time in the army." I said I didn't have a choice. Mother started crying—she told me I was just a boy and I wasn't a man.

But, in my mind, I stopped being a boy long, long before I decided on the army. I guess many poor kids stop being boys in their childhood. I decided on the army to start earning more to improve the life of my family—to bring them from terrible poverty. I finished my military service at the end of 1975 and applied to the treasury police. In 1976 I was accepted and after six months of schooling, I became full police in January 1977.

My experience in the first years was exciting because it was a different deal from this poor, angry boy. When you are so poor, you just think about where you are going to get food. When you are 10 years old, or 11, you stop thinking about yourself; you think about your brothers and sisters. In 1977 I started making pretty good money and my family started eating three meals a day with consistency. This was my reward. In 1978 my family was doing better, and better, and better.

DPK: What prompted you to leave El Salvador?
RH: By the end of 1978, torture became part of life in the police. Torture always existed, always, but sometimes you try to ignore things, pretend they don't exist. Torture was happening, but my awareness wasn't that great. Torture started becoming more and more open, not something just relegated to small rooms. In 1979, it became a common practice from the death squad to the uniformed police. I started to question my morality in being there. When you are police, or a soldier, you learn how to kill. In no country is a soldier instructed how to deliver good to the people as much as how to kill. That will happen in the armies of the world. Armed forces have different levels of moral principles, and in my country the morals were going down the drain. No more did people care about how much suffering they inflicted. The more suffering they inflicted, the more they rejoiced. That was in contradiction with my convictions, and I started questioning. "If we pretend to be Christians like many in the armed forces want to be," I say, "this type of killing is not going to get you not even near heaven." And that's the reason why I was having increasingly more problems with my officers. They started seeing me as a wimp. Sometime in 1979 I acquired a Bible. I learned things I hadn't known, because I didn't have the chance. I understood that Communism was a big, big farce that was put in the mind of the police. Justice, reconciliation, love, words like that... I started telling my friends my feelings and finally I refused to kill. And if you refuse to kill where they take pride in killing, you are a misfit. I decided killing wasn't going to be part of my life, and nobody was able to change my thinking. Eventually I had to leave the country because it was so dangerous.

DPK: Tell me how you got to Minnesota.
RH: The hardest thing was deciding how and when to leave the police. Because it was giving me a pretty good income and my family was doing well, that was hard to decide. If I quit, how was my family going to survive? Once they helped me decide, coming to the United States wasn't the hardest thing. It was quite easy to get into the United States. I had to spend about two days without eating but I made it. I spent seven months in Los Angeles, three months in an immigration detention center and like seven months in Tucson, Arizona. I was contacted by a religious group who told me my position would be better in Sanctuary. I asked the requirements and they said to tell people my story and to be a witness to what was happening in my country.

I came to Minnesota and fortunately came to a Sanctuary church that was quite militant, and with a lot of contacts. In the beginning I was quite nervous. But it was good therapy for me to learn about myself and my own mortality, to learn to forgive myself. Once I forgave myself, the rest came easy. Since then I don't regret any event. I don't want to relive everything that happened but I don't regret. People have been good to me and I've had so many opportunities to meet good people. In Minnesota, a lot of people are willing to listen, a few people are not. Many people here are involved one way or another in my fight against injustice.

DPK: Do you remember your first time at People Camp?
RH: First time was in 1983, I think. I had had another experience camping outdoors in a tent, and there was a terrible storm—it rained the whole night and we were all wet!

When I was contacted by People Camp*, I was invited to speak in the workshop. I was willing to do that but not for the whole week, because I was thinking about my other camping experience. So I got there Wednesday. The first day was so-so. The second day was more exciting. By Friday, I was very, very comfortable. I felt that I was among nice, nice human beings. The atmosphere, the sense of community, was flowing everywhere. By Saturday I was regretting not coming earlier in the week. Since then I have been going regularly. I missed one year because of work, but I have been there six times, I think. As long as I am in Minnesota, I will go to People Camp—it has been one of my greatest experiences here.

DPK: Are there things about People Camp you particularly like?
RH: One particular thing is being among the people—that's very important. Once I get to People Camp, it's a whole different experience! Sauna is the trade mark of People Camp, I think; and the food is always great!

DPK: Tell me why you decided to fast.
RH: When I was thinking what action to take, you know, I thought about People Camp, in a way. This is a nonviolent action, a strong message, challenging to some people but peaceful. People don't have to condemn me for killing anymore, shooting people in the street, they won't see me as a schizophrenic or reckless fanatic. If they see me that way they are confused, not aware about what is going on in Central America. But this I believe is the most peaceful, loving thing I can do—through my faith, my convictions, to use the peace testimony. Last thing you should ever use is violence, but the first thing some people choose is violence instead of dialogue and negotiation. In my book, peace is the strongest thing, peace is the only thing that can defeat violence. And eventually it will. If we commit ourselves to act, then we will make a difference. Gandhi made it, Martin Luther King made it; they made changes and they didn't use a gun.

DPK: What progress do you see so far?
RH: So far our fast has been everything I envisioned. A lot of people who won't go to a demonstration are coming over here to the Cathedral, a lot of people who wouldn't think are thinking. The press has been talking about it. People who get the message eventually will change their attitude about my country, about why people sometimes take weapons over there—you can take injustice and poverty without doing anything for only so long, when you have a government that is so vicious. I want people to understand what is happening in El Salvador. The people there aren't by nature violent. The U. S. government is sending weapons to kill people and money that doesn't get to the ordinary people but to the generals and the colonels, who are getting rich; they don't want to end the war because they benefit from that war—they're getting fat accounts in foreign banks. But the response to your question is that people have been coming all the time, all the time, and the response has been great from a wide range of people. Our main goal is for the United States to cease sending military aid to El Salvador. It seems like a fantasy but that's the main goal. The

*For more information about People Camp, interested persons may call FNVW at (612) 870-1501.