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Interviewee: Ann German  
Interviewer: Dawn Walsh  
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Dawn Walsh: This is Dawn Walsh with the Montana Feminist History Project, I’ll be interviewing Ann German in her law office at 421 Montana Avenue in Libby, Montana, which is also the home of the Lincoln County Family Planning Clinic. The date is August 14, 2001.

Ann, I’d like to start out by asking you the basic questions about where you were born, where you grew up, where you did your education, your parents, what your home life was like, those types of questions.

Ann German: Okay. I was born in 1949—November of 1949—in Butte, Montana. My mother’s was named Margarie Parker before she married my dad, she had been born in...She was born in Seattle. Her parents had been residents of Butte starting in the 1870s. My grandfather came over from Ireland, and my grandmother came over from Wales. They were both very young if not...they were probably infants when their parents moved from Europe to America. They ended up in Butte because that’s when the mines were really going great—that was in the 1870s. They lived in Butte forever, but my grandfather was a mine supervisor. They’d been in Mexico, and he was supervising a mine and my grandmother was pregnant. They didn’t want her to give birth there because of the medical facilities so they came back to Seattle, and my mother was born there in 1910. Then they moved back to Butte, and so my mother had been a Butte native basically—had lived in Butte all of her life.

My father had come from Pennsylvania. His family was involved with the railroad in Pennsylvania, and he had become an engineer. He went to Cornell. He was born in 1903, and he was an engineer—gas electric engineer. The Montana Power Company was kind of just getting going back in the ’20s and ’30s. So he came up from San Francisco. He was recruited to come and work. He was working in San Francisco. So he came up from San Francisco and went to Butte and met my mother who was working at the power company as a secretary.

They were married in ’47 and my sister...They were married in ’46. My sister Margaret was born in September of ’47, and then I was born in November of ’49. We lived in Butte and my mother had to quit her job when she married my father because the Montana Power Company had a rule against married women working there. Later they allowed married women to work there but not if there were married to somebody who worked for the company. But she had to quit her job because they wouldn’t allow married women to work; they didn’t have jobs for married women. So then she quit and was a mother-homemaker. Then my father died in 1960 when I was just 10, and my mother then, who was then 40—she would’ve been 40—she ended up going back to work. Ended up back at the power company as a stenographer. She was the head of stenography section.

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I have a funny anecdote I have to tell you, when I was at the law school. I went to law school from '73 to '76. That’s when I became friendly with a lot of the women in Missoula in the women’s movement. We all went to Bozeman one day to see Meg Williams and I think Cris Williamson was there, but I know for sure Meg Williams was there. Was that her name, Meg?

DW: Meg Christian.

AG: No...Was it Meg Christian? Anyways, she was the original Olivia Records performer and Cris Williamson. I don’t know if Cris was there but Meg definitely was. They did this one great number called “Here Come the Lesbians,” and we were in the audience. I took my mother to it, and we were in the audience. These women would come down out of performing, off the stage. They would come up behind people and goose them and go “(make teasing noise)” because it was like (imitates music of play)—

DW: The Leaping Lesbians. (laughs)

AG: Yes, the Leaping Lesbians. My mother was absolutely enthralled. She just loved it. When we were driving back to Butte that night after the concert—because she was the head of the stenographers section of the power company which was all young women of course—she said “You know, I’m going to have to tell the gals about this.” So she came home the next day, this must have been...I don’t know if I was living with her then. I don’t remember, but I was there for a couple of days anyway. She came back from work the next day, and she said that she told them that her daughter didn’t shave under her arms and didn’t wear a bra and had all these friends were lesbians. She says, “I don’t know what they thought about that, but I think they were surprised.” This would’ve been when my mother was in her...she was probably close to 60 then.

To get back to where I came from, I taught school one time when I was in between college and law school. I’d had an exercise for my class, and they had to answer two questions. One of them was “List ten things you don’t like about yourself,” and the other was “List ten things you do like about yourself.” I said [to her mother], “You know the really unusual thing was that they didn’t have any problems listing the ten things they didn’t like about themselves, but it’s really hard to list one positive thing that they felt about themselves.”

My mother said, “Oh that’s not a problem, I can do that.”

I said, “Great, do it.”

So she came back at the end of the day and she said, “Well, you’re right, that was hard to do. But I came up with one.”

I said, “What was that?”
She said, “I am open to new ideas.” I’ve always felt that that’s the reason that I am a really positive feminist because I was raised by a woman who just was open to new ideas, and it’s an attribute that I actually don’t have as well as she does.

Anyway, that was where I grew up. I was in a real woman-centered household because my dad died when I was 10, my grandfather died when I was 11, so I grew up with me, my mom, my sister, and my grandmother. My grandmother lived to be 98. She died in ’73, the year I went to law school. So that was quite the woman-centered household. I graduated from high school in ’67. I had a really important thing that happened to me—it was in the fall of ’66. I was involved in an explosion in the Butte High School chemistry class, and I burned my hand. I ended up having to go to Seattle, and I finished high school in Seattle—my last year in high school. I think probably if I hadn’t done that I wouldn’t have gone to Antioch. The reason I went to Antioch is because my sister, who was at Cornell University, came home for Christmas break that year—the winter of ’67. She had met a woman on the plane who had studied at Antioch who was from Seattle and she came—I remember she came in the house—and she said, “You have got to apply to this school” because Margaret had gone to Cornell and she didn’t like it, it was too big. My dad and all of his family had gone there, everybody in his family had gone there. She didn’t like it. It was too big, it was too impersonal, you know. Again I mean, this is right in the middle of the ‘60s when everything was happening so I ended up applying to and going to Antioch.

The other thing that that incident had a really important impact on me was that my mother who was a widow and had no…I mean she was working as a secretary—minimum wage I’m sure. My father, when he’d been alive he was the vice-president of the Montana Power Company so he had a lot of pretty powerful influential friends and a lot of them were attorneys. When I got hurt, my mother went to these jokers and asked them to help her because it was a case of absolute negligence. My professor—my teacher, my chemistry teacher—was out in the hall drinking at the time it happened, 7:30 in the morning. We got a hold of a chemical we weren’t supposed to have. We were supposed to have potassium, and my lab partner thought potassium, the symbol for potassium was P, and it’s actually K. So she brought a whole bunch of red phosphorus over to our table, and that’s when it exploded. I burned myself up really badly and ended up having to have all these skin grafts and you know my hand was…I couldn’t use it for about three years. It’s fine now. Anyway my mother went to these people and not one of those attorneys would do anything for us because they had kids in the school system or because they were involved in with the powers that be. This was in 1967, and I remember thinking “I would really to be an attorney to represent young people with legal problems,” so that’s one of the main reasons I became an attorney. I specialized, when I got out of law school, in representing juveniles. In fact I ended up teaching at the law school. I taught other law students to do juvenile law. So that was a pretty important impressive thing that happened to me. I think going to high school in Seattle my last year was probably a really good thing because I was at the point where I was becoming very dissatisfied. I didn’t know why because I didn’t know about the women’s movement but I was becoming incredibly dissatisfied.

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One of the other impressive things that happened is I’d been a cheerleader. When I applied to be a cheerleader, when I tried out, there was a black woman who’d been a cheerleader with me. When she tried out for the varsity—we’d been on the junior varsity cheerleading squad—and when she applied for the varsity, she didn’t get it, and she was easily the best cheerleader in the state. I mean, she was excellent. I’d been on the squad with her for a couple years, and I was furious that she didn’t get picked because it was a popularity contest. It had nothing to do with skill or ability. I quit because of it, I was so mad. Again, this was in the spring of ‘67, ’66, sometime in there, but I had a couple of those things happen to me and I didn’t know quite why I was so traumatized and upset by them and troubled by them.

I think it’s a fair statement. I was raised in a household of Republicans so I certainly was not indoctrinated in any way, any kind of, sort of populist. Judy and I kid about that a lot, she was raised in a household where they were promoting Adlai Stevenson for president, and I was at the age of ten walking around with a ‘Nixon for President’ hat on, if you can imagine. Barb Burke and I laugh about that because she was also raised in a Republican household. We’ve decided that kind of promotes sort of an iconoclastic approach that you can just be and do what you what to be because you’re...I mean in Butte, Montana, being a Protestant Republican, you’re about as much of a minority as you’re going to get. So anyway I wasn’t very happy with women’s lot and I think I became real aware of that.

Another thing that happened, another real important thing that happened to me in high school is I had a very good friend who was the head majorette. Her name was Jeanne Triscica, and she was just a great gal. Her family lived up on the hill. They were miners and lived in this little tiny house. She and I were very, very good friends. She got pregnant, and I’ll never forget, her boyfriend was the star quarterback on the Butte High football team. Jeanne got pregnant, and they kicked her out of high school. They wouldn’t let her come back to high school because she was pregnant, and of course she lost her head majorette, which she had worked all her life to be. She was one of these kids who was never going to have money to go to college or do anything, but this was where she was really going to shine and she was excellent. In fact I have her picture— I keep it—of her in her majorette outfit. She had to drop out of high school and have this baby, and her life pretty much came to a screeching halt. She was a sophomore, whereas her boyfriend ends up going on to become the star football player and gets a scholarship to college. I remember being so struck by the inequity of that. Again I think growing up in a woman-centered household I really knew that there was something that wasn’t right about that, but I couldn’t quite put my finger on what you could do about it.

So anyway, I went to Seattle, which exposed me to a lot of really positive women. They had excellent women teachers there. They had some good women teachers at Butte High too—these spinsters, classic spinster, some of whom were published. But for a high school kid the last thing you want to do is emulate some woman with whiskers who probably should be a book on history.

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Then I went to Antioch, and Antioch of course is very political, extremely so. In fact when I was at Antioch, the second year I was there, the university—the Department of Education—closed down the campus because we had one part of the campus that was run entirely by the black Muslims and white people weren’t allowed on that part of campus. They had all their own classes, they had all their own dorms, they had their own eating facilities. The Department of Education came in and shut us down because it was a violation of the Civil Rights Act, which was kind of interesting. So it was very political. Again this was ’67, ’68 with all the craziness that was going on, with [Martin Luther] King being killed, [President John F.] Kennedy being killed, the anti-war movement.

