

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 389-004**

**Interviewee: Nancy Erickson**

**Interviewer: Dawn Walsh**

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**Project: Missoula Women for Peace Oral History Project**

*Note: Interviewee's full date of birth has been restricted.*

Dawn Walsh: Nancy, the first question that I'd like to ask you is to just note when and where you born.

Nancy Erickson: In Toledo, Ohio, which is in northern Ohio, in 1935 [REDACTED].

Dawn Walsh: And then I'd like to ask you some questions about your growing up. As a child growing up your family's interactions or conversations or activities influenced your feelings about peace and affected your becoming a peace activist?

Nancy Erickson: Actually, no. I grew up in a Republican household. My mother and father left Ohio when I was six. My father left a manufacturing business in which he was involved, and he decided he wanted to go back into ranching. He had been as an immigrant child on a ranch, and he loved it. So, he bought a ranch. It was the James Hill Ranch, actually, in Montana, and we moved to Montana. So I grew up, really, in Livingston, Montana in the grade schools there. And eventually when I was 12—11 years old—we moved to the ranch in a log home in which they installed electricity, and we didn't have a telephone. But those were really interesting events in my life. My mother and father were not activists at all, I would say. It was a nuclear family, and that just wasn't part of their lives. My dad was very interested in creative ranching. He tried all different kinds of grasses, and he had a wonderful ranch. It was a great thing for us to grow up in that environment, but as far as activism—no. What happened was that eventually we moved to Billings. He sold the ranch. He was quite ill with leukemia and didn't know it at the time.

I became really active in student council and in all kinds of school activities. It was just something that interested me. I voted when I graduated at 18, and I was still probably a Republican. It was really later when I met my husband—I went to school at Carlton for a while, and then left for some social life at the University of Iowa and to pursue my studies in zoology, and I met my husband there. We were together in almost all of these political things, which occurred. Linus Pauling, for instance, came to speak at the University of Iowa, and we both went to listen to him. We both changed, we both really changed and became active in various things, but it took a while. It truly was when we came to Missoula, later, because we went to Germany for a year and went to Texas where he was a post-doctoral fellow. Living in Germany was also very revealing. It really, you know, helped. It helped us both. But it was really coming to Missoula in 1965 that we changed. We had friends here, and the friends turned out to be

the peace group of people, many of them. But there were others at the university—it was a time of incredible activism here. Anything occur to you that you want to ask?

Dawn Walsh: Yes. I want to go back to the encounter Linus Pauling, and ask what, you know, what he was talking about at that time? You said it changed you, so what was it and how did it change you?

Nancy Erickson: It was an anti-nuclear talk, and I was studying chemistry, and my husband has a Ph.D. in chemistry so we were both understanding—beginning to understand—the ramifications. And we were also very interested in learning the truth about what had happened with the atom bomb. And we had friends, but they were not as inclined as we were in that direction.

Dawn Walsh: So it seems like it was an intellectual pursuit of understanding?

Nancy Erickson: Yeah, it really was at that time. And it was kind of, again, our lives were busy in doing other things, and we eventually did get married. I was also studying nutrition. I came back after my degree in Zoology and came back to study nutrition, and we resumed our relationship then. I think it was at that time, probably, that Linus Pauling talked. But anyway, it wasn't articulated as much as was felt, and it just grew over the years, yeah. Because both of us came from households that were not activists in any way—I mean not in any way. Of course, this kind of thinking led to incredible disagreements—I mean it was schism that was never healed with my family, and Ron's mother and father died in 1971. They would have been more sympathetic than my mother, I think. But, you know, it was a schism. It was terrible.

Dawn Walsh: And I'd also like to ask more about Germany. And you said that is was—I can't remember what you said.

