

Questions and Answers: Two Hours with Carl Rogers

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Abstract

This project involved a transcription of a 2-hour community meeting with Carl Rogers and more than 100 participants at the summer 1975 workshop titled “A Person-Centered Approach: The Process of Individual Growth and its Social Implications.” During this meeting, Rogers candidly answered questions on a wide range of topics including planning for the workshop, the evolution of the person-centered approach and its meaning to him, partners and “satellite” relationships, encounter groups, therapy issues, how he made personal decisions, and his garden.

The present project represents a transcription of a 2-hour community meeting with Carl Rogers at the summer 1975 residential workshop titled “A Person-Centered Approach: The Process of Individual Growth and its Social Implications.” The workshop was held at Mills College in Oakland, California, from August 1 to August 16 and was sponsored by the Center for the Studies of the Person. It was pivotal in the development of the person-centered approach, and this was the first time the phrase “person-centered approach” was used for a workshop (J. K. Wood, personal communication, November 7, 1996).

I was present at this meeting when Rogers candidly answered nearly 50 questions posed by workshop participants. Some of these questions covered familiar ground; some were mildly confronting; and some required that he reveal his feelings about areas that many of us probably know nothing. For example, I suspect that very few people

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are aware of the unique manner in which he made important decisions in his life, and his response may surprise a lot of people. All of his responses were characteristically informal and personal, and often, they were very humorous.

In my view, this transcription of Rogers' answers to a wide range of questions is not only historically important to students of the person-centered approach, but can also serve as an introduction to some of his ideas for beginners and an opportunity to reexamine some of his views for the more experienced through a fairly extemporaneous format. Transcribing this material from the 2-hour audiotape I had saved for 25 years proved to be a difficult project. First, I asked my secretary to transcribe it. She worked on it for over a week and returned with only three pages, and they were missing a lot of the dialogue. The audio was simply not clear, and she could not understand what was being said. I thought that, since I had been present at the workshop, maybe I could more easily ascertain what was being said. This assumption proved to be partly true and partly false. Much of the dialogue was clear, but some of it was nearly impossible to hear. I had to listen to some segments over and over and over again to decipher what was being said. To complicate matters even more, it seemed that when one person coughed, everyone else at the meeting joined in, drowning out what Rogers was saying in a resounding cacophony. Sometimes, I found that if I ran the tape at a very slow speed I could understand the dialogue better.

Eventually I was able to make out what was being said for perhaps 98% of the dialogue. Since Rogers' responses were spontaneous verbal reactions to the questions at hand, many of his sentences were quite informal and included a lot of "ahs," "ums," and other speech elements that one would not normally include in the written medium. I took some editorial license and excluded the majority of these elements. I also took the liberty of eliminating "and" as a word that started many sentences. I made other minor editorial changes, but in no case did any of these changes alter the meaning of what he was saying. My sole purpose in making any editorial changes

was to effectively make a shift from the spoken to the written mode of communication in order to make his presentation readable, clear, and grammatically correct. I know that he usually wanted to keep what he was saying informal and that he took great pains to keep his writings easy to understand (F. N. Roebuck, personal communication, October 6, 1996). I think my work on this project is consistent with his goal.

Rogers: I really would like for everyone to get comfortable. I don't know whether this thing [microphone] operates well or not. Talk directly into it. Does this help now?

Participants: Yes.

Rogers: My voice sounds strange to me, but if it sounds O.K. to you, then it's all right. I really would like for everybody to get comfortable. If you need to get a chair or something, do so. I'm really pleased that the group is so close in together. We'll hope the machine works without buzzing or difficulty. Just before this session someone not in the program was asking me what's going on tonight, and I said, "Well I'm just going to answer questions." [Laughter from the participants.]

For those of you who were here this morning this is kind of a repeat, but I just would like to say that anything goes. I will be happy to comment on any issue or question or idea that you raise. My whole purpose is to really try to make myself as available to you as I can. I'd really like to think you wouldn't be here if you didn't want to know me, and I would like you to get to know me.

A Participant: I have a question.

Rogers: O.K.

Question: I think you must have done some significant planning, and I'd like to know what are your goals and what do you even want to find out or learn from this large group here?

Rogers: Not only have I done some planning, but the whole staff did some planning. I've made some notes on that from this workshop because I want some time to try to use it as an example of what it does mean to make a struggle to be person-centered because you're not planning in any ordinary sense. You're trying to predict the unpredictable. You're trying to create conditions where things can

happen without having the slightest notion of what will happen, and you're trying to provide resources when you're not sure of what kind of resources will be desired. One of the first things we did as a staff was try to get to be persons with each other because some of the staff didn't know each other at all and others weren't very well acquainted. We wanted to be ourselves and to be persons to each other so that, insofar as possible, we could be persons to this group. It's so different from the planning that you would ordinarily do for a conference or a seminar. We tried to think through all the initial steps because we felt that often the first impressions, even before anything is said, helps to set the whole tone of a conference. It wasn't accidental that we were all helping at the registration desk at different times. We spent a lot of time passing out food to open the first meeting. If this was a typical conference, there's no question that I would be asked to say the first remarks. I didn't want to do that and no one else was eager to do it. Finally, it really impressed me that the two younger staff members [Jared Kass and Maureen O'Hara (formerly Miller)] volunteered to open up the workshop together, and I thought that was just great. I have told them, and I would be glad to tell the group, they did so much better a job than I could possibly have done if I had tried to open the conference. It's that kind of, sort of backwards planning, you know, just the reverse of what one would ordinarily think about in planning for a conference that often took place.

Question: Carl, just now we all sat for a minute or two and reflected about what the person-centered approach means to us, and I'd like to ask you to share your thoughts.

Rogers: Well, ah, that's both easy and hard. Um, in one sense it's difficult to try to share a professional lifetime, and in another sense I can try to put it rather briefly and consequently very inadequately. But to me, I think it means, first of all, placing a primary value on the dignity and worth of the person and the fact that each person does have potential. I don't think that's a conviction that one can just adopt like you might adopt legislation or something; it's something that has to grow out of your experience, or it doesn't really mean very much.