I got real involved. You read all these feminist histories about how feminists start out—radical feminists start out in the Civil Rights Movement—and then one day they realize they don’t want to make coffee for the men anymore, you know. That’s kind of what happened to me. I was sort of a handmaid to a couple of these organizations. I ended up going to Mississippi and working the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi for a while. Again, all of the major players were men. These white guys that would come down from Harvard to show the black guys how to promote racial equality which I always thought was very bizarre. Some of the black lawyers who were there were also from the North were excellent. I understand a couple of them are still there and very active. But again there wasn’t much entree for women in that field. Women were basically secretaries and help mates. It’s kind of hard now looking back on it. Some of those men were such prima donnas it’s just amazing they didn’t get lynched. They’re the ones that should’ve been lynched.

I had a lot of political experience with that myself, that was in ’70, ’71 when the Civil Rights Movement had taken a more legalistic turn. They’d gone from community demonstrations and marches to legal analysis and legal...One of things we did was called municipal equalization where we would go into all these little towns on the delta, and we’d count all the city services on the black side of town, like the street lights and the stop signs and the septic systems, power and everything. Then we would count them on the white side. Then we went to federal court and got the judge to order these towns on the delta that they couldn’t make any more improvements on the white side of town until they brought the black side of town. Literally in the South when you say going across the tracks everything stops, the sidewalk stops, the street stops, the light stops, everything stops and the black people live in the squalor.

So that was fun. Then we did some school integration cases. I had a job where I would go into the schools and pretend to be—I can’t believe I did this at the age of 19—I would pretend to be a wife of a Baptist minister who was moving to the community and we had a child that was going to be in school and that I wanted to see what the school was like. That way I could get into the lunch room. I’d always invite myself to lunch. I’d say, “Well I’d like to go and sit in the lunch room.” I could watch and see if the—not just black but white kids too—if they had a school lunch program, if the school lunch program recipients were being treated unfairly, if they were being...because they weren’t supposed to be identified or singled out in any way. I’d sit there and make these little mental notes and then run out to my car and write them down,
or whatever car I was driving. I didn’t have a car. One day I’d been in about four schools, and one day my boss got a call. I was in Oxford, Mississippi. It was Mississippi Rural Legal Services that called. I was there and my boss got a call from the attorney general, and they said “If that woman goes into one more school...” So that was the end of that project.

It was right about this time because I remember, I think it was the Republican National Convention was happening or something else but it was right about this time that some of the people I was working with, including a women professor at Antioch—I can’t remember her name—but some of these people invented this concept of the...It was a form of civil disobedience. What you would do is you would go to, like an Air Force base—we did this—legal observers. What you would do is you would have the demonstrators lie down in front of the tanks, and then you would have people standing next to them. As they got arrested, you would find out their names and find out where they were being taken. Ostensibly it was to assist in getting people released and making sure there wasn’t police brutality. But in fact what it was, that it was great because the legal observers had immunity, and they couldn’t be arrested. So all the people who were being hauled off, we were left there to observe, and we were blocking the tanks so it was a very clever strategy. But that was kind of a fun thing to go and negotiate with law enforcement with how we were going to do that.

The first thing I probably did when I was in undergraduate school that had a specifically feminist focus was I got involved with what was called the Women’s Health Collective. I was one of the founders of that. It was based primarily on women pre-med students who became interested in what was happening with the Barefoot Doctor Program in China. There were some very prestigious doctors who had gone over to China in the late ‘60s, early ‘70s and had trained with the Barefoot Doctor Program or had observed them in the field and had gone to the hospitals. I remember being very impressed because they brought back a video tape of a woman having brain surgery and another woman having open heart surgery and the only anesthetic they were using was acupuncture. We were all just amazed, especially the brain surgery patient because they had to have her do things, you know, respond to stimuli. They had to have her blink or move her hand while they were working on her brain so she was completely awake. They had these machines that would twist the needles and keep these people from feeling any pain. I was just-impressed the hell out of me so you know we all wanted to go to China and be Barefoot Doctors. So we started this group called the Women’s Health Collective and there were men in it but I got picked to be the head of it. I think the reason I got picked to be the head of it because I was the only one there who...I was the only one who wasn’t going to go to...didn’t have an interest in medicine as a career. I wasn’t going to be a premed student. I was in a science curriculum. I got my undergraduate degree in science, but I didn’t want to be a med student. I wanted to be a naturalist. I wanted to work outside. So I got picked to be the head of it. It was real interesting to me because it was the first time I’d ever been involved in consensus decision making and learning how to reach consensus with people so it was a real good experience in organizing. We worked for about a year. I think, it was that last year before I graduated in ’72. Primarily we did two things. We dispensed birth control, and then we did rape crisis and domestic violence counseling.

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I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of it, but a couple years ago Antioch instituted this informed dating policy where you negotiate ahead of time what is or is not acceptable. It got a lot of media play because everybody thought it was outrageous, but that stuff was going on even back then. It was a really open campus. There were no non-students on the campus after 5:00. There was no security. I remember it was real interesting because when I went there in ’67 the big thing was free love, lots of drugs, primarily marijuana and hashish and that kind of thing. There weren’t very many hard drugs there. Everybody was sleeping with everybody, of course. There weren’t any sexually transmitted diseases that would kill you then that we knew about. I mean there was gonorrhea and syphilis, but there were cures for those. Birth control—it just finally became available, and so it was very open and it was philosophically considered extremely poor taste to object in any way to this openness. Well, by the time I left in ’72, there had been a couple rapes, there had been some violence, so then it shifted. The emphasis shifted to security and this whole idea that women had the right to say no that it wasn’t necessarily cool to have sex with everybody on the first date.

In ’73...No, that was afterwards. In ’70—I’m going to say ’70 or ’71—New York was one of the first...I think it was New York, Washington, D.C., and Hawaii were the first places where you could get a legal abortion. Of course, one of the objections before that was the fact that it was dangerous. I had a friend at Antioch that was actually from Billings which is kind of usual because there were only about two of us there from Montana. She had an unwanted pregnancy and she had an illegal abortion and she almost died from it. She got septicemia, and she almost died. I can remember how upset I was about that—that she had that experience. Then I had another friend who got pregnant, and she flew to St. Louis and they gave her...They injected her with saline, and they put her on the plane. She had a miscarriage on the plane when she was coming back and she could’ve died from that. My friend from Billings ended up going to Chicago for one of those classic back-alley, horrible-knife-involved, you know, so it was really nice when abortion became legal in New York.

I got pregnant. I came home for Christmas in ’71 and I got pregnant. I ran into my old boyfriend from high school in Butte, and I got pregnant. I went to New York and got an abortion. It was real interesting because in those days getting an abortion, at least in that climate and in that particular place that I was, it had almost a revolutionary feeling about it. It’s like, “I don’t have to be subject to these menstrual cycles.” I personally have never felt that abortion is a negative thing. I know some people who’ve had them that wished they hadn’t. I know other people who’ve had them and don’t necessarily regret it but wouldn’t do it again. I have never had that feeling. I felt it was a positive thing.

One of the funny anecdotes about it is the place where they had the first legal abortions in New York was in Manhattan, and you would go into this place. It was in the ‘60s or ‘70s somewhere. It was called the Women’s Something Center, and it was just great. You go in there, and you really felt like you were a part of something really exciting because it was so new. It was such a wonderful alternative to the illegal abortions that were killing people. You go in there, and they

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would have you go into a little room. You’d take your clothes off and put on a gown, and they would give you this little plastic bag to put your clothes in to carry them with you when you went in to get the abortion. The bag had a very distinctive and unusual in those days kind of art deco, Andy Warhol-esque design—a black and white design on it. It was very modernistic and usual. When I was at the airport waiting to get on the plane after the abortion, I was sitting in the airport, and I saw two or three other women walking around with these bags. It was just like this sort of funny little club. We’d all kind of give one another the high sign, and nobody would say anything but you knew. So it really had kind of a feeling about it that was real positive.

I remember the one negative thing about it was that the doctor who did it was from some third world country. I don’t know where he was from. He had some sort of an accent that I couldn’t pinpoint—might’ve been Puerto Rican or something like that—but he had some accent and he really couldn’t speak English very well. He came in, and he had a gown on and, you know, whatever he was wearing. He had hash marks on it that he made with this pen, and that’s how he was keeping track of how many abortions he’d done. So he had like these 1-2-3-4 with a slash, 1-2-3-4. He had like 20 of them, and that’s how he charged, I guess. I remember looking at that thinking, “Oh God, you know the pro-life people would just,”—in those days I don’t know what we called them—“but the anti-abortion people would just be having a fit.” I mean, this would just fall right into their whole perception of what this whole business was about.

But it was very revolutionary. You didn’t necessarily talk about it with people, but you felt positive about the fact that...I mean, after having made a horrible mistake and screwed up, you know, but the difference between that and the desperation that was felt by people when I was in high school. That’s another thing that I think historically is real hard to put your finger on, but so many of the movies of the ’60s and ’50s had as their theme the tragedy that ensues when you have an unwanted pregnancy. You know, all these movies about illegitimate children and nobody wanting to know. I had another friend in high school who got pregnant when we were in high school, and they sent her away. Everybody said that she was having a nervous breakdown. Well, she wasn’t having a nervous breakdown, she was having a baby. So there was just so much tragedy. Probably of all of the things, if there were one thing that somebody said to me, “You can make a difference if you put your energy into something,” it would be legalized abortion. That to me is just critical to women feeling like they are in control of their lives.

So anyway, that was Antioch. I graduated and I came back to Butte. I decided not to go ahead with my biology career, and I decided to go to law school. I lived in Butte with my mom for a year because I couldn’t get into the University of Montana because you had to be a resident. They had this goofy rule that if you went to undergraduate out of state that you were no longer a resident. So I lived in Butte. I was real involved with the union there. I belonged to the Women’s Protective Union which Diane knows all about, which was just hilarious. It was all these women who’d never really learned to speak English. It was the waitress’s union, and they would have meetings once a month. If you went to the meeting, they had a rule that they had started back in the ’20s probably to try to get people to come. If you went to the meeting, you
could put your name in a hat, and they’d draw names. If your name was drawn, you wouldn’t have to pay dues that month. So I would go to the meetings because I was real involved with union organizing. I’d been in Kentucky and worked with the United Mine Workers. That’s back when they were getting rid of Tony Boyle and bringing in Yablonski and doing all that stuff. I was real involved in that. So I’d go to these meetings, and I’d really want to get involved in this union stuff. It was all these women in their 60s who didn’t really have any interest in union organizing, they were just there...I won the drawing because I was the only member who wasn’t an officer. Finally one of them came up to me after about the sixth time and in kind of Finnish accent—great gal—she says, “Honey you don’t need to come to these meetings anymore,” because I was never having to pay my dues.