Nancy Erickson: Well it was a changing event. Of course, we were very young, and we had a baby, and it was a wonderful time for us both. Ron got to do what he loved most, which was research, and I got to learn a language, which I wanted badly to do. We had a great deal of fun, but we did meet people who had been through the War, our neighbors. It took them awhile for them to become friendly with us. Ron had one of the first NATO fellowships—something we laugh about now—but we had enough money to live on, and we lived well in Germany on that money. We had a two bedroom that was beautiful and airy and, you know, our baby was healthy, etc., etc. Well it was just interesting seeing bombed out areas and brand new areas. And to feel some resentment toward us, as there would be—you know, the postal worker would say, "We'd just like all the Americans to leave, just leave us—leave." And this was 1960, the whole year. So it was good to feel that there were other points of view in the world, for heaven's sakes, besides our very parochial one. We did not go to Berlin, we were tempted, but people were getting nabbed. And we thought that, Ron as a scientist, it wouldn't be a good idea, so we didn't. We traveled in Western Europe and Italy and Scandinavia. We were very fortunate.

Dawn Walsh: And then shortly thereafter in '65 you said you came to Missoula, and that was really when you started doing peace activist work.

Nancy Erickson: Well, we had both come here from a small school in Buffalo, New York where Ron was teaching, and this school presented an opportunity for me to continue in what I had found I really like, which it turned out not to be nutrition. I just didn't feel comfortable working in that area and doing research in that area. So I pursued a career or a degree in art—a Master's of Arts and then a Master of Fine Arts. And Ron had a job, and they had a new Ph.D. program here teaching chemistry. Through that, though, we did meet people, and they were university people. We met the Pfeiffers and the Silvermans, and then Alice Campbell and the Chessins, and was because of the war starting, and I can still remember when lived in our little house on Woodworth that I put up the figures, the numbers of people who were called to Vietnam as advisors, and that was not good. So there were others who were meeting already, and that would be that group I mentioned, and we would meet in people's homes. At the same time, Ron started working with—I forgot the name of the group—Professors against the War, and so he got people to sign up on that and others, you know, working in that area. So it was kind of like there was a group of university people, and then there were the group of women who were meeting in people's homes.

Dawn Walsh: And so can you elaborate a little bit on the feelings or the beliefs that you held that propelled you to get involved in this peace group?

Nancy Erickson: Well, basically, a feeling that it was wrong for us to be involved in Vietnam, basically it was that. That, of course, there would be some self-interest, there were children who were already active, and they were going to be sent off to be killed away from anything, which seemed to have any remote interest to the United States and its so-called stand on democracy. Plus, the government there was crooked, we could tell that, the little information we got we could tell certainly it was. Our sympathies were with North Vietnam as it turned out. But I don't know exactly how that—I wasn't keeping a journal then, so I can't really determine it except to say that this group was great, and that it was good. Again, I was going to school full-time and had two small children, and so it was one of those things where I wasn't working as much as the other people in the group who were really carrying the load, I felt. But we gradually all changed together, coming to meetings and dropping pieces of paper on the floor and saying, "Would you read this?" Then somebody would read it, so it was great, great stuff. And good to be with people of like mind, and we just continue to change with our friends.

Dawn Walsh: And so can you comment about what it was like then and continues to be like to be a part of a peace group that is made up of women?

Nancy Erickson: With women specifically? Well I think that, actually men were welcome at the meetings, certainly they are now. But at the time, I would say that most women had been raised, as was I, in the '50s with '50s values. I was raised in a household where discussion was

not encouraged and where the father had the last say on practically everything, and it was hard to change those things. So, women felt comfortable, everyone in this group felt comfortable speaking out, and eventually it occurred that everyone did have a chance. Sometimes at the beginning we just all spoke at once, but everyone was very fair. This is a very fair group of people, and everyone had a chance. And they got used to that, I could think—I know I did. I had a friend in the group who was my, actually my age, Susan Roberts, now Susan Boehner, who no longer lives here, but she also had small children the age of mine. So it was always hard for her to come, but we would come. She turned out also to be, then when we moved to Pattee Canyon she was right across the street, which just couldn't have been nicer. So that was good. It kind of kept us together. But she was also writing and involved in schools, and I was also trying to make art at the same time, and all those things take a great deal of time. Art takes a lot of time.

Dawn Walsh: And then can you comment on what it means to you now after these years to still be a part of this group of mostly, you know, specifically women and what that has come, again, to mean for you?