But if your experience is such as to make you feel a person does have worth and potential, then there are, I believe, certain conditions that help to bring that about. There is a kind of a climate which helps people to grow and develop and be. I've tried to formulate what I think that climate consists of. I've done it differently at different times, though, and done research on it. Dave Aspy and Flora Roebuck have done a lot of research on it in the schools. To me, probably the most important things which promote growth in the other person are if I can be real with them or real with the group and if I really care. I think that a caring or a prizing or loving, or whatever phrase has the most meaning for you, that something does communicate to the other person that he matters to me or she matters to me. The other thing which is both an attitude and a skill is perhaps, I think, more easily learned than some of the others. These first two you just can't fake. I mean you either have them, either feel them or you don't. But if you do have an attitude of genuinely wanting to understand and trying to capture the meaning of this person's inner world for him at that moment, there's just no question in my mind that is a very helpful third factor in promoting the development of persons. I guess it's that kind of an approach to try to build into a workshop like this or into a counseling relationship or into a class in school, course in college, whatever. Well, I could say more, but that's enough of that.

Question: I believe in the importance of trying to provide the right conditions in the counseling situation or any situation. However, I get frustrated if I keep trying to listen and provide this climate and nothing happens, and then I feel like a failure. I was wondering if this ever happens to you and how you deal with it?

Rogers: Well, let me respond first to what you have been saying. If frustration begins to take over as being stronger in you than these other attitudes, then obviously frustration is part of the real you at that moment. Perhaps if that can be communicated to the other person, it might help the relationship, because I often think that we forget that realness is a very changing thing. We aren't the same from moment to moment. I'm not saying that we can possibly communicate all the

changes we go through, but it seems to me persistent feelings are best communicated. If you're feeling quite frustrated by this counseling relationship, voicing it might be the very best way of helping it move forward. And yes, I feel frustrated, sure I do. I felt so frustrated during part of the morning session yesterday and part of the afternoon session that I started working on other things so I could let out my frustration. I said this morning, once I had rather a low tolerance for just what seems, "Oh God, let's quit wasting time or something." I'm that much problem-oriented with things I don't like very well. But sure, I feel frustrated, and it's a great learning for me, as in those sessions yesterday, to tell myself, "Wait it out--I'll bet the group will do something." And they do. And that's what's very exciting.

Question: I was wondering if you have had any really groovy insights that really struck you as a result of going through this experience with us?

Rogers: Yes, I did. I was thinking something the other day and now I can't think of it. [Loud laughter from the participants.] It may come to me. I'm not trying to hold back on you. I don't know that these are major insights, but they are very impressive. Twenty years ago this would have been an absolutely impossible thing to do. If we could have gotten a group similar to this together 20 years ago, the difference in where you start from would have been so incredible to us now that you wouldn't believe it. And that's a very heartening thing to me--that change is taking place to get a group like this together. You don't have to spend hours and hours and hours waiting for them to work through their defensiveness and so on. They are really ready to open up to each other, and that's something that is very, very heartening to me.

Question: I'd like to know if there is anything you feel like saying to us?

Rogers: (Pause) No, I think not. If I drop any words of wisdom, it's usually in interaction with people. I'll probably pour out plenty, but it really has to come from interaction.

Question: Could you explain to me the evolutionary process of how the person-centered approach evolved, or where it came from in your thinking?

Rogers: Yes, I can do that. But I would stress that I really think a great many people have been involved in the development of a person-centered approach. And I am not much good at reviewing the history of the whole thing. So, I will simply tell you what it has meant for me and what my evolution in that has been.

I was trained in a thoroughly conventional clinical psychology approach. You give tests. You diagnose the person. You figure out the total personality diagnosis, and then you decide what treatment is indicated. Whether it's environmental change, or whether it should be suggestions to the person, or counseling, or whatever. I was very fortunate in being in Rochester, New York, in a social agency where ideology was totally unimportant. It wasn't an academic setting. People only cared that you get results with the kids you were working with. That was the primary thing. And it began slowly to seem to me that there might be something wrong with that approach. For example, I worked in a department in connection with a juvenile detention home. Sometimes I would have a very good interview with a boy, let's say, in which I was giving him the treatment that I was sure would be most helpful for him; then he wouldn't come back to see me the next day. That sort of gave me pause. Maybe it hadn't been as helpful as I thought it was. So, from that kind of experience, and from dealing with parents who, well, for me particular incidents always stand out as points of learning. There was one particular mother I have written about. It's old stuff in a way, but it's not old to me. She had brought her son to the clinic. One of the other staff members was working with the boy, and I was working with her. I suppose we had a dozen interviews in which we--well, the staff had figured out that the real problem in this case was the mother's rejection of the boy. So, I was trying in every way I could think of to lead her gradually to realize that was the factor that was causing the difficulty, and we just got nowhere. She seemed to want to cooperate, but every lead I could give with that

kind of idea, she would turn down. So, at least I was realistic, and I told her I don't think we are getting anywhere. She agreed that was true. I said that we both tried and let's call it quits; then when she got to the door of the room, she turned around and said, "Do you ever take adults for counseling here?" I said, "Yes," and she came back to the chair and began to pour out a story that was so different from the case history we had gotten from her that I just couldn't believe it. In the first place, in her mind the trouble was not with her son. The trouble was in the relationship with her husband. Well anyway, I was sort of floored and did not know what to do, so I listened. [Laughter from the participants.]

I really look back on that. We continued for quite a while. I think she was the first client who ever kept in touch with me for a long time afterward--telling me about her own situation and that of her boy--how much help she had gotten and so on. I don't want to drag this out too long by getting too anecdotal.

We also had a Rankian-trained social worker who contributed a lot to my understanding of listening for feelings, and that helped. And gradually, I began to incorporate some of these things into my own thinking, which didn't seem to me at all original, until I gave a talk one time at the University of Minnesota and nearly shocked them off their seats by presenting some ideas that I thought were quite commonplace. I began to think that maybe I was saying something new. But it never in the wide, wide world occurred to me that I was saying anything new about anything but the counseling relationship. Thereon, it gradually broadened. Once you get hooked on it, in finding something that was helpful, it begins to eat at you. I couldn't any longer conduct staff meetings in the same way. I could no longer teach classes in the same way. So, I had to begin to experiment in those spheres. And from thereon, it goes on and on.

Question: I have two questions. What are your feelings about the amount of time one should spend with a client? The other is, what are your feelings about a fee relative to the client-counselor relationship?