That was kind of different, and that was kind of a troubling experience because in the waitress’s situation at least, if you’re a waitress it’s real hard to be in the union because there’s you and the boss and maybe three other employees. It’s not like you’re at GM, and there are 5,000 of you and the boss. I mean you’re intimately...you and your boss are rubbing elbows all day and working together. If you have a grievance all of the sudden, you’re thrown into a situation where you’re going after your boss so that was kind of a troubling upsetting thing for me. I remember one day I filed a grievance because they took somebody...I’d worked in the restaurant where all the kids used to come on their way to Vietnam to get their physicals. The draft—kids were being drafted. I was always trying to talk them into going to Canada and stuff over the chicken fried steak that they got for lunch. One of them wrote a check one day for a milkshake, and it bounced. They took it out of my wages, and so I grieved it. I come to work the next day, and the head of the union is sitting talking to my boss in the booth. I’m like, “Oh, this is a quirk,” you know, so that kind of gave me a bad taste about unions. That particular union I like, but I still think unions could use a hell of a lot of political analysis frankly. Anyhow I did that for a year. I worked in the schools there. I got a job working in the middle school for the Catholic...what was it called? South Central, I think, was a Catholic school, and that was very interesting. I worked with a woman there who had been a nun and who was getting married. She had quit being a nun, and so that was a whole different kind of perspective on a woman’s thing.

I didn’t do too much with the women’s movement in Butte. Butte’s a real hard nut to crack when it comes to that kind of thing because for one thing the Catholic Church is so pervasive and then Butte’s pretty traditional. I did have a really good friend from high school that called me one day because her husband...She’d married the high school basketball star, and her husband was abusing her. I remember I wrote a country western song about her and the lyric went, “She used to be a cheerleader, she kicked her leg so high and now she’s six months pregnant and she’s sporting a black eye. Oh something or other battered woman now, oh I wish I weren’t a battered woman now or something.” I wrote the song for her, and she is still with him as far as I know. He went through some horrendous problems. Last I understood he had cirrhosis of the liver from alcohol abuse. He probably wasn’t going to live as long as he should. But that was very distressing to me to see that happening, and she really didn’t have anybody
she could talk to about it. Butte, I think, is a lot better now than it used to be, but that year that I was there I got pretty discouraged.

So then I went to the University of Montana law school, started in the fall of '73. I'd been there for about a week, and I was ready to quit because all of the University of Montana law students with rare exception—rare exception—were graduates of either the business school or the forestry school. Male graduates, and they were awful. They were sexist jerks. I thought, “If I have to spend three years with these people, I won’t make it.” A positive thing is that the women who were there, by and large, were very good. They were older, as a rule. They were women who had families and came back, and of course, they were just brilliant compared to these guys. I mean it’s not hard to go to law school. I’ve told a lot of people law school isn’t difficult. It’s just tedious. It’s a lot of memorization, rote memorization, and a lot of creativity involved. But the women like my friend Marge Brown—I don’t know if you’ve met her—but she was just an absolute classic. I always wanted to write her life story. Her sister lives here. She grew up in Libby in a family of a woman and four daughters after their father died during the Depression. This woman raised these four daughters in a boarding house, raised them up and made money in the boarding house. Her daughter June lives here, and she is just an absolute delightful gal. Her sister Marge was my friend in law school. Diane and Marge were good friends. She died here a couple years ago, but they were wonderful. The older women were just great.

I think it was probably our first year in law school...What had happened was in 1972 the Montana Constitution had been ratified by the people of Montana, and it had in it the prohibition against sex discrimination. The legislature that met immediately after that in ’73 wrote the first human rights law that was based on the Federal Civil Rights Act. All of the sudden we had these laws on the books that said we were not to be discriminated on the basis of gender. So some of us came up with the idea that a fun project might be to go back to the legislature in ’75, the next meeting of the legislature, with a bill that eliminated all gender-based distinctions in Montana Code. The Montana Code is like 12 volumes, you know, so it’s pretty extensive. Each one of us took a book. I think I got the criminal law and family law book, and everybody took a book. One of my favorite statutes that we revised to get rid of the specific designations was there was a law that was passed in the 1800s that said that if a man kills another man in a duel he has to support the widow for the rest of her life—the widow and the children. So we changed that to say that if a person kills another person during a duel they have to support the person’s surviving spouse and children. I was very proud of the fact that we eliminated gender from the dueling prohibition statute. (laughs) Why we didn’t just repeal the damn thing I don’t know and it may have been since, then but that was just an example. It was pretty funny.

So we spent a lot of time. We’d get together at least once a week and sit around and talk about that. As happens with a lot of things, the first year we were in existence we were pretty well received because nobody really thought we were serious about really doing anything. I think it was after I left—it was probably in ’76 or ’77—that the law caucus got pretty radical, and then

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everybody freaked out. By that time more women were being admitted who were real interested in being successful and wealthy and not necessarily political and so then there was kind of a backlash. I haven’t had anything to do with it for a long time but the impression I have is that the Women’s Law Caucus doesn’t have any of the vitality it had back when we first started it. But those three years I was there, ’73 to ’76, the law caucus was real involved, and we did a lot of fun stuff. We went over and lobbied in legislature on a lot of different things. Pro-choice, which I don’t think...I think the law caucus, at least the last I heard, they would not endorse pro-choice because they had anti-choice members and there were men in it. They allowed men to join because there was some threat that they were going to raise Cain about that.

I graduated in ’76. I went back and taught for two years from ’80-’82, and the atmosphere had really gotten a lot more hostile toward feminism in that period. Partly I think because those older women who were so impressive...I mean these guys, it was like having your mom around, and they weren’t about to criticize these women. Now, you know they felt like they had more opportunity to do that. It was good because when I started law school, I think there were 15 women in the law school and there were three classes of 75 so that would have been 15 out of 225. It was a pretty small number so it was important to have that kind of cohesion. I think of the 15 of us there were only maybe one or two that weren’t active in the caucus. Now my impression is that I think about a third of the class are women so you know you don’t that same need to sort of have—

Anyway I’d been at the law school for about two weeks, and I thought “I am going to kill somebody if I have to stay here.” I was at the University Center, I think. I can’t remember where I was. I saw a sign on the wall—might’ve been at the UC—a little handwritten sign that said “Organizing Women’s Crisis Line. Come to the YWCA on Orange Street.” I went to the meeting, and it was right in the September of ’73. Judy Smith had just moved up from Texas because she was living with Jim Whelus (?). Jim had met a woman named Joan Ouda (?) who was a second year law student with me. I was first; she was second. Joan was really involved in pro-choice and had gone to Texas to a seminar. She was again an older woman with a family. She’d gone there, and she had met Jim Whelus and they became friends. Jim applied for and got a job in Missoula and moved up to work for Datsopoulos—I think that’s what he went to work for. So Judy moved up and so that’s when I met her.

I was right in on the ground floor of that original meeting at the Women’s Place, and because I was in law school I volunteered to help women with legal problems. We were doing violence intervention, we were doing birth control and abortion counseling. Some employment but not very much because employment still was pretty...there wasn’t much going on with employment law then. Some work with women with kids—child support—but I was helping women with legal problems.

One of the projects we undertook, I remember very well, was we were trying to educate some of the male professors about sexism in the classroom. We got out there one time...I thought we
were all going to get thrown in jail because we basically confronted some guy that we thought
was sexually harassing his... He was in the counseling department. We thought he was sexually
harassing his counselees, and we confronted him. I thought we were going to get arrested or
sued or something because it got pretty heavy. That was a hairy one.

The Women’s Place. If it hadn’t been for Women’s Place, I would have never made it through
law school. I have no question about that whatsoever. That’s when I got to know Judy, and
there are a lot of women that Judy probably remembers that I don’t. Marcia Hogan was one of
the main ones that I remember. There was a little gal named Kate Brown who I maintained
friendship with quite a while after that. She was from Michigan, really interesting gal. She’s a
potter in Mexico now, I think, in Taos. Marcia of course works on the (unintelligible) married
to Karl Englund. Diane was involved in it. Annie Maclay. I can’t remember exactly if Diane was
part of Women’s Place then or if she was doing something. She might’ve been someplace else,
but Annie Maclay was involved. Annie was real active. She and Judy were really different. So
anyway that’s what I did. Every week that would be my thing. It was like I can’t wait to get over
and put my time in, whatever my shift was.

I had a couple of women that I befriended there that I’m still friendly with. One of them in Jan
Van Riker (?), interesting gal from Missoula. I did a (unintelligible) divorce for her. She
represented herself and got a divorce. She’s in Helena now, an attorney in Helena. But
Women’s Place was great, and just before I left, when I came up... I moved up here in summer
of ’76. I think I got here right at the Fourth of July. We were going through all the conversation
about starting Blue Mountain Women’s Clinic. That got started right after I left and came up
here. I wasn’t involved in Blue Mountain, but that’s when there was kind of a decision made
in the Women’s Place. Do we want to do this because it’s really ratcheting up the whole
professionalism, or do we want to stay primarily volunteer-based and don’t intimidate people
by making them feel they have to have all kinds of professional training to be peer counselors?
It was kind of an exciting time.

I know when we first started there was the most eclectic group of people. It was amazing.
There were socialists, there were anarchists, there were strong Democratic Party people, a
couple of reformed Republicans like me—recovering Republicans. People who came from the
anti-war movement, people from the South, people from back East. A lot of the people, I think,
moved from Women’s Place out to other community organizing efforts and were really pretty
productive. So that was a great nurturing place, and I credit Judy with a lot of it. She and maybe
other people too, but I remember talking to her about it, had figured out that the Y was the
perfect entrée because it was already an accepted institution in the community. That’s one of
the things that I’ve always been really proud about the family planning clinic, is that.