Nancy Erickson: It's still, I feel this group is still composed of people who are my oldest friends in all respects. I mean do not see them as much since my career has taken over my life, and I seem to have less energy. So I've kind of put my energies into art, and I try to speak about these issues when I give lectures elsewhere about these issues. I have to say I think that one of the significant things about the marches in the early '70s was the way, especially '71 when we moved to Pattee Canyon, was the way the feminist movement and the environmental movement and the peace movement came together. I had a very dear friend who was in the environmental movement as well as my husband, who was starting the environmental program at the university as well as an experimental undergraduate program called the Round River Program. We were very much involved in that work. It was important for me to see the relationships among those areas and to try to work it out. For instance, my friend Jean Curry (?) said, "Well, you know, we could make some money, but who do we give the money to? Do we give it to the peace movement or do we give it to the environmental movement?" It was a case where there were some lines being drawn in those areas, which were not healthy. But sooner or later, I think we all saw the relationships among those areas, and that is for the better, definitely. So the environmental program at the university is very careful about feminist issues, and I think eventually the feminist movement began to see that there were connections to the environmental movement. It took a very long time, I thought, and there's still—you know, they want to deal with their issues first and the environmental people wanted their issues first. What happens is that's great, because that means that people don't have to be in everything, you can count on some people doing very good work in some areas.

So, that for me was the important thing, and it also then helped my work to see that integration, and so my pieces from those years were environmental works. They were big quilts that had to do with dioxin and acid rain and things like that. It had also, in my case, and this is still a problem I feel in all of those areas, had to do with the position of other animals in our

culture. There are still hang-ups with the problems of animal rights, and that hasn't been dealt with yet, totally, certainly it hasn't been dealt with by feminists, and many environmental groups haven't dealt it with. So, that was a major change for my husband and me. I read a book in 1984, and then in 1988 we took a seminar from a friend, a philosophy seminar on animal rights and read huge numbers of books. Everyone in the class changed, except the instructor. So I think that's an area that's still is a hang-up, because we speak about feeding the world in the peace movement when in fact if we were to work on changing our diets, we already can feed the world even in this country if the soy beans went to people instead of cattle. So there's just major, major things that nobody is dealing with quite—It's changing though. It's changing, and I have hope for that, not in my lifetime though, you know.

Dawn Walsh: So, and you bring your activist beliefs into your art obviously. Can you talk a little bit more about some of the artwork that you've done that has been incorporated your beliefs?

Nancy Erickson: What generally, I just had to write a statement for a showing I'm having in California, and I thought, you know, the message has not changed in 30 years. So, I wrote that. Actually, I did a missile piece for a show in Atlanta in my area, which are contemporary quilts, and it was just a 5 x 5 foot painting which had been quilted, and I had missiles coming in through every window. And I work with a figure and work with animals and all of those things together, and so, there was a lot of fire. It was a war piece. But they wanted political art, now that's a real change. It was so nice that this gallery is willing to do that, because in my area that hasn't always been. What's more, she sold a lot of the work, so it was nice. But what happens with all my pieces since the '70s is that the work tends to concern itself with communities of individuals of all species coping somehow, which I actually felt that many people are doing. I mean they're certainly doing that in Iraq right now. I mean, we're still bombing them for goodness sakes, and Iran, people are coping with what's left of war, what war leaves and dealing the terrible destructive effects of war, which is the enemy. War is the enemy.

So, my work has in the early '80s has dealt with nuclear winter, which I was shocked to learn more about, and Paul Ehrlich papers in science were just incredibly good. And so I did a lot of—I did a whole series of pieces with after nuclear winter in which there were a few survivors strangling through a landscape and were still trying to live. They are very positive pieces I feel, others may disagree, but they looked at the truth as I saw it and saw that there was still hope. I'm still dealing with that kind of a theme in some form or another. It may not always be evident. My pieces you could look at on any level you like. There's the, you know, just the tactile level and then there's the business of understanding what is going on in the environment and so on. I always have women in the pieces too; I don't tend to have men. We have a drawing group, and we always agree to just stay women. So it's been ten, fifteen years.