Rogers: I think that if I were going back into individual therapy now, I would be far more flexible than I was at the time in regard to time. I don't know what I would do, but I would experiment with various things. I have always worked with a 50-minute hour and met once, twice, three times a week--but that was about it. I think I would try various things depending on the client and try and keep my own time as flexible as possible. I think I would try to have the client share with me the responsibility of determining how much time to spend. I don't know. I think there would be lots of things I would try to do. In other words, I don't think I know the answer to that.

On the matter of a fee, you touched on one of my points of cowardliness. I have never accepted, except perhaps a half a dozen incidences, a fee for therapy. I sympathize with, and look with a critical eye also, on all the people who are charging fees. I have a whole range of feelings on that. It's perfectly justifiable to charge a fee. What you are doing is quite worth doing. On the other hand, I wish we could get to a world where people didn't have to pay for human relationship.

Question: Do you see behavior modification having a place within the person-centered approach?

Rogers: By and large, I am deeply opposed to philosophy of strict orthodox behaviorism. It seems to me it does not click with respect to the person. On the other hand, I have known people who are definitely person-centered trying to use some behavior modification procedures in dealing with particular special situations. In Louisville, where they were really trying to turn the schools upside down, some of the younger children from the ghetto who had not been in school before, who did not come from a home background that would encourage learning at all--just couldn't even be kept in a classroom together. They were in and out of the windows and out of the school. The teachers just couldn't keep them in one room. Being person-centered in this type of situation really doesn't work unless you can be in some kind of a--at least a simple relationship. So, we began to use behavior mod methods to reward the children for sitting in their seats

for 10 minutes at a time until their behavior was such that they could be reached through a more human approach. That, to me, makes sense. I have no objection to that. I am also much intrigued with the fact that--it seems to me that really orthodox behaviorists, that is, philosophically orthodox behaviorists, believe that there is really nothing from within--that we are all simply shaped from the stimuli that impinge on us and the responses that come out have nothing to do with us as persons. That group, it seems to me, is diminishing. I may be wrong on that. At any rate, there are a great many behaviorists who really have completely changed their philosophy. I was struck by the title of a book (I haven't read it), *Self Control, Power to the Person*, that was written by a behaviorist who is trying to help people control their own behavior by setting their own rewards. Well, it's another possibility in changing one's behavior. It's just very far from the orthodox behaviorist views.

Question: I would like to hear you speak to partners having a primary relationship and yet having freedom to have other meaningful relationships. Also, I would like you to address the whole thing of energy expended in a lot of directions, and jealousy, and all those things.

Rogers: Well, the first thing I would say is that I have really thought a lot about that and certainly don't have any nice neat conclusions. But there is one thing that has gradually become more clear to me. I believe that a partnership that is person-centered in its relationship in which you have respect for each other, permit each other to make independent decisions, permit each other freedom, and where the desire is for each person to grow--I do think that the persons in that kind of relationship are more likely to develop "satellite" relationships. I like that term best of the various terms that have been used. By that I mean a secondary relationship outside the marriage or partnership bond. I guess it has taken me quite a while to recognize that I really believe that is true. And perhaps like many aspects of the person-centered approach, it is one of the risks one should consider in it. If you are going to permit your partner to grow in a fashion that he or

she finds most enriching, then one of the real possibilities is that they may find you don't meet all my needs. You are important to me, but some of my needs can best be met by others outside the partnership. And that might be anything from a friendship to a continuing sexual relationship or whatever. And to comment on the last part of your question: In our present culture, there seems no doubt that so-called satellite relationships almost inevitably cause jealousy. The question I cannot quite answer for myself is whether that is something innate. Is it kind of a territoriality that we feel a need to possess another person, or is it strictly something that has been engendered by our cultural attitudes? I lean toward the latter. But the evidence is far from conclusive or complete. The fact is, I don't know. I feel that it is possible that individuals could grow to a point of--I hate to use a fabricated term like maturity. Perhaps they could grow to a point where they would not be deeply, deeply threatened by sharing some aspect of their partner with another person. That's a hunch. I don't know.

Question: Are there ways for preparing for that?

Rogers: Oh, I think this is one of the ways.

Participants: Laughter, chatter.

Question: I want to hear from you, Carl, what is your understanding of the difference between counseling and therapy? I mean in what sense could counseling be called therapy, and in what sense couldn't it be called therapy?

Rogers: When I'm serious, I say that I can see no line of distinction between the two. When I am being a little facetious, I say that if it's a pretty poor relationship, sometimes it's called counseling. If it's a good relationship, it's called therapy.

Participants: Laughter, applause.

Question: I have been doing a little reading of *On Becoming a Person*, and in it there are several times you mentioned the words "certain lawfulness" which seems to occur as a person emerges and becomes, let's say, their organic whole. I wonder if you could describe what that means to you as you emerged yourself.

Rogers: I think it would be easier for me to describe that lawfulness as I observe it in other people, and I'll tell you why. One thing that perhaps hasn't been so evident in me to many people in recent years is that I really am a scientist as well as a therapist and contemplator and so forth. I am often struck by the awesomeness of the predictability of the process of change. I could talk about that a little bit in relationship to this group. I would be quite willing to predict that, starting from the beginning to the end of the workshop, we will become more expressive of deeper feelings. O.K. What deeper feelings, and what is that going to mean to us and all that? I don't know. That will depend. That's what I mean by predicting the unpredictable. I think we do see a lawfulness in the process, and yet cannot (and I hope never will be able to) predict the specifics of it. To me, it's very, very exciting, for example, that we have been able to confirm a number of hypotheses by research as to how change comes about and the conditions that tend to make for change. It's been interesting to me to build what I regard as a very tight theory of the way in which that comes about. That was published a long time ago, and I think not too many people are deeply interested in wading through it. But I spent several years trying to figure out "What am I about?" "Does it make any sense?" "Is there any order to it?" "Can you say if this and this exist, then this will happen?" And I gained a great deal from that. I think, like any theory, it's sometimes helpful and sometimes dangerous. If people tend to adopt a theory, that is a horrible thing. Whereas, it's the creation of a theory that's really valuable. I would much prefer to have people create a theory that has meaning for them than to say, "Oh, yes, I'll adopt Freudian theory, that's the thing I believe in," or "I'll adopt client-centered theory," or whatever. I think that's all I want to say at the moment. It's really the scientific side of me that is coming out.

Question: Do you feel now that the research approaches we are using are adequately reflecting the value of what we are doing?