Anyway, leap ahead to the family planning clinic. I moved up here in ’76. Judy and Barb Burke
who had been involved with me in Missoula... Barb was involved in Blue Mountain, and I know
Barb from way back. She was part of the old lefty eclectic gang down in the Bitterroot that
moved to Missoula when I was there in the ’60s. Anyway they figured out a way, and I’ve never

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quite figured out how they did this, but they figured out a way to get money from the state to come up here and do a feasibility study to determine whether or not we could do a family planning clinic here. I had a friend named Patty Stone who was a nurse, then a nurse-midwife, and she wanted to do it so Judy came up and met with all the docs and all the medical people and the school people and the social workers. Did this great community-based support group and got the clinic started. We had a doctor here who was excellent, who’s still our medical director after all these years.

DW: How did you all choose Libby?

AG: Well since I was here, primarily. I think it was because Libby was then very underserved. We didn’t have anything in the way of...I think Kalispell may have had one through the public health department, but we didn’t have any kind of organized birth control—dispensary.

DW: And how did you come to Libby?

AG: How did I come to Libby? Oh, well that’s kind of an interesting story. In the summer of 1974, I was going to drop out of law school after my first year. I couldn’t stand it. I’d just had it. I hated it. I had a professor there I was very close with, Larry Ellison (?). He came to me because he knew I was talking about quitting, and he said, “Ann, if I can get you a job for the summer so you don’t have to worry about money next year and get you a scholarship, would you stay?” I said okay, so he got me a job in Helena working for the Department of Institutions with juvenile delinquents—kids from reform schools—doing legislative drafting. Then I filed a lawsuit to force the state to send reform school people to college. Our plaintiff and our star pupil ended up going to college and getting a degree and now runs a group home in Missoula which was kind of exciting.

Anyway I had some friends in Butte that had a cabin outside of Helena in the woods, very primitive—outhouse, no plumbing—on a lake, and it was just idyllic. I spent the summer there, and I was just in love with the place. I just loved being there. So then in the spring of my second year of law school, they used to have a program and they don’t anymore. They used to have a program where they placed all the second-year law students in a law office for the summer, and the first choice for everybody was to work in a county attorney’s office somewhere, especially for people like me who wanted to be criminal defense lawyers so you could get an idea how the others had it. There was an advertisement for the Lincoln County public defender—the Lincoln County attorney—and I applied for it. The guy who was the county attorney called me, and he said “I’m going to be in Butte over Christmas, and I’d like to interview you.”

I said “Great.” So I met him when I was home visiting my mom. I met him and we went out and he interviewed me and he hired me. The reason I applied for it was because it was Lincoln County and I thought it was Lincoln. I thought if I can get this job I can live in that cabin again.
So I get hired, and I get ready to move to Lincoln. It’s about two weeks before the end of school and the gal who’s the secretary at the law school—she and I were real good friends—she said, “Ann, have you ever lived in a town where the Forest Service is the main employer?”

I said, “No, that sounds awful. Why would I want to do that?” because I didn’t know anything about the federal government. Now that I do know about it, I really have a reason to be afraid. I said, “No, why would I want to do that?”

She said “Well, where you going for the summer is run by the Forest Service. Libby is like the main Forest Service place in the state.”

I said “Libby? What are you talking about Libby?”

She said, “Well that’s where you’re going.” I had no idea, and I’d never been here.

AG: I loved it because it’s in Montana; I did never want to leave Montana but I didn’t like the idea that I always felt like I never left home. Because it’s so different from Butte, you know. It’s more like the Pacific Northwest. It’s kind of like living in Spokane or the Olympic Peninsula or something. It’s so wet—not this year—but usually it’s so wet. So I thought, “I can live here and be in Montana, but yet not feel like I didn’t ever left home,” because it’s so alien.

Also I just really liked Libby. Libby in 1976, 1975, was incredible. The dam had just been finished. It was the last year of the dam, and President Ford came and dedicated the dam. The place was just bustling, and it was full of blue-collar workers. The mines were going; the mill was going. The lumber mill had hundreds and hundreds of workers. W.R. Grace was going, Stark Co. hadn’t started yet. The loggers were all working overtime; schools were packed. It was a really upbeat, positive place and very working-class oriented. Real progressive politically in a lot of ways I find very interesting.

There were all these people who lived here two or three generations, and they kind of develop—because they’re sort of off the beaten track. They sort of develop their own kind of populism kind of like the east side, some of the populism on the east side. I remember the guy who was the head of post office calling me one day, and he was upset because some church had sponsored a school event. He thought that was a violation of church and state, and wouldn’t I do something. Real positive, progressive thinking. The labor unions here were great. I used to go and sit on the picket line, and they’d strike. It was called St. Regis then, of course now that I think about it. Hang out with these people. They had a really strong...had great representatives in legislature. There was a man from here named Art Sheldon who was one of the most progressive legislators that we ever had, a lot of really fun stuff going on.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
AG: I was involved in a couple lawsuits to preserve the Kootenai. We had this one project called Save the Kootenai to prevent a dam on the Kootenai, and we had another project. They were going to put a dam at the falls, and then we filed a law suit to stop the mine. We didn’t really want to stop the mine, but we wanted them to do litigation in terms of social services and tax. There were a lot of real progressive people that had moved here, kind of backed up the land a little bit in the ‘70s and I had a lot of friends that were just real interested in getting out there and raising hell and carrying on. I think it was just kind of duty. Barb’s idea was that this was a good place to start the family planning clinic because there wasn’t anything and because I was here. I think they thought, “Well that’s a good entrée because Ann knows these people.”

A lot of these people that were environmental people I got involved with, and they were on the original board so it was a real nice mix of people who were environmentalists but also kind of interested in or forced to be interested in women’s issues. It was just a real nice political connection. There weren’t as many fundamentalists who are just here then as there are now, although I started to say earlier I’m really proud of the fact that we have never had any kind of a backlash against the clinic. We’ve been real careful to provide real good quality medical services and because the standard of living here is so low a lot of people come here to just get medical services. They’ll come for their pap or their breast exam or their annual. The fact that we provide low income health services as well as contraception and unplanned pregnancy referrals, I think, has made it just a really acceptable thing. People just aren’t willing to trash it. Last year I came to work one day and somebody had tacked a sign outside that said “Children murderers,” or something like that, but we’ve been real lucky. We’ve never been picketed, never had any violence. I’ve never felt any problems with security at all.

So anyway, jump ahead to ‘85. We’ve always had problems maintaining this place financially because there just isn’t any money around here. We were in a facility that was owned by a dentist, and he was charging 800 dollars a month rent or something. We were on the second floor and they [clients] had to go up an outside stairway. I was just terrified somebody would get hurt, and so I bought this building in ‘85 for the sole purpose providing a place for the clinic. That reception area down there, I added that. Then in the basement there was a big furnace down there and all the heating ducts because it was primarily just used for storage. I took all that out, replaced it with baseboard heat so that we wouldn’t have to do that underneath the clinic. Then I charged them 300 dollars a month, which includes utilities, which were like 120 dollars a month for utilities around here because the water is really expensive. Then I do a lot of other supportive stuff, running the copy machine, doing services, but it’s nice because they don’t have a lot of overhead so they can continue to sort of function on a pretty small budget.

Of course it’s like everything else, you know, people got kind of burned out. One of our main sources of support is board members for instance, within the Forest Service. Forest Service people seem to have...They bring in ideas from other places, and they seem to have the time and the willingness to put in volunteer work. That’s usually our biggest draw when we have...
fundraisers are Forest Service people, and because of the cut backs in Forest Service we don’t have so many of those people coming in so that’s been kind of a shame. We just went through a transition. We hired a new director, and we’re always trying to figure out a way to do this without having to spend very much money. I’m kind worried right now because of the administration in Helena. I’m not sure what’s going to happen, if we’re going to be able to—

DW: So where does the money come from?

AG: Some of it comes from the state—from the Department of Health—and then we do charge on a sliding fee scale. We have donations. We have one big fundraiser every spring that brings in some money, and we have an auction that everybody comes to, all the medical community because they’re all supportive. It’s like I keep telling people. These doctors don’t want these people in their offices because they can’t afford to pay what the doctor has to charge, plus the kinds of problems that they have are real time-consuming. We end up providing a lot of supportive counseling services. I have a friend who’s a counselor who uses my office two days a week, and she uses the clinic as her entrance so we expose a lot of people to the clinic who probably never realized we were here so that’s another good thing, I like that. We go through periods of—

Right now the high school principal here is very interested in working with the clinic. She’s new, and so I’m going to go talk to her when school starts up again. She wants to have someone at the high school who does referrals over to the clinic so that’ll be good. The gal who’s the counselor here, my friend Alice, she was on the original board with the clinic back in the ’70s. She was the bookkeeper for a long time before we could hire a bookkeeper. She used to be the guidance counselor at the high school, and she was great because she would always make sure that the young women got their appointments. We’re kind trying to make a connection there again. We need to get back out and do some education, but I see in the paper that teenage pregnancy rates are going down, so hopefully here too. So that’s what happened with the family planning clinic, and I feel good about the fact that I can be supportive of that.

We did go through a period where we were providing a lot of different services that we don’t provide anymore. We used to have a support group for gay men here. We don’t do that. They go to Kalispell, I think. The gal that we just hired is from Texas and she has a lot of experience with HIV testing and treatment so I’ll be curious to see if she has an interest in doing more of that.

As far as my private practice goes, I think it’s difficult to characterize my private practice as a feminist practice. If I were in Missoula, I could do kind of like Joan Jonkel and specialize in labor law and employment discrimination, but I really can’t afford to do that here. It’s been a real struggle for me for the last 25 years, trying to decide if I want to stay in Libby or move to a place where I could specialize. Because even though it would nice to just get really, really good at one thing and do that and care about it and do it well, the problem with that is that it means that to the extent I’m able to do anything here I wouldn’t be able to do it if I were someplace else and

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there wouldn’t be anyone else who would be doing it here. I’m one of the few attorneys that has had the experience of going through all various facets of the human rights case, from the initial complaint through the Supreme Court decision. There really aren’t that many of us unfortunately, and I get referrals from all over the state. I don’t take very many of them because it’s so expensive to travel from here to anywhere to do anything, but what I try to do instead is I try to use my law practice sort of as a consciousness raising thing for people. I can’t remember now, but I’ve got a couple things I call threshold tests for people if they come in here, especially my male clients. If they don’t have the right kind of reaction, boy, I’m explaining things to them. If I don’t like what they have to say about stuff I won’t represent them. That’s the nice thing about being self-employed. I don’t have to. I try to work with women, a lot of whom I represent come from homes where two incomes in one home is barely enough to support them. Then when you’re going to splitting up and going to two homes with less income it’s really going to be a struggle. I really encourage women to get out of here basically, unfortunately, because there just isn’t anything for women to do here.