Dawn Walsh: I'd like to go back specifically to Missoula Women for Peace now and when you came into the group, do you remember what the group was taking on sort of specifically as you came in? I know that it had to deal with the Vietnam War, but I'd like a specific action or event or

Nancy Erickson: We were involved in all the marches, as I recall. The first march in which students were major players, people really got hammered by bystanders throwing stuff. It was not very pleasant. But the second march I think we were all of us in it in some capacity. Then we were in just all the marches we could be in, as I recall—I'm just sure of that. I tried to find some things from that era for you—I can't. If I find them we'll make sure that they're part of it. But we did things that were fun in the late '60s, like that one silk-screen of all the dead people buried, and that was called "Silent Majority". That was because the moral majority was talking about their point of view at that time, so we just turned it around. Then, we had million dollar bills, which had all the factual material with a big general on the front. They were dollar bills with the factual material about what kind of money was being spent on defense and a pie chart and everything. In one of the parades, we just handed those out to zillions of people, and it was fun. So, those were things where we had fun working together and worked late on things together, and yet the cause was we felt just—though again, our parents would have disagreed with us. But we just couldn't talk to parents. Ron's parents were gone, but my mother just—it was a schism that has never healed. She died this year at 93, and that never healed, unfortunately. It was symptomatic of other differences, of course. But specifically there were the marches.

We raised money—I mean Flo Chessin did 10,000 rummage sales at a time when people didn't have as much as they do now. Rummage sales were really more of a treat than they are now. There were discussions; we brought people in to talk about the war. We became members of W.I.L.P.F.; you know all of that part. So there was a reaching out to national groups. Another Mother for Peace was great at that time, very active group, and we were members of that and individually gave to them. They sent us posters. We distributed the posters out. You know, just anything to get the word out—just anything. Of course, we all feel that it made a difference.

Dawn Walsh: Yeah that's what I was going to ask next. In what ways did you see your actions make a difference?

Nancy Erickson: Well I think that Nixon finally found that it was a very powerful movement. And the fact that young people were leaving the country and leaving their parents, and their parents many of them were supporting them in leaving the country to go to Canada, which I have the best feelings about in the world still for accepting all our people. That was wonderful of Canada, very generous of them. Anyway, yeah, I think we made a difference. There were huge numbers of people on the street. Even middle class people were joining us. We had a presidential candidate with Eugene McCarthy and a rebellion in the Democratic Party. I honestly can't remember all of the things that went on. But it was always there.

We were writing letters to our Congress people, and you have some of the letters from the '80s. But there were constant letters to the Congress people from our group about the issue. So they knew that we were feeling something. Then when they'd see there would be 600

people in a parade—well, that’s a sizable amount, and Missoula isn’t that large. So it was spreading across the country. It was good. This is very good.

At the same then, of course, the environmental effects of missile building, and the environmental effects on people—Bert Pfeiffer was one of the original people on Agent Orange. I went to Helena, I know, to testify on the committee in the local legislature, the Montana legislature, about this work on Agent Orange and what is happening to the craters that are filling up—Vietnam was becoming a mosquito whole—and the effects of agent orange pouring down off roofs onto people. It was terrible. Actually, that stuff, and I’ve forgotten who went over that time. It might have been, probably, Flo □□ maybe Alice brought the article from *Science Magazine* in which there were the craters on the cover, and Bert had done the article with a friend of his, and they couldn’t get over the effects of those—I mean, these were Republicans on the committee to. They were just silent after we presented this material.

I just mention that, not for our benefit here, but just the factual material that people didn’t know. That’s what we don’t know in this country. They didn’t know the actual effects upon other human beings, it doesn’t matter what color their skin, it affected them for that moment. I don’t know how they voted after that, but we kept up the pressure as much as we could. I don’t know whether that covers what you wanted, Dawn. I wish I had. I probably still have that paper of Bert’s. But he was fabulous, and then he filmed everything on this jerky old eight—so, you’ve talked about that with Jean I’m sure.

Dawn Walsh: What year was that when you went and did this presentation?

Nancy Erickson: I just don’t know. It was the late ‘60s.

Dawn Walsh: So I was just thinking what that was like for a group of women to go and present to a group of male legislatures, you know, the Women’s Movement was so new and—

Nancy Erickson: I didn’t sense that because we were women that there was a hesitation. But, of course, they may have