Rogers: I have very mixed feelings and very vacillating feelings on the whole topic. I not long ago did a paper, which I am quite pleased with,

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that tries to sum up a lot of the research on empathy. It's not in our library. The reprints have not yet come from our publisher. I am going to try and do something about that in the next day or two. I call it *Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being*. I try to bring together a lot of the research that shows how extremely valuable empathy is as a change agent. So that's the research side of me speaking, saying, "See here are these facts which have been demonstrated in all kinds of different situations." And then if you ask me, "Do we have the research instruments to capture what has gone on thus far in this workshop?" My feeling is, "No, I don't think they are adequate." Our research methods lag way behind where we are experientially. And I've grown (what's the proper word?) more and more reluctant to always be lagging way behind where I think we are experientially. For myself, (this isn't to play down anyone else's research), I would rather try and be on the cutting edge of what's happening in experience and hope that gradually instruments may be developed which would help us to really understand what is going on currently.

Question: How do you see Gestalt therapy and client-centered therapy fitting together?

Rogers: I would really prefer to have other people answer that. I don't like to. I'm enough of a prejudiced person that I don't like to comment on other points of view in therapy. I'm very pleased that Maureen is (and perhaps some others) are possibly going to offer a group on Gestalt therapy. I'll say this much: I do think that the ultimate aim of Gestalt therapy and client-centered therapy is similar. Namely, to help the person experience what's going on in him at this moment and be guided by that experiencing. The roots are different, and if I thought they were equivalent, it wouldn't make any difference. I don't think they are equivalent. I think they are different. One thing about the client-centered approach is that I think it can utilize many modes from other points of view and yet keep a basically person-centered philosophy.

Question: On the same question, I'd like to ask you, do you see any difference between the person-centered approach and the in-between person of I-thou of Martin Buber?

Rogers: You were wondering if I saw any similarities or differences between the person-centered approach and Martin Buber's I-thou relationship. A very, very fascinating experience for me was the time that I was able to have a dialogue with Martin Buber. If some of you are not familiar with who he is, he is a famous Jewish philosopher. I felt our thinking was enough alike for the most part. We just struck different notes, but were very much in harmony. But when I said that the best parts of therapy, the most crucial moments of therapy were really described by his description of the I-thou relationship, he was quite shocked and differed with me sharply. It couldn't possibly be true because the therapist was here and the client was here, and it couldn't possibly be the real I-thou relationship he was talking about. I argued with him some on that. Then to clinch the point, he finally said, "But certainly with a schizophrenic you wouldn't believe that was true, that an I-thou relationship was possible." And I said, "Yes, I most assuredly did think that it was possible, that I suspected that the moments of change were the moments in which there was a real I-thou relationship between the therapist and the schizophrenic." And this, I could see, made him feel that I was a little bit off my rocker.

We happened to meet the next morning for breakfast. We were staying at the Michigan Student Union. He told me he had been thinking about our discussion a lot that night. And in order to get to understand each other better, we continued our discussion. It was fascinating to me, and he was very open. It developed that the courses he had taken in psychiatry, I think, were taken in the 1890s, which helped explain our differences. It gave me a better understanding than I had the night before.

Question: I'm wondering if the force and the energy that are going on here, of women gathering together and working together, have influenced you in your writings, which I consider to be very masculine and male-oriented?

Rogers: I think two chapters in the book I'm working on are available in the library. If you read the one on the "Person-Centered Approach to Marriage," I don't think you will find it male-oriented. I do think you will find some things there that you will like because I really regard the woman's liberation movement, at its best, definitely person-centered. It has its extremists and so on, as any movement does, but it is a respect for the worth of the individual woman that is at the heart of that. So, I even try to be very careful to use him and her, to change my language. That's why I told Jane Dallinger that I was so amused today when she presented the beautiful sketches to us and discussed what use should be made of staff, and how we could have "him" in one room, we could have "him" in another place, and we could have "him" serve another function. If I had said that, I would have been shot down.

Participants: Laughter.

Question: Now that you have experienced a person-centered approach, can you visualize a world-centered approach?

Rogers: I have a good deal of vision, excitement, and regard for the whole world. I don't know how much hope there is, but I can see lots of possibilities. But just as I don't see this experience as being group-centered, neither do I see my world view as being world-centered. I see it rather as a person-centered kind of approach which extends out more broadly, more broadly, more broadly across cultural lines, across racial lines, between Arabs and Jews, Catholics and Protestants in Belfast, all kinds of things like that. But it seems for me, still, the focus would be on helping the individual to communicate and to appreciate others and to encourage growth in others. We have a film that we did here with a mixed group of Protestants and Catholics in Belfast, and it was an exciting experience. The film costs an enormous amount, and our capital was limited, so it was only a weekend group. And that was not enough time to produce harmony between the two, that's certain. But the progress that was made seemed to many of us quite exciting. It could only be termed "some progress," not a resolution of the tremendous feelings that exist there. It was an exciting group.

Question: During this workshop, you have talked about the person-centered approach as it relates to education, marriage, and the political area. My question is, what conditions do you envision as being important for the acceleration of this process or relating to this process? And what else could we do to accelerate this process?

Rogers: I have many responses to what you are saying. One of them is, yes, I have wandered all over the place in my writings, touching so many different fields that I sometimes feel that I am spreading myself much too thin. And then on the other hand, I feel that there is a real consistent note running through those writings that perhaps I am not spreading myself so thin. But I guess I could perhaps best comment on your question by saying that I feel that we have a sort of test tube solution to a lot of the world's ills. That is, give me sufficient contact, or give you sufficient contact with a group that is at war within itself, and we will find that we know a lot of things that we can do to help that situation. So, we are not lacking in knowledge or skills of what to do with friction, with differences, with underdeveloped people, as well as underdeveloped countries--and I don't mean the two are synonymous. But all of that, so far, is in small compass. And when we ask, can we extend it to all the schools in the country, can we extend it to all the international problems that exist--I don't know. I guess at my age, that's not my bag. I hope the hell it can be.

The next article in the piece we did on empathy was by Dave Aspy. His title is, "Empathy: Let's Get the Hell on With It." I really like to see that kind of thing. I feel that my role, probably, is to try to keep formulating ideas that might be of help in a whole wide variety of situations. In this book I'm working on, one chapter I haven't written yet, but I have some notes on it, is the "Person-Centered Approach in Intercultural, Interracial, and International Issues." There is a lot we don't know in these fields, and I am very much aware of it. As to how we can hasten the development of that point of view, I hope this group comes up with some good answers to this.