Our judge is funny. When we go to court, there’s always an issue in a divorce of custody. Women are always saying to me, “If I get divorced and I have custody of my kids and I want to move to Missoula to go to college, am I going to give up custody? Am I going to lose custody?” It can happen. The law says that if the non-custodial parent’s access to the child will be adversely affected by the other parent—the residential parent’s move—the non-custodial parent can come in and ask for change of custody. So even though, in 90 percent of the cases where that happens it’s not done in good faith—it’s done more as a control mechanism or used as a control mechanism—the potential is there. Our judge has said to a lot of these young women—I’ve heard him tell them in court—“If you decide you’re going to leave, if you want to go and better yourself, if you want to go to college or look for a better job, I’m not going to let the possibility of you losing custody stand in your way.” So he’s been very reassuring about that. Made them feel like it’s okay to do that. I’ll be curious to see as we go along because more and more men seem to think that they can be custodial parents and they want to do that.

The other thing I like to do for my clients I feel pretty positive about is a lot of women really would like a break. I know my friend Amy Gouth (?), she’s another woman attorney, she has two children. She has a three year-old and, I think, a six year-old now. She says, “I don’t understand what the big deal is about custody. I’d do anything to have my kids on the weekend and let their father take care of them during the week. The weekend is when we have the fun time. What is the matter with all these women who want to have their kids all week and let the dad take care of them on the weekend?” So I try to help my women clients if they feel like this is something that they’re interested in but they don’t know how to go about sharing custody. I try to talk to them positively about that.

I know a client right now who gave her husband custody. I can tell she’s really bothered by it because she doesn’t like the way he’s raising the kids, but yet she wants to improve her employment situation and she doesn’t want her kids to have to be uprooted from their home.
We’ve had a couple of real long talks about that. I respect her decision, but I know it’s causing her a lot of anxiety.

So there are little things like that. It’s not true. It would be facetious or mistaken to characterize my practice as a feminist practice. One of the funny things I hear is men coming here all the time, and they say, “Everybody tells me I need to hire you before my wife does.”

I’ll just say, “Well, if you want to hire me that’s fine, but if your wife calls me and she wants to hire me, she can hire me.” It’s like they want to get reservations ahead of time. I say, “No I don’t think so...” but then sometimes I think in those cases I probably actually...It’s helpful for the women to have me represent their husbands because we don’t take real hard line positions. We don’t take unreasonable positions. Whereas I’ve noticed that a lot of the male attorneys—I shouldn’t say a lot—but some of the male attorneys I’ve worked with, especially in Missoula more than here...When I was in Missoula at the law school, I ran a clinic at the law school that trained students in not only juvenile law but other aspects of law. We did a lot of divorce work. There were some attorneys in Missoula that I think are reliving their own divorce with every divorce—every man they represent. It’s like we have to go through the same battles over and over and over, the bitterness and the same accusations and the characterization of their wives is really negative, horrible sexist ways.

When I was working at the law school, Diane remembers this because we were all living in the same two-block area there for a while. Judy and Lynn and I and Diane were all there. We used to hang around a lot to together. When I was at the law school, we were representing this Native American gal from the Flathead, and she was married to a guy from Puerto Rico. She came in, and we got a restraining order against him with Jim Whelus. He was restrained from coming to the home. I’d made an appointment for her to come in and meet with this one client of mine, Debbie Parker...or student Debbie Parker. She was supposed to come in so we could talk about the property division, and she didn’t show up. We found out that he had come to the home and killed her, shot her. Went to the house and shot her...Or she went to the house. That was it. She went to the house to get...I’d asked her to get some paperwork. She went to get it, and he was sitting in the kitchen when she walked in and he killed her.

Yes. I remember Debbie saying, “I’m not going to practice law, I’m just not going to do it.” She did go on and she’s a very successful attorney now in Kalispell, but she was just devastated. I, of course, was devastated. It was a pretty awful, awful thing that happened, and I remember faulting the attorney for that guy because I think he told him it was okay to be there. Obviously he didn’t tell him to kill her, but I think he really reinforced this guy’s feeling of alienation, bitterness, and anger, whereas he could’ve stepped in and said, “You know, man, maybe you need to get some counseling and work on your problems.” That particular attorney, I told him at the time, I said, “If I could figure out a way to prove that you told him to violate the restraining order I would do it. I would get you disbarred,” because I really do think that was probably what was going on but I never could pinpoint it. So I think to a certain extent as I say...
when I represent men in divorces—and I represent a lot of boys in juvenile law I represent a lot of male clients—most of my clients in my criminal practice are men.

I’m a public defender so I get all the people who can’t afford an attorney. I guess it’s five-twelfths of the practice—almost half anyway—here and sharing with the other two attorneys. Another one has five-twelfths, and then one of them has one-sixth. I end up representing a lot of men. The hardest cases I have are sex offenses. They’re real hard. Generally my experience with men that I represent in sex cases is that they had done something that has...whether they confessed or they’ve been caught or they’ve made a record of what they’ve done. I rarely have a case where it’s a question of whether or not they’ve done what they’re accused of doing. So my goal is just sit down with them and say, “Okay look, you’ve got to get a sex offender evaluation. The evaluator will decide whether or not you’re a minimal to treatment, inside or outside of the prison. If you’re not a minimal to treatment outside the prison, then you’re going to have to go to prison.” It’s pretty cut-and-dried. There’s not a lot of legal work that you can do.

The cases that are the hard ones—I really do not do well with them and I shouldn’t be doing them—are the cases where a man is accused or a woman is accused for that matter of sexually offending against a small child because they’re not that hard to beat. It’s not that hard to impeach credibility of a child. I had one here not too long ago. It was a civil case. A little girl told her mom that her father had sexually molested her, and we wrestled around with that thing for about four months. We finally had to let it go because the social workers interviewed her, she wouldn’t say it. The cops interviewed her, she wouldn’t say it. We got her into counseling with a counselor, and she wouldn’t say it so at some point we just had to kind of give it up that, you know, this little girl is counseling still and hopefully if it did happen and this man does something again it will come to light. The counselor’s taught her a lot of tools, but those are the ones that just terrify me because those are usually the guys that the scenario is that they’re alone with the child. There are no witnesses. The child says or does something, and the typical defense is that something happened but somebody else did it or that nothing happened. If you’re appointed to represent someone in that situation, you’ve got a legal obligation to defend them to the best of your ability. That’s what I’ve always said about sex cases. The way you do that is you don’t do it by proving that your client is innocent, you do it by proving that the complaining witness is a liar. Unfortunately in sex case, whether it’s child or a young woman—which happens a lot, teenage girl or young woman, the classic date rape kind of case—it’s not that hard to prove that they’re liars or at least suggest that they are. So I’m real troubled by that.

One of the first cases I got when I first got out of law school was this young man who wanted me to represent him in a rape case. It was a date rape deal, and I wouldn’t do it. He ended up being convicted and sent to prison. I had just gotten into practice with another attorney who invited me to come up here and work with him. He was trying to retire and so basically it was, “You come and take over my practice.” He was so excited. I remember he called me when I was

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still in Missoula and said, “Oh I've got this great case for you,” because he knew I was interested in criminal defense.

I said, “I won’t do it.” He was furious. He was ready to kill me, but I said, “I’m sorry, I’m not going to do it. I will not represent him.” So I’ve been pretty lucky. The last sex offender I represented who insisted that he hadn’t done anything, I was working with him and he disappeared. I don’t know if he’s dead or if he took off for Canada or what. I was trying to do the best I could for him, and it’s hard. That’s the kind of case that’s really hard. It seems like in Missoula they make...here we don’t seem to have so much of these kinds of cases coming out of divorces, and I think the reason for that is because the social workers. When I first started practicing law, social workers would not touch in sex cases. They were just too hard. There was too much involved and there was too much family stuff and they just wouldn’t do it. Unfortunately in a lot of incest cases—I shouldn’t say a lot but in those days it seemed like in a fair number of sex offense cases—the mother was not supportive. So you ended with a situation where the child becomes the outcast. In fact, I remember putting on a presentation in Missoula, probably in ’82 or ’81 about that. I had this client who was an incest victim. She was 10 or 11, and the mother refused to kick the husband out of the home so she ended up being bounced from foster home to foster home. I remember being so distressed by the fact that this little girl, who was the innocent victim, was the one whose life was so unalterably affected by it to her detriment. It made me just sick. I remember when I gave the presentation I started crying, and the people in the room were like, “Oh god what’s this? German having a nervous breakdown?” But anymore I think what happens is that I think the social workers have been much more interested in intervening. I think the school people have gotten a lot better about identifying the signs of sex abuse. So by the time somebody comes in here to get a divorce, they’ve already identified the problem, and the wife is no longer covering for the husband or no longer feeling like she has to protect the husband.

It’s interesting to think, Dawn, my significant other, I guess for lack of a better word, is in prison. I go visit him in the visiting room. He’s on what’s called the low side. It’s the lower security side so a lot of the people who are on that side are not serious offenders. They’re not violent offenders. Almost every other person in the visiting room is a sex offender. They’re the ones that get the visits. They’re the ones whose families come. They’re very supportive—their wives are very supportive. It’s just bizarre to me. I don’t get it. I think to myself, “Okay, your husband has been convicted of molesting your child, and you maintain that relationship for what? For the good of the family, for what?” I don’t know. There’s a practice in the prison—there’s a mystique about this but it also happens to be true—that prisoners do not talk about why they’re in prison. So it’s theoretically possible that you could go to prison for a certain time, and no one would even know why you’re there. But there’s some kind of general knowledge that gets floated around, and people do know which are the sex offenders. It was very interesting to me when I’m visiting and looking around, they’re usually people who look presentable. They don’t have all the tattoos. A lot of the drug dealers and violent offenders are just covered in tattoos, and they’ve got weird hairdos and the way they move you can just tell. It’s like they’re trying to emulate some kind of street gang thing, but the sex offenders seem to
be very presentable, middle-class looking guys. They’ve got their families there and their kids, and it’s an interesting thing in our society that that offense is still so shrouded in family mystique.

