally polarized, and that's what opened up Hitler to come to power. So I think – I can't deal with Nazi Germany.

Chris: Well, I'm not surprised.

Paul Wahrhaftig: So if we're to avoid that future, our future has to be in open communications at whatever level we can.

Chris: Yeah. Okay, I think you're right. I think we're badly in need of that. Not just blues and reds, but, you know, within churches and etc., etc.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, and don't forget with the blue and red business, you know, Republicans are red states and Democrats are blue states, or something like that – if you step back and you look at those states county by county and take a step back, they're almost all purple.

Chris: Yeah. Well, it's interesting, the same point that Barack made, the sort of young African-American politician who got into the Senate. I remember seeing one speech that he made when he'd, you know, been elected, and he said, you know, you have to understand that there are Democrats who are worried about – the Republicans are worried about Social Security, and there are Democrats are worried about – you know, we're not just sort of Republicans who only have this agenda and Democrats who only have that agenda. People are more complicated than that.

What about internationally? What would you put a $1.5 million into doing something about it internationally?

Paul Wahrhaftig: I really don't know.

Chris: Well, yeah, I have to admit it's an unfair question, because as I'm asking it I'm thinking to myself, what would I put money into internationally, and I'm not sure what the answer is to that, either.

Paul Wahrhaftig: I know the area that I was most interested in towards the end of my tenure, if that's term, on the job, was post-war reconciliation. Forgiveness, trauma reduction – so many of these wars seem to be cyclical, you've got to find something to break that cycle.

Chris: Yeah, and it's much more difficult than I think sometimes our textbooks pretend. And I just had a very good student do some field work in northern Ireland, and, you know, the post-we'll-try-the-agreement period, and she's come to the conclusion that the society there is just as polarized as it was even before the ending of the violence. And, you know, sometimes I think it will be generations before that changes.

Anyway, okay, last question, as I am running out of questions and we're running out of time. What haven't I asked you that you think I should have asked you, and how would you answer it?

Paul Wahrhaftig: You've done a great job.

Chris: Well, I've, you know, done the best I can, you know. As Wallace Warfield was pointing out to me the other day after I'd done a piece on how I saw the field, he said well, he said, that's a very interesting take on it, but it's a very European take. And then proceeded to tell me about the Community Relations Commission and things like that. So, anyway.

Okay, well, Paul, thank you very much indeed for giving us all this time and helping us look back and also look forward. And we know that you say that you've retired and you're not running your center anymore, but don't retire completely. If you won't, I won't, so.

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, I'm still writing and doing a little stuff, and my library is still accessible through the Canadians.

Chris: Oh, okay. Where have you put that?

Paul Wahrhaftig: It's the Network for Conflict Resolution Canada. The index is online at CRNetwork.ca. And so you can still access all the materials I collected, or most of them.

Chris: Okay. CRNetwork.ca. Okay. Good resource, thanks, Paul. Okay, that's it. Paul, you were saying earlier on that you come from a background originally in law and civil rights activism. So can you tell us a little bit about how you made the transition from that to alternative dispute resolution?

Okay, I think one of the first times you and I met was when you and Hezekiah, who now calls himself Hizkias – I can't quite cope with that – when Hizkias Assefa and you were writing the Move book. And how did you come to getting involved in looking at that particular situation?

Tell us a bit more about your center in Pittsburgh. How did that get started, and what were some of the things that you were planning to do with it? And it was an international center, so what were the implications of that?

All right, going back to your Move book, do you think it really had an effect on some of the people in Philadelphia, some of the city people?

There've been a lot of groups and a lot of institutions and organizations that have had an impact on the field, generally speaking. And, you know, from my experience back in Britain, one of the groups that was really very important were the Quakers. So, what sort of an impact did they have in the development of the field in this country?

Michael Lowy was an anthropologist and was an academic, so, you know, who were other useful academics and ideas people who sort of produced schemes or ideas or approaches that were useful, practically speaking, in the field?

I think one of the major things that you were associated with throughout your career – and I can see you're wearing the t-shirt – is the NCPCR – the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution.

So how did at that actually get started, and where did it begin? And what impact do you think it had on the field? And what were

some of the crucial turning points in the development of NCPCR and also the development of the field? Because I think that was important in this field.

One of the problems has always been for our field it seems to me is involving people from what we call the Third World, and we're still working on that. So have you got any ideas about why it's been so difficult to get people to accept, conflict resolution ideas?

Do you think it's all associated with the idea that this is a sort of North American – or at least it's seen as a North American and as a European feat, technique that we're trying to impose on them?

Developments of, you know, ECPCR in Europe has been very much slower than over here, and I wonder if you've got some ideas about why it really didn't take off and maybe it's a cultural thing. Maybe Europeans are different, but certainly it's been more of a struggle over there. So what do you think has been the things that slow it down?

You were talking earlier about coming from a law and civil rights background originally. How did you get involved? How did you make the transfer across to the alternative dispute resolution field?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, it all started with an anthropologist on my committee named Mike Lowy.

Well, it all started with an anthropologist on my committee, Mike Lowy, who studied the Ghanaian tribal methods of resolving conflict. And he had had this mission to bring this village dispute resolution system to urban America.

Chris: Throughout the last 30-odd years, there've been, you know, various groups and organizations that have played a major role into helping to develop the field and supporting it, and, you know, I think one of those, looking back on my experience from England, has always been the Quakers. Now, were they helpful, were they important, were they key over on this side of the Atlantic, in the States?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Yeah, yeah. Well, they funded me, for one thing, through 1980. And I remember at that first conference, I put on – well, after Mike Lowy had come up with this idea, he was the keynote speaker at the first conference and just blew it apart with his idea of a community dispute resolution center. And there was good Quaker

representation at that, and I think out of that experience grew the Friends Suburban Project and the Philadelphia yearly meetings **[inaudible]**.

Chris: Okay, I think that one of the, you know, key influences on the development of the field, in this country, anyway, and perhaps internationally, was the whole National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution -- the NCPCR, and I see you're wearing the t-shirt. So, how did that actually get started?

Okay, Mike Lowy was an anthropologist, and he obviously was very important in introducing this sort of idea of the Ashanti moot. But were there any other important and influential people who produced ideas?

I've always had the impression that Roger Fisher, for example, and Bill Ury with their *Getting to Yes* book became a kind of a bible for the whole field. Do you think that they were as important with the grassroots movement?

Paul Wahrhaftig: Well, you're sort of asking two questions there. Roger Fisher and Ury – yes, the early trainers in community mediation regularly required or distributed *Getting to Yes*, so most of the trainees had read it and those that hadn't read it probably absorbed it all through the training, anyway, because it was all based –

**[End of Audio]**

**Duration: 107 minutes**