Question: Have research activities seemed less important to you in your more recent work on small group processes?

Rogers: Yes, it has seemed less important to me, which is not to say it is a less important issue. I'm not as excited by that prospect as I was by the prospect of studying individual therapy from a research point of view. I'm not quite sure why. Part of it is the complexity. Part of it is that it is much harder to get the raw data. I operate best viewing the raw data, and to even get a decent recording of a series of small group sessions is a more difficult technical problem than to record two people in a regular therapy situation. If I were to do research on it, it would probably start with getting much more of the raw data. I guess that is just my prejudice. I can make more out of studying the specific interchanges that take place between people and in studying them coolly afterwards than I can out of using measurements that, to me, don't necessarily measure the significant dynamics of what's going on. The other part of it is that I've done my thing on research. I'll leave the rest of it up to you all.

Question: Could you comment on what you think the five to ten major specific events or changes that would have to occur for us to have a reasonably successful world in the future?

Rogers: I really think that's not something I could answer off the cuff. I hope that's something a lot of people will think about. It's an extremely good question. What comes to mind, to me, I guess, is a dilemma. I think there are ways of trying to train people in a person-centered approach, and therefore, it would be available on a much broader scale, whether we are talking about teachers, or parents, or whatever. And attempts have been made along that line. I grow a little concerned about anything that seems to me to be in the direction of mechanizing a person-centered kind of approach. And yet, over the years, my attitude on that has softened because I have seen a number of people whose attitudes have undoubtedly been helped by just the kind of training I would really be quite critical of. It has kind of opened them up further to what I would call real caring or real experience, or something. So, that's the dilemma I am in. Of course, what I'm saying is that, if we knew a way where we could somehow quickly multiply a hundred fold what we are doing, what we know and so on, there is no

doubt that would move us much closer to some kind of solution. As you see, my thinking on that stays quite close to earth. And for some of the rest of you who have to have a broader perspective on the events, it might help.

Question: What are the kinds of human experiences that you would see a utopian society promoting or providing?

Rogers: I really don't like to answer that in the abstract because I feel very, very strongly myself that's exactly what we are working on here. We are trying to learn, at a gut level, hopefully also at an abstract level, but first, perhaps at a gut level, what, if anything, makes it possible for a group to feel unified, to feel respected, to deal with each other in constructive ways and not being afraid to differ, not being afraid of negative feelings, but having a way of dealing with those that the outcome is constructive, not destructive. And so, by the time we get through here, we ought to be able to write a brief essay on "Attempts to Form a Utopia, and How They Succeeded or How They Failed."

Question: I'm wondering, regarding encounter groups and freedom to learn, it seems that most people come into encounter groups either by choice or because they were in some kind of required course. If it was a choice made by the teacher to handle it in that way, the students were not free to decide for themselves what they really wanted to do. I'm wondering what your ideas are on what can be done to reach people with encounter-group type of situations while respecting their right to make their decision for themselves without laying any kind of expectations on them on what they would get out of it.

Rogers: Well, the best answer I can give is just what we tried to do here at the start. This was one of the kind of "back ass" things that we did in planning. Where instead of wondering, "How can we get through running an encounter group?"--we did ask that, but, we also asked ourselves, "What are we going to do about the people who may not want to be in an encounter group?" And if you will recall, we tried to make that choice just as available to people as the choice to be in encounter groups. And had there been a sizeable number, we were prepared to handle those individuals in helping them find what they

wanted to do, and do it. Now, I realize that for a single teacher, with his own class, perhaps that can present difficulties and all that. But what I think would have happened, yeah, let me carry this scenario a little bit further. What I honestly think would have happened, had there been a group large enough to form a group who said, "No, we don't want to be in these initial, intensive, small groups." If they had been interested in getting together with a facilitating leader, pretty soon their sessions would have begun to take on the flavor of an encounter group. I really don't regard that as manipulation; I just feel that's a fact. If you get people interacting without much fear or threat, without feeling that, "Oh, I have got to be in that encounter group," pretty soon they will be willing to meet each other and talk to each other and be closer to each other. I don't know what the difference is between that and an encounter group.

Question: I guess my question is at a more basic level. How do you get high-level kids to participate in intensive groups, and what do you tell them to prepare them for it?

Rogers: Well, I don't like to theorize beyond my experience. The last time I had contact with a group of teenagers was with a group of high school girls from Immaculate Heart High School. They had agreed to come to a conference, but if you know what people are like, including you and me, you can't receive a communication of what an intensive group is going to be like because there is no way of communicating it really until you have had some kind of taste of that kind of experience. So, they hadn't been deceived in coming there, but neither were they expecting what they found. I had a fascinating experience with that group of girls. Initially, it was extremely discouraging. I thought, "My god, I have never heard such chitchat in my life." I listened to more stuff about nothing than I had in a long time; then in the midst of a lot of nothing, one girl would say something very deep and very meaningful and almost immediately retreat from it and get back on a superficial level.

You had to keep a very sharp ear for these notes of significance since these girls were, in my judgment, extremely fearful of

bringing out anything sensitive because they thought that an adult wouldn't understand, or would disapprove, or would have some other judgmental attitude that they couldn't take. I think adolescents are terribly sensitive about personal things. So, little by little, over the four-day workshop, it did become a real encounter group. But I had to listen to a lot of stuff first.

Question: There are many different kinds of groups: laboratory training groups, sensitivity training groups, developmental groups, small groups, encounter groups, experiential groups, and so forth. Some people divide all of these different kinds of groups into two main types: group-oriented or person-oriented. While other people divide these groups up into interpersonal-growth-oriented and personal-growth-oriented and put encounter groups into the personal-growth-oriented group. Do you agree with that, or do you see any differences in these two kinds of groups?

Rogers: I'm terrible about categories because I don't particularly believe in them. I think some group leaders do tend to focus more on what is going on in the group process, and others tend to focus more on what is happening with communication between individual persons or communication of a person with himself. I do feel that there is a gradation there, a continuum.

Question: I would like to go back to the high school group. What did you learn from the group?

Rogers: I am discouraging to lots of people because I am so unexciting as a group facilitator. But I listen and try to keep alert for those moments of meaning. I even try to pay attention to the chitchat. One story which started out as chitchat still sticks in my mind. One girl said that a fellow had offered to pick her up and take her with him to pick up his girlfriend, and they would all go to the party together. At any rate, the three of them were in the car together. She said she was so concerned about that because what could they talk about?