I have a client I was talking to just the other day who just found out that her 25 year-old daughter was sexually offended by her husband for years when she was growing up in her home, and she didn’t know. She was just thunderstruck. She said the thing that upset her the most was that she didn’t know. “How could I have not known,” she said, “How could I have missed it?”

I said, “Well it’s possible that you chose not to see it because it’s hard to believe if you live in a house with somebody for years and this is going on that you wouldn’t have noticed something.” I don’t know that it’s all that unusual, and it’s one of the things in this business that I really feel like I can bring some insight into it because I’m a feminist, which I guess kind of gets back to one of your other questions. I would say that my self-definition of a feminist is a product of a lot of different exposures. I’ve gone through periods where I’ve just been ardent, and then I’ve gone through other periods where I haven’t been as involved. It usually depends on my surroundings. I’m one of these people, I’m sort of like one of those...What do you call them—animals that change their coloration depending—?

DW: Chameleon?

AG: Chameleon! If I’m in Missoula hanging around with my feminist friends, I get real interested and involved, and then when I’m up here I just don’t have that same interaction and so my involvement, in terms of my personal day-to-day stuff, I become less involved and less active. I’m not uncomfortable switching from one to the other. For instance, if Judy were to...We used to have a joke about how I was a cave feminist. They always invite me to speak at these seminars, at these panels, because I always was this cave feminist, but I’m not uncomfortable doing that. I don’t think that I’m at all politically unaware of what’s going on with the women’s movement. It seems like here just out of self-preservation more than anything I have to kind of have that as the backdrop but not be the forefront. Again if I could move to Missoula, I would have a sign on my front door that said Women’s Legal Services, and I wouldn’t have a problem with it at all. Practically, I can’t do that here.

One of the things that I’m really proud of is that I helped raise this boy. He’s not my biological son. He’s the son of my boyfriend whose mother was killed. I got involved with him when he was 7 and he’s 26 now. He and I regard one another as mother and son, and I am going to legally adopt him. He’s legally adopted right now by his grandfather who’s living in Minnesota, and at some point I’m going to be able to legally adopt him. I’m real proud of the fact that he has a positive attitude toward women based on his growing up around me and my friends. That makes me feel good. I think that’s one person who probably otherwise wouldn’t have had that.
I think there are some women in town who look to me as a role model. I had one little gal who works at the courthouse, she called me one day, and she said, “Ann, you didn’t sign this paper you brought over. You forgot to sign it.”

I said, “Oh you just sign it, can’t you sign my name to it?”

She said, “I would love to sign Ann German on something!” So that was kind of cute. I thought that was cute. It’s funny because I think my reputation for being a “woman’s libber,” as they would call it here is probably a little exaggerated compared to what I actually do every day, but I do think that there is that kind of effect is important to some young women in terms of modeling and role modeling. I try to have woman high school students work for me and sort of encourage them. I had one gal that worked for me here for two years. She’s at the University of Montana. Whenever she would come home, she would look for me, and I feel real good about...I think I was able to give her some of the positive ideas about what she wants to do with her life. So those little one-on-one things seem to be, up here seem to be, pretty important.

Little things like when we have a jury, I know that the judge always refers to the “foreperson.” He never talks about the foreman. I know that I was the person who started that, and now it’s just done and people don’t think about it. Little things like that. When I was in Missoula, before I came up here, I did practice a little bit down there and then again in ’80 and ’82 when I was there, Marny McLean (?) and I had a lot of practice together, and Marny works at the county attorney now. She’s a great gal. If you ever get to meet her, she’s a really neat gal. Do you know her? Marny McLean (?)?

DW: No I don’t.

AG: I think she does a lot of the environmental stuff. Like she was trying to get...What’s that place out there at Frenchtown? Stoffer? Anyway she was trying to get one of those guys closed. She’s done a lot of air pollution stuff, but she’s a great gal. She came up and lived with me here for a while. I was in Missoula teaching philosophy. We had a law practice together. One of the things I would never be able to practice law in is weather because I don’t have the clothes. That’s one of the great things about living in Libby. I noticed when I first moved here. I came up here from Missoula, and everybody’s dressed to the nines. I came up here and I was the only woman in town who had a dress because this is a working class community and a lot of these women are out working in the woods with their husbands. One of my very first divorce cases. When you do a divorce, on the front page you list the name of the people and their occupation, and this woman was a logger. She worked with her husband and I asked her what her occupation was and said “hooker,” so I wrote hooker on the petition. She hooks the logs with the chain you know. Then I thought, “I love this! That I can actually put “hooker” on a divorce petition, and it doesn’t have any sexist connotations.” So being in Libby is a real easy place to not fall into the trap of being caught up in a lot of that modern woman stuff, I don’t know what you call that, but you don’t have to do that. In fact if you do it, you’re really kind of out of place here. Max Baucus was here the other day with some of his staff people, and you could see

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those people, you could tell them a mile away because they were really dressed up. Little things like that, I think kind of contributes to a way of being that makes it a little bit easier to do this work. I used to kid people about how the reason I wear...I don’t ever wear a bra, and I said I wear a bra to court so I can remember not to say fuck in a courtroom. If I wear a bra and I feel really uncomfortable, I remember not to say fuck in court. (laughs) Otherwise I might just—

DW: That’s probably a good thing.

AG: Oh it is, yes it is. One of the very first cases I had here, I got appointed to represent this kid who come over from Idaho. When I moved here, Idaho...You had to be 21 to drink regular beer, otherwise you had to drink 3-2 beer. These kids used to come over from Idaho and drink in Troy [Montana]. One night this one boy got busted. He was raising hell, and they arrested him, He got a DUI or something. Well, his friends came down to the jail in Troy and were trying to get him out and take him back to Troy, and they wouldn’t let him go. They kept standing around outside, but they wouldn’t let them in. They kept standing around outside the jailhouse yelling. One of them finally in exasperation said, “If this is the justice system, the Constitution’s fucked!” So they arrested him for disorderly conduct because he swore at them. I got appointed to represent him, and I got up in front of the jury and I said, “Now you’re going to hear some words that are kind of offensive today, and I want to make sure nobody here would be so offended by the use of this word that you would have to rule against my client. Is there anybody here who’s so offended by profanity that they couldn’t sit and listen to it?” A couple people raised their hand, and they were excused, so then I said, “Okay, the people that are left apparently you don’t have a problem with profanity so I’m going to tell you something about this case. This case has to do with somebody saying fuck.” Well this was back in 1976, and people didn’t use the word fuck very loosely. Everybody in the jury just looked at me. Their mouths dropped, because here I am this 25 year-old hippie, dancing around in front of them. I kept using the f-word over and over again, until they got so used to they found him not guilty. It was like who cares. That was just kind of an interesting thing.

Another funny story that I used to tell about being an attorney, in 1977 I went to Seattle to the National Lawyer’s Guild Convention. The Lawyer’s Guild is the national organization I belong to. I don’t belong to the ABA. The Lawyer’s Guild is a left organization started back in the ‘40s, I think, by black people because they wouldn’t let black people in the American Bar Association. Then it was the double-travelers, all the Commies. Anyway I went to this national convention in Seattle in 1977, and it was great. They had women there who were from the Cuban Supreme Court speaking, which was incredible because no one from Cuba was even coming here then. I remember they had a women’s section meeting, a women’s caucus or something meeting, and there were women there who were these high powered lawyers from all over the United States that were winning all these great cases. One of them had just won this really important rape case in California. This woman who was raped and went back two days later and killed the guy who raped her. She got off on self-defense because she said the thought of him being alive made her so uncomfortable that she had to do something. The fact that she didn’t do it right

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when she was being raped was excused by the jury. It was a really revolutionary thing in those days.

DW: When was that again?

AG: Seventy-seven [1977]. It was a really interesting case. It was so classic Watershed case for political law. Her first lawyer was a white guy, an older guy, who had represented the Black Panthers, Angela Davis. He was very well regarded as an excellent, radical left-wing criminal defense lawyer. He’d done a lot of anti-war stuff, and he might’ve even been part of the Chicago (not sure of the rest). He was a big deal. He defended her on the ground of mental disease, temporary insanity. That she was raped on Tuesday and she went and killed the guy on Thursday, and that she was temporarily insane because she’d been raped, kind of a post traumatic stress disorder thing. She was convicted on the grounds...When you’re acquitted on the ground of mental disease or defect, you’re not let free. You’re made to go to an institution. So she appealed it. She got another trial and she got this feminist lawyer—this woman who was quite a bit younger and really hadn’t tried very many cases. She came in with this theory. I can’t remember the name of it. I can find it. Anyway it was name that people were using then that it was self-defense. It wasn’t some insanity thing. It was self-defense. That she had a right to go and kill this guy because even though he wasn’t currently, at the minute that she shot him, he wasn’t...Technically with self-defense, you can only react with the amount of force that you need to repel the force acting toward you. Because the rape happened on Tuesday, she knew where he was and her concern and fear that he would do it again, it was self-defense and she was acquitted on the grounds of self-defense. It was so interesting at this convention because here you had the old guard, all these people from the ‘30s and ‘40s—these radical people who’d been through the McCarthy era and had done all this really radical political work—and then these younger attorneys who were saying, “We’re not going to be characterized as mentally ill because we want to hurt somebody. It’s perfectly understandable and sane for us to want to hurt somebody. It’s the opposite of being mentally ill.” So there’s a really interesting watershed because you have these two amazing...It caused a lot of dissension because you had this huge uproar and carry-on. “You’re dissing this guy, and you should have respect for him.” “He’s a sexist asshole, and he was just trying to treat this gal like she was some stupid little...” It was very interesting.

Anyway, I went to this caucus meeting and we talked about that among other things, but the main topic of conversation was whether or not we should shave our legs. You know because the whole idea is if you get up in front of the jury and you’re representing somebody, is it fair to your client to have the jury make a decision based on the fact that they don’t like the way that you look. People like me, I have never shaved my legs, but I don’t have a lot hair on my legs. Women with dark hair or women who’ve shaved their legs all their lives, you develop hair on your legs if you shave it. They were in a real quandary, because nylons with hair under them are not attractive. So then we came up with the—which again in those days wasn’t that obvious—we came up with the compromise that we would wear dark nylons. It was like, I mean here we are these high power legal reps, and I thought, “How ridiculous!” I remember I said to

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somebody, “You know, if men had to wear nylons to court, they would invent nylons that don’t run. The only reason that nylons run is because men don’t have to wear them. If they were required to wear nylons, they would’ve figured out a way. We can put people on the moon but we can’t figure out how to invent nylons that don’t run.” I said one of two things would happen, nylons wouldn’t run or men would get rid of the rule if they had to wear them. Men would never! I mean I know all these women lawyers that are really, they’re excellent—if you could have a conversation with them over the phone—but then you see them in court and they’re self-conscious about the way they look. And you can tell it affects their performance.