Participants: A lot of laughter.

Rogers: But she said this difficult social situation worked out all right because the minute they all three got in the car, they all talked at once,

and nobody heard what the others were saying. And it went perfectly O.K., which was one of the things I learned from them.

Question: I am interested in what you have to say about some of the mental health leaders in the world today and how they make decisions regarding resource allocations.

Rogers: The effort to make diagnosis of world leaders is probably as ineffective, in my mind, as it is to make psychological diagnosis of other people. I'm not much hooked on that. For example, if you take one instance, I certainly had my psychological judgments about Harry Truman when he took office. He was a weak, frightened man. Scared stiff of all the responsibilities that had fallen on his shoulders all at once and obviously quite incapable of carrying the burden he would have to carry. Now, he looks pretty good. So, I distrust my diagnosis there as much as I do in other cases.

Question: What do you think would happen if we had sixteen days with a group of hard hats?

Rogers: One question would be whether they came voluntarily. If so, that would make a very real difference. If they came voluntarily, out of curiosity, or because they heard from some friend that something like this might be kind of exciting or interesting or something, I would expect to see process. They wouldn't be starting from the same level that this group did in terms of emotional sophistication, but sometimes you get very rapid movement with people who are relatively naive in the psychological field. They are often not as concerned with defending their feelings as people with a hell of a lot of professional training. So, if they came voluntarily, I really would expect a great deal of movement and a great deal of change in them. If they didn't come voluntarily, then it would be more difficult. I would expect the same kind of process, but probably not as much movement. I would also expect more skepticism. If they didn't come voluntarily, I would hope they were required to stay for the sixteen days. That would work out all right.

Question: I am interested in the relationship of the person-centered approach to changing institutions. I am coming to the question from

the point of view of one of our own churches in New Orleans as an illustration only. This situation concerned a racial issue which involved a lot of people. This goes back twenty years ago. The church of my denomination and the Catholic Church, as institutions, went through a considerable struggle before changing its policy about non-exclusion of blacks. There was very little opportunity in those institutions for the client-centered approach to really have an opportunity to show its attar. In our church, for instance, it involved three bombings of a minister's home and two bombings of the church. I'm trying to see the relationship, and I think there is one between the growth movement and the institution of change. What are the dialects on that? Do they both have to happen at the same time? Does one lead to the other?

Rogers: Well, that surely is a profound question. Let me sort of sneak around the edges of it and see if I can get anywhere close to your question. I think that part of my difficulty knowing how to respond is that, personally, I feel that all institutions would be better off if they voluntarily disbanded at the end of 10 years and reorganized. Since that seems somewhat unlikely to happen in the near future, I have to face it on a more realistic basis. Still, I don't want to leave that out because I think that institutions are going to rigidify no matter what. Perhaps someday, they will develop the skills to keep them really open, but it's obviously very difficult.

So, now you are talking about how do you deal with an institution already rigid, already knowing just what it is going to do and what it's not going to do. I am sure that what was involved was the same kind of thing. I'm not so acquainted with that field as I am with education, where people are taking risks of trying to open up their classes and teach in a freer fashion. I can name a number of them who have been fired for that reason, or if not fired, just their contract not renewed, which is a much more graceful way of putting it. In other words, risk is involved, by someone, in trying to bring about better communication. I'm sure of that. In school, so far, I don't know of anybody being bombed for that reason. But it could happen.

Perhaps, that is as far as I can go, which is not a real answer.

Question: Carl, could you address yourself to Christianity and the humanistic movement?

Rogers: I suppose my feeling is that institutional Christianity is not particularly humanistic. I think that many people that hold a religious point of view are definitely humanistic. I don't feel I am a very good person to answer your question because if I have any religious point of view, it is that whatever is going on here at the best moments in our small groups, or at the best moments in our community groups, is some sort of a force in the universe that can be released. I think it is a force in us, not a force somewhere up there, not a force in the past. So, that point of view doesn't lend itself very well to a comparison of Christianity and humanistic psychology.

Question: Isn't that point of view a religious point?

Rogers: No, I don't like to call it religious because I would prefer to call it lawful. There is something lawful about the fact that a spirit of that kind exists and can be released. The only reason I don't like to call it religious is that term has so many connotations, that which for me, I don't like. But nevertheless, I am quite aware of the fact that the issues that religious people are trying to deal with are also issues that I would like to be able to deal with. And in that sense, I feel close to it.

Question: If you were in charge of a counseling program in a typical inner-city high school of about 2,000 students and four counselors and one part-time psychologist, what basic activities would you like to see going on first?

Rogers: First, I would stop beating my mother.

Participants: A lot of laughter.

Rogers: What I'm saying is that seems like a very, very difficult situation, and I am quite aware that any answer would be partial and all that. This off the top of the head, not having ever worked in a high school, one fantasy I might have would be that I would endeavor to get together the real leaders of the high school and form an intensive small group of those individuals because if they could be reached, they might be able to have some impact on others--which means that I

would depart totally from the notion of high school counseling as being to put band aides on the kids who are having problems.

Question: It seems to me that the person-centered approach is more directly applicable to healthy functioning personalities as opposed to pathological personalities. Do you still use the nondirective approach in working with the pathological or working with those individuals that have been so brutalized by society as to have adapted an antisocial behavior pattern?

Rogers: Yes, we did a whole research project on psychotherapy with schizophrenics, which was too ambitious and not highly conclusive. But based on the personal experiences we had, perhaps the person-centered approach is the only thing that can work. I have been very much interested in the San Francisco outfit, which I think is just now defunct, called Diabesis. Do any of you know of that? Well, anyway, it's led by John Perry and another fellow. It fascinated me because Perry has had loads of experience with psychotics, and he was able to set up the kind of institution that he wanted. It was a very small one. He wished it could be larger. I would describe the approach there as a straight person-centered approach. As staff, he enlisted mostly young people. Many of them were from the counterculture and had often been on drug trips themselves. They weren't scared of bizarre behavior. They weren't afraid of people who were on some other kind of trip; then one of those volunteers, because often they were volunteers, would stay with a new individual. They refused to call them a patient. When an individual came into that system, this volunteer would spend as much time as needed for being with that person, trying to respond to them, trying to be themselves in the relationship. The results they obtained were really very striking. It's true he was dealing with individuals who were having their first psychotic breakdown, which is the most hopeful group of psychotics. But nonetheless, it was very impressive. Another thing that intrigued me was that as the whole staff became more and more imbued with that kind of approach, pretty soon he couldn't tolerate the kind of administration they had where he was the director. And so, the last I knew, the organization

was run by the whole staff together, not by any one director, which bears out what I said earlier, that when you get hooked on something like this, it begins to affect all kinds of things you don't expect.

Question: Is there any particular reason you haven't used the term nondirective?

Rogers: I very carefully avoided any reference to that term. That's part of the evolution of my own thinking which was, first of all, a protest against the highly directive, advice-giving counseling that was going on at that time, and also against the highly interpretive Freudian thinking, which was characteristic of that period. So it started out, in a way, as a negative statement. Don't do this. Then gradually, I became quite dissatisfied with that and tried to use the term client-centered to indicate that the process was focused in the person, in the client. Client-centered gets a little bit useless when you are talking about students, and international relationships, and what not. Who are the clients? And so, person-centered seemed to me, recently, to be a better term. I suppose that's part of conscious and unconscious strategy. Keep changing labels. Whatever you do, keep changing labels.

Participants: Laughter. Applause.

Rogers: Earlier, someone asked if there was anything I wanted to say to the group, and I couldn't think of anything at that time. Yes, I do think there is one thing I want to say which somehow really hasn't come out except by implication. And that is, what we are involved in here is subversion of the most powerful sort. This is a revolutionary kind of approach. It has revolutionary effects, and sometimes I think people underestimate both the risks and the impact. I just want to say that because what started as just a way of trying to help a person in trouble turns out to be an approach which undermines institutions, which undermines current education, which is sharply at variance of conventional notions of marriage, and which I think is really revolutionary in all its aspects.

Question: Has Jung had any influence on your development?

Rogers: I read Jung when I was interning back in 1927-1928. And to tell the honest truth, I thought, "My god, how dull can you get!" And

so, I kind of turned off on him. It was only a year ago that I read his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, and I thought, “Why the hell didn’t he write that first?” But of course he couldn’t do that because he wrote this at the end of his life. I am turned off by ponderous scholarship in any field, and he has a lot of it in what he has written. It is clear from his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* that he was a very growing person, and that I deeply respect. He was a person of enormous depth. I really have come to have a great deal of respect for Jung. I have a somewhat dim respect for Freud. I liked, perhaps best, (I forgot whether it was in his book, or I learned it from other sources) when they were exchanging dreams and interpreting them, and Freud kind of decided, no, that he had one dream that he was not going to tell because if he told it to Jung, he would probably lose his authority over him and no longer be respected as a teacher. And Jung said that was the last time that he really could learn from Freud. Well, that would turn me off too.

Question: What do you think about Sullivan, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, or some of the other neo-Freudians?

Rogers: After saying initially that I was not going to comment on other people’s points of view, you pretty well sucked me into that one. I’ll say something personal first. I don’t regard myself as a scholar. I think there is a certain amount of truth to the notion that those who read don’t write, and those who write don’t read. I don’t claim to be an expert in the different fields of therapy. I think the one comment I would make in regard to your question is I have a great deal of respect for Frieda Fromm-Reichmann as a therapist. Beyond that, I feel it would be a little presumptuous for me to say because I don’t feel acquainted with all the aspects of her work.

Question: What do you think about the purpose of the American Association of Humanistic Psychology at Estes Park?

Rogers: It has a good title. I like the AHP as an organization. Maybe some of you would know better than I do whether that conference would be worth a large change in schedule. I really wouldn’t hesitate to say. I just don’t know.

Question: How can I become more accepting?

Rogers: I think with the development of any of these attitudes we have been talking about is really a lifetime task. I don't think anyone develops a degree of acceptance of others that they would like. I suppose for me, at times when I have changed from a nonacceptance of a person to a later acceptance of him or her is when I have been quite willing to listen as empathically as I can. Once you get inside the other person, he seems far more understandable and acceptable, and you realize I probably would be like that to if I had the same set of circumstances surrounding me. So, I think that's the only tool I can think of offhand.

Question: I wonder about your own personal change in working in a one-to-one therapeutic situation to a group situation, and is that reflected in your ideas about social change?

Rogers: Well, like many things in my life, it came about first due to circumstances. When I was in Chicago, I was deeply involved in one-to-one therapy during the 12 years I was there. When I went to Wisconsin, I particularly wanted to get involved with psychotics because that was the group I'd never worked with until I set up an elaborate program of research on psychotherapy with schizophrenics, which was one-to-one. Then when I moved to the West Coast, I realized that my life had changed enough and the demands on it were such that I simply could not do individual therapy anymore because I feel individual therapy demands a time commitment on a regular basis over a long period of time--and that, I was quite unable to give. So, that was part of the reason I began to get more into the group experience kind of thing because I could say I could commit myself for a week, or for a weekend, or something like that. Then as I got more deeply into that (and it was not new to me, as I tried some of that at Chicago and had a very successful workshop or two at Wisconsin), the more I came to feel that it did have more impact in ways that make sense to me but might not to some of you. When you are working with clients who are people in great difficulty, you may be very successful in helping them. Their lives may really have changed a good deal. And

yet, perhaps for many of them, they are doing very well if they can get along just reasonably well in society. That is a big step forward from where they were. When you are dealing with the kind of people who increasingly come to encounter groups, you are dealing with people who are potential leaders. And so, that does have something to do with social change as far as I'm concerned. If some change occurs in people like that, then perhaps the total social impact is much greater than any equivalent amount of time working with individuals. I guess there are a lot of things I am not ambitious for, but I realize that I am ambitious for impact. I've come to recognize that much more as the years have gone by.

Question: Carl, the question I ask has a great deal of conflict for me, and it deals with the issues of acceptance and confrontation and attempting to reconcile those two things. Specifically, I work with people who are very often involved with extremely destructive behavior for themselves and for other persons. They are also very suspicious and regard acceptance as weakness. Yet, there is the danger to themselves and other people that if their behavior is not confronted, it could lead to a life and death situation. I have a lot of difficulty with this because sometimes in the process of confrontation the person becomes alienated and it seems that the whole communication process breaks down.

Rogers: I guess that I am beginning to feel that I am not King Solomon.

Participants: Laughter.