DW: Yes.

AG: You know, and I wish we were like London. I would love for us to wear those gowns and wigs. Everybody had to wear exactly the same thing, and it would even the playing field because I know that this stuff—juries are affected by it, judges are affected by it. There’s a standard joke among the male judges. When I was teaching at the law school, I had a student who was very inappropriate. She came to court. She had a client; she was doing a course. I went with her to train her. She shows up in court with this shirt slit up to her hip and what I call “fuck-me shoes” on—these stiletto ankle shoes. She looked like a call-girl. She looked like a women of the night. She gets up and does her divorce, and she’s a bright gal. She’s not stupid, well-educated. The judge comes up to me afterwards—I’m the supervising attorney—and he says, “Jeez, German, how do you rate?”

I looked at him, and I said, “Judge Harkin, don’t you understand? It’s not interesting to me.” But it never occurred to him that I wouldn’t be as titillated as he was, and because I was sort of on his level because I’m the supervising attorney, that he could make this crack that was totally inappropriate. I told her, I said, “Honey, you have got to knock this off because people aren’t going to take you seriously.” Well, I don’t know if they do or not, but I’m really bothered by the fact that it just seems that women’s...the appearance that women have in court, their physical appearance. I mean, yes in some cases if the appearance is one of being a healthy person, I guess, that’s fine but the sexy stuff is like oh.

I know people make jokes about women, pretend that women do well in law because of their willingness to hop in the sack with somebody. I don’t know if it’s happening or not. I just know when I was teaching at the law school that was one of my big peeves. That was just a delightful experience because the male students decided...They had Playboy posters in their study areas, and I would go at night and take them down and throw them out. They’d put them back up, and I’d go in at night and take them because I had a key to the building. Finally, they went to the Dean, and they wanted me prosecuted for criminal mischief or some darn thing. I’ll never forget what the Dean said. I just thought this was so classic. I said, “Look, you can even send me my paycheck at home and I’ll stay home, or you can get rid of this sexist stuff because I have to work here and I have to be in these study cubicles.” Because in the clinic program you go and get the students when the clients come and say, “Come on, your client’s here.” I had to go down to the study cubicles. I wasn’t able to avoid them. I said, “I’m not looking at that stuff so
you either decide if you want to send me my paycheck and I’ll just stay home, or if you want to get rid of this stuff.”

I’ll never forget, it was Jack Madding. He looked at these guys, and he said, “You know, Ann’s kind of like Martin Luther King.”

I remember I looked at my skin, and I said, “What! I don’t think so,” but that was the only analogy he could come up with.

He said, “You know, she’s right,” because I told them I was going to sue for sexual harassment on the job. Anyway their way of dealing with me then was they had a smoker every year at the end of law school, and they’d make fun of the professors. I didn’t like them when I was in law school. I thought they were cruel, and I wouldn’t go to them. I didn’t go to those, but they did a smoker about me. These guys got up there, and the way they portrayed me was that I was a lesbian and that all the women students that I worked with were lesbians—they were all my lovers. One of them got up and said, “What she needs is ten inches of swinging meat.”

DW: Oh my.

AG: Yes. I was going to go after them. I was going to get them kicked out of the law school, but I didn’t. Anyway Judy and I had this fantasy that we were going to have one of the gals who was on the basketball team for the Grizzlies come over. We were going to write “ten inches of swinging meat” on her arm and have her come over and walk up to one of these guys, and say “I understand you’re being mean to my little friend Ann.” I don’t know if we actually did that or talked about doing it. I can’t remember now but it was great. It was like ten inches of swinging meat, we’ll give you ten inches of swinging meat.

DW: That’s a brilliant idea.

AG: Yes isn’t that great. Well, the other brilliant idea that I had when I was teaching at the law school which Diane was intimately involved with was I started the Montana Moral Majority, did you hear about that?

DW: [indicates no]

AG: Oh yes. Jerry Falwell was coming to Montana. He was coming to Montana to collect money, he was going on a state by state tour of the United States and promoting this Moral Majority thing and he lined up an appearance in Helena in the summer of ’81. Bari Burke who teaches at the law school had just moved here, she’d been here for about a day. I got her and picked her up at the airport from Los Angeles, and she was just blown away. She’d never been out of Los Angeles, and there was this Jewish gal from Los Angeles like, “What the hell am I doing in Montana?”
So I went and I got here, and I said, “Come on, we’re going to Helena.” Well, what I did was, I called up and found out the Moral Majority wasn’t registered in Montana as a foreign corporation, and so we reserved the name and then I incorporated it. In the corporation papers our mission statement was that because the majority of Montanans that ratified the Montana Constitution that promotes the ideas of gender equality and privacy that we are the Moral Majority—Moral Majority is pro-choice. So I registered this corporation, and we went over to this rally. I walked up to him with my little corporate thing that I got from the Secretary of State—my seal in corporation. I handed it to him, and I said, “You are forbidden to do business in the state of Montana. You cannot collect money in the state of Montana because we are the Montana Moral Majority and you are not registered to do business.” So they had to break up the rally. It was on the capitol steps, and I remember standing up in the...I was in the window of the capitol, and a guy named Frank Haswell who was in on the Supreme Court, looked like somebody’s grandfather—he was cute, he always wore a bowtie—very sprightly man in his 70s—he walked over and said “Ann, what’s going on?” I told him. He just cracked up. He thought it was the greatest thing he’d ever seen in his life, and the Governor was Tom Judge or Ted...I don’t know, but I remember standing by the governor’s office. Falwell came out, and he was furious because they told him he was going to have to leave.

DW: Oh my, sure.

AG: Yes, so then we got a lot of play in paper. People sent me money. It was pretty interesting. We had checks in the mail, these unsolicited checks. I didn’t cash them because there was nothing we could do with them. Diane was real interested in that, and a lot of the people wanted us to keep it going but I finally just let it lapse. Yes, that was pretty fun.

There was a guy who came to speak at the law school, his name was Arthur Connoy (?). Arthur Connoy was one of the original lefties. He was the guy who argued the Pentagon papers case. He argued the Watergate case in front of the U.S. Supreme Court—the tapes case. Excellent, excellent civil rights attorney. Little tiny guy from Rutgers, and he’s famous for going to jail for his clients and doing all this real political work, just a great urban Jewish guy. One of my students at the law school, he and I arranged for him to come and speak to the law school class. Andy Small, who’s also Jewish, one of the few Jewish kids in the law school, and that was kind of neat. So anyway, I went and picked him up at the airport. He was probably in his late 60s then, and as I say, urban Jewish guy, probably had never been out of the city. On the way to Missoula, he gets in the car. He’s got this really thick New Jersey accent, and he says, “So, what do you do for political stuff in Montana?”

I looked at him, and I said, “Well I’m the head of the Montana Moral Majority.” He’s like looking for the door handle trying to figure out...he thought he’d been kidnapped or something. I explained it to him, and he just thought it was brilliant. We got calls from a couple of different states that people wanted to copy. I have to say it was not original with me. What happened was I read in the paper that they did that in Hawaii, when Falwell went to Hawaii some of the
gay guys there went and registered the name so he couldn’t...So that’s where I got the idea. So anyway, I don’t know how much more time we have...

DW: Just about five more minutes.

AG: So anyway as far as my current feeling about being a feminist, I guess in some ways I’d like to be complacent about it and say that I don’t need to be as outspoken as I have been in the past because we’ve made such great strides, but I’m really troubled by what’s going on in the political scene national and locally. I guess I’m sort of feeling like it’s really important for women to continue to be vocal and outspoken about feminism. In the very beginning of the movement, I used to like to tell people I thought I was kind of a queen bee because I always felt that I had been really privileged to have in a family with all women because I had observed so many of my women friends, and male friends for that matter, modifying their behavior around their fathers. I mean we would go home after school, and I would see my old friends with their moms. Then when the dad came home, everything would just change. It would be like a 180-degree change, temperature would drop, talking would stop. I never learned to do that. I never learned to get along, I never learned to be different, I never learned to do that stuff. So I used to kind of like to say as a matter of pride that I thought I was sort of queen bee to the extent that I didn’t really have to overcome a lot of that. My women friends who really were more male-centered growing up, I think, have a lot bigger job to do to get to where they want to be and that’s one of the things that I think that’s real disturbing right now is how so many...It just strikes me that so many of the existent—

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
AG: —one of the things that’s a concern to me looking back on the women’s movement. I personally pinpoint my...It wasn’t really a conversion, more of a consciousness-raising. I would pinpoint it at about the time that I got involved with that Women’s Health Collective in ’70, ’71, even though there had been many things up to that point that made it clear to me that my being a woman was going to be a problem as far as what I wanted to do in life. Which reminds me of another anecdote I’m going to tell you before I forget.

When I first came here, the judge who was here was just a complete jerk. In fact I ran against him. He was awful. He made a comment to me one day. It wasn’t the judge who was here when I first moved here. I moved here to have the judge that was here because I’d practiced in front of him that summer I was here and I really liked him. Bob Keller was his name—is his name. Then he quit right after I got here. He retired—resigned—and went to work in Helena because he had kids in college. He and I later ended up practicing together, and then he became the judge again here but I really, really liked him. Back in those days he was one of the few judges in the state who really understood civil rights, and I just really liked him. But he quit and then they run in this guy named Holter from Bozeman who I just had huge problems with. I ended up running against him in ’86.

By that time I was hooked up with this guy that is in prison. I was involved with Jerry. The fact that I was living with the man and wasn’t married to him, and the fact that he was convicted of murdering his wife and was going to prison for years. This man’s campaign slogan was that he was “emotionally strong and morally upright.” So I went to a public speaking engagement one night during the election, and I knew I wasn’t going to win. It was pretty obvious at that point, but I’d made a promise to myself the next time he ran I would run against him because he had discriminated against me. That’s why I ended up teaching at the law school because he wouldn’t hire me to be the public defender. I applied for it in ’80. The man who’d done it was quitting. I applied for it, and he said, “I’m not going to put you and have these guys go to prison and say I was prosecuted by the best prosecutor in the state and they gave me a woman as a lawyer.” I tried to sue him and then I realized I probably couldn’t because the one lawyer I talked to about suing him agreed with him so I said “Okay fine.”

So anyway I decided to go work at the law school instead, but I promised myself that when he ran again I’d run against him. By that time it was ’86 and my boyfriend was in prison. It’s a long story, but he was getting ready to be sent to prison. So he had his campaign slogan that was “emotionally strong and morally upright,” and I went to—I don’t know if it was League of Women Voters or what—but I went to some speaking occasion. I got up and said, “I don’t know how many of you have seen my opponent’s slogan, ’emotionally strong and morally upright’ but as far as I can tell that just means he’s a Republican with an erection.” Yes. But he is the one who said to me one day in court, he said “You’ve got pretty good brains for a girl.” I guess if you really care about yourself that would be when you would quit. That would be when you take your hand out of the meat grinder and say “Why do I keep doing this?”

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But what I wanted to say, going back to the beginning. The thing that scares me about what’s going on now politically and with women is that so many of the things that were so immediate in the ‘60s. It’s like I’ve always told Judy, it’s really easy to organize against something. It’s really hard to organize for something. You can mobilize people in opposition to anything, stop the war, stop illegal abortions, stop wife abuse, but it’s really hard to maintain a status quo. It’s really hard to argue to support the status quo because everybody wants to just sigh and lean back and say “Well, at least we won that battle.” I think one of the things that’s disturbing to me is so many of the things that were so immediate back in the ‘60s, like the friend who dies from the illegal abortion or the wife who’s killed by the husband. The wife who’s beaten by the husband and no one wants to take her name, I guess more appropriately, doesn’t think they have any right interfering with the family. Or the daughter who’s anorexic and nobody wants to say anything, or the son who’s gay and is terrified to...you know commits suicide. Those kinds of things that we don’t have as daily occurrences anymore, at least as obvious as they were back then. It’s troublesome to me because I think young women really do not appreciate what they need to do to maintain the progress that’s been made. I know sometimes when I talk to young women I get the feeling it’s just falling on deaf ears. They don’t have a clue what I’m talking about. I know based on their attitudes and my attitude that I’m probably a lot more aggressive than they are, but their perception of me is that I’m this little fuddy-duddy and I don’t understand. That’s scary to me. I guess one of the things as a feminist that I try to do now is just talk about and remember and remind people of those things.

Like the other night, this conversation that we were just having about the family planning clinic. They’re trying to figure out a way to make it less expensive to run by using somebody else’s bookkeeping and reception services, and I keep saying “You don’t understand that our original impetus, what we were trying to provide in 1977 was more controversial perhaps than it is now, but to provide absolutely confidential, quality medical care to 14 year-olds, it’s a big challenge. We can’t just assume that these girls are going to come in here because they have for the last 20-something years.”

So that to me seems to be the thing that we need to do is sort of, kind of keep repeating the same lessons without becoming jaded and dated, but get out there and talk about those experiences that we had.

I know when I went to the women’s history thing in Helena...I can’t remember what it was called, but it was to celebrate women’s suffrage. I took my mom. My mom is 90 now, and I took my mom. My mother has never been terribly political but like I told you before—this concept that she is open to new ideas—it was real fun to sit and listen to her talk about what it was like for her growing up. I think that is one of the most important things that we can do is what you’re doing, is to go around and preserve the stories of people who helped make some of these changes so that we don’t lose sight of what it was that gave rise...to make the political movement more organic. I’ve sort of given up on the idea that law is a very effective tool for social change on a macro scale and that may not be true. Obviously what’s going on in Libby...
right now with W.R. Grace is the result of lawsuits so you can see what that’s been...but I think on a micro scale as I say what I try to do is—just in my practice every day with my clients—try to help them feel better if they’re a young woman and they don’t know for sure if they should get pregnant, get married, or go off to school. Feel better about that decision if they decide to go to school. For the young man who really doesn’t want to be in the military and doesn’t like guns and doesn’t want to have to be macho—little things like that. That’s kind of my focus right now in terms of my feminist beliefs. To try to stay on top of some of the stuff that’s coming out of Helena. I’m on the board of the indigent program here, and so I get to help make decisions about funding for low-income programs. That’s my only challenge. There’s only so much money, and of course I’m involved with the Family Planning Clinic. I’m on the board of the group home. I’m on the board of Families and Partnership. The group home right now is kind of in a dormant status because we’ve lost our funding there, but we’ve still got an organization and hopefully someday we can get it running again. Again, just kind of clinging to those different forms of perspective that might not otherwise be there. So I don’t know. Do you have any other questions?

DW: (laughs) No, I think you gave a very great—

AG: Did I cover it? (laughs)

DW: —a very great story, representation of what you’ve been doing and up to very current.

AG: Well you know, what I would like to do sometime for myself is...My grandmother in Butte—my mom’s mom. Her mother was from Wales, and I understand she never really learned to speak English that well. My mother remembers her sitting in the kitchen alone by herself which seemed to be the standard pattern. I can remember in Butte growing up and going to people’s houses, and it always seemed like there was a grandparent in the back kind of talking some foreign language to themselves, Serbian, Finnish, or something. She had ten kids. My grandmother was born in ’75 so I’m thinking she must’ve been about nine, and I think she was one of the oldest so I think her older brother was 14 so he was the oldest. So she had ten kids ranging in age from 14 to newborn, and she must’ve been in her 30s—late 30s—and her husband was down in the mines working with the son that was 14. It was a classic story. It’s right out of that Welsh story. It’s a classic story of these people. The son goes down the shaft with the cart of ore, and he comes back. There’s a pile of rubble with his dad’s arm sticking out. So she was widowed in her 30s with ten kids, in Butte, in 1884 when there was no welfare. Somehow or another her baby died, but the other nine kids survived. My grandmother at the age of nine went off and was an indentured servant. She went and lived on somebody’s farm somewhere for room and board. She had to go up near Whitehall somewhere, I guess, and be their kitchen help or whatever. I don’t know how she lived. I think to myself, “How in the world did she live with all those kids and no job? What did she do?” Then my grandmother, who was her daughter, lived to be 98 and she had incredible jobs.

Ann German Interview, OH 378-023a, b, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
When I was a kid my grandmother owned a hotel. My grandparents owned a hotel. My grandfather was an alcoholic, and he had a lot of problems. He was a mine supervisor, but he was always getting fired because he would get drunk and tell somebody off. He was a brilliant man, and he didn’t keep his mouth shut. They had an interesting marriage because he was an Irish Catholic and she was a Protestant. When he married her, his family disowned him so I have all these Irish Catholic relatives in Butte that I’ve never met because they wouldn’t have anything to do with our family. Anyway, she ended up being the main person in this hotel. I’m thinking I was born in ’49 so she would’ve been 75, 74, when I was born. I remember until she was 84 because they moved out to our house when I was nine just about a year before my dad died. She would be out on the third floor of this hotel in Butte washing the windows, hanging out the window washing these windows, and she was 84 years old. It was one of those horrible old hotels where everybody shared a bathroom, and I can remember a couple times we’d go in the rooms and there’d be dead people. Some gal’s hung herself from the ceiling, or there’s been a drug overdose or something. I mean, it was just awful people.

DW: What did we call them? We didn’t call them junkies. There was another name for drug addicts back then?

AG: Potheads or something, but it was very urban. Butte in those days was very urban. It was interesting looking back on it. Public transportation—everybody went on public transportation. Very few people had their own cars, or if they did they didn’t drive very much except on the weekends. You’d go everywhere on the buses. Buses every five minutes all over town, diesel smoke hanging in the air. She would wash the sheets from these rooms—these bedrooms. There were probably a dozen, well 15, bedrooms altogether on these two floors. She would wash them by hand in one of those big mangles in the bathroom, and then she would blue the sheets in the bathtub. I remember walking in there and seeing the bluing and thinking how neat that was. Then she would wring them by hand and hang them. She would get up on the roof and hang these. I think about this woman. What an incredible thing! She died when she was 98. She wasn’t hospitalized. She never was hospitalized. Finally her last six months of life she ended up being hospitalized. Then my mom is 90, and she is very mentally alert. Physically she has some problems. She’s very weak and frail. My mom was never anybody to get much physical exercise. She just kind of got very frail. There’s a picture of her, I’ll show you. This is her 90th birthday. She is one healthy woman. This is my sister’s kids. So I’m looking at these women in my family, and I’m thinking ‘I’ve got really incredible women ancestors.’

DW: And you’re part of that.

AG: Yes, I am. I am the one. My decision not to have my own kids. It’s so interesting to me. My mother never faulted that; she never encouraged me to have my own kids. She always felt real good about it. In fact, I think when my sister had kids she was kind of worried about it. I remember her saying “How can you bring children into this world?” I mean she is realistic. She’s not sentimental, she’s realistic about stuff but it was great not to have that pressure. Never any pressure to get married. The only pressure I got was not to get hooked up with some jerk which
unfortunately she probably thinks I have. So yes, I’ve just been really lucky. I think what it would have been like if I’d been...I used to have a running joke about how if my dad had lived, if he hadn’t died, I would’ve been a terror to manage because he and I had a real clash at wills. I think that’s a huge thing with young people, role modeling in the family.

I remember when my sister had her baby, she called me and she said, “What can I do so that she doesn’t have problems?”

I said, “Make sure she understands she can talk about and think about anything. She can express any opinion about anything, anytime. She shouldn’t have to be worried about what she says.” That to me is the main thing. I used to go to this dermatologist in Missoula when I was growing up about once every three months. I had pretty bad acne, and he was one of these guys. I don’t know what he was thinking, but after I graduated from high school I went back to see him. He said, “Oh your skin looks good, what are you doing?”

I said “I don’t know I’m on birth control.”

He said “You are on birth control! You are depriving the gene pool of your genes.” He said, “All these inferior people are having kids, and you’re the one who should be having them.” I was just blown away. I just looked at him, and I thought, “Now there’s an interesting idea!” It’s like, yes, buddy. But thank god I never had that pressure. I really do owe a huge debt of gratitude to my mom for, as I say, making it possible for me to be and think and say.

Okay, that’s it, bye. Do you have anything else?

[End of Interview]