Rogers: I can certainly appreciate your situation, and I'm sure I would have as tough a time with it if I were in your spot that you are having. I think that often a caring confrontation is helpful. I think that's one of the things I've learned from Synanon. The Synanon groups always strike me as being incredibly attacking. I think when they carry this approach outside of Synanon and try to deal with other groups, I doubt that they do much good. I think they perhaps often do a lot of damage. But in Synanon, they are dealing with people who have been putting up a phony front all of their lives to get by at one level or

another. It is helpful, not just because their defenses are attacked, it's helpful because that occurs in a 24-hour context of caring. They are supported; they are helped; they are encouraged; they are given responsibility at their own level, and so on. And so, that makes sense to me. But I would not know how to translate it into your situation. I'm just saying that where confrontation is helpful and real, and even strong confrontation, it can be helpful if it exists in a total atmosphere of a real caring situation.

Question: I'm starting to feel a little restless and I was wondering if we could take a 10-minute break so that we could move our bodies around.

Rogers: Well, let me ask what you would like to do. It's now 10 minutes to nine. So, if we took a 10-minute break, actually, the time would be over.

A Participant: I didn't know that.

Rogers: Well, there is a certain amount of limit for me. I feel I begin to run down and get not so smart as I really am.

Participants: Laughter and then a lot of applause.

A Participant: That's fine. I can sit for 10 minutes.

Rogers: O.K.

Question: I would like to know if you would share a little bit about your personal life and your own spiritual life or religious convictions, if any, and how you have evolved and grown in that process. Further, could you point out and give some advice that could suit the attitude toward life for an adolescent, or a young adult, and for a mature person.

Rogers: So, this is just a minor question of reviewing my life and the spiritual part of me and also the attitudes that would be useful for an adolescent, a young adult, and a mature person.

Let me answer 10 percent of that question. I was brought up in a religious home quite fundamentalist in nature. I rebelled against that, but in a very constructive way. I have often thought how fortunate I was that it was on a trip to China for a world student Christian Federation conference that I left my adolescent religion behind and

moved into a whole new field. I was gone for six months, and by the time I got back, the fight was all over. I had come to a new orientation for myself, and I never really had to struggle it out with my family; then I was religious in a new way and went to Union Theological Seminary for a year. And during the second year, I was moving across the street to Teachers College, Columbia. I've never regretted the year I spent at Union Theological Seminary. That was a marvelous chance to think through my own philosophy of life and sort of come to terms with a lot of important issues. From there on, some of the things I said earlier apply. I suppose this will be taken badly too, perhaps. I really don't think of myself as having a spiritual life. I think that my spirit is nourished by the deepest of human contacts. I always feel nourished when something really deep happens between me and another person in therapy, or in a group, or something like that. I feel just renewed by that, and that is terribly important to me. That's why it's a real need of mine to do something like this, for example. I couldn't stay home and write all year. I have to touch base. I have to feel this all over again. I have to experience things again to somehow be confirmed in what I'm thinking.

Then somehow, I want to say something else. I didn't quite answer that question. I have often been interested in the way in which I make choices and decisions--because I don't. Oftentimes, I really find myself groping in a number of different directions at once, then some of those directions feel unsatisfying and not good, and some feel surprisingly good that I had not expected to be so. So, I grope toward the next move in my life. I sometimes liken myself to an amoeba. I put out a pseudopod in one direction. If it senses something rough, or acrid, or something, then it pulls back; then I move out in another direction, and if that feels good, I tend to flow in that direction. I have long, long ago given up much of any attempt to make conscious decisions on important issues. I will make a decision as to whether I will give a talk or something like that. But on important issues, I really don't make decisions; I eventually feel them. I finally realize, "Oh yeah, that's the direction I want to move in." For example, this book that I

have put in a lot of effort on now started out to be a short paper just touching on a number of issues of interpersonal politics; then the paper grew, and grew, and grew, and grew. Writing this book had a strange origin. I had agreed to do a book for junior college students. I still wish I could have completed that. I signed a contract and everything. Being of a thrifty sort, since I had written a number of chapters I thought, "I can't throw those away." I had the most fun writing a chapter or two on marriage. I thought that's something I could cull. And so, I groped along in that direction and out of it came the book *Becoming Partners*, which kind of shocked a lot of people because they probably thought, "What does he know about that? That's a new topic for him." I'm not sure that I do know much about it, but I could at least listen to other people and put down what they told me.

So, now I'm way away from the question that was asked, but anyway, it seems to me that's how I moved through life. I found it a nice way. I really liked that way of going through life.

Question: I am speaking now as a kind of "plant freak." Could you tell us a little bit about your garden?

Rogers: Ha! Ha! All right. That would be a good closing note. Well, I could say--but, it wouldn't be quite the truth, that it got its start when I studied agriculture for two years in college. I was going to be a scientific farmer. Well, that's another issue. I would be a despair of any vocational counselor. I knew I wanted to be a scientific farmer, so I took two years of agriculture, then I got sort of stirred up by a religious conference and decided, no, I shouldn't do any religious work, somehow agriculture didn't seem like the best foundation for that, so I switched to a history major. I majored mostly in mediaeval history, then I went to Union Seminary for a year. Next, I went to Teachers College, and I began to go into clinical psychology, so that's part of my own gardening.

Now, as to my garden, I've really become a gardener, in any intensive sense, in the last twelve years since we've been down here on the West Coast. It's so nice to have things grow the year 'round. I had

my fill of practical agriculture years ago, so what I grow are succulents. And when I wasn't quite so troubled by arthritis, I grew some damn good tuberous begonias. It really takes a lot of care to do them right. I have some now, but I'm not too proud of them. I also have some roses.

I like to go for unusual things, I guess. A student of mine from South Africa sent me some olives through the mail. When he learned I was interested in gardening, he sent me some South African olives. Now, I've got a bunch of those growing. My latest gardening hobby is a nutty one. I question whether I will live long enough to see the fruits of it. I got interested in Proteas. I don't know whether any of you know what Proteas are. They have very exotic blooms. Some of them as big as that [raising his arm to indicate they were several feet high] and some smaller, but all of them are very, very different. At supper someone was asking me about them, and I was trying to describe what some of them are like. One of them is shaped sort of like that, [demonstrating their shape with his hands] with either pink or white petals. But the end of each petal is--O.K. Let's just call it quits for tonight.

Participants: A great deal of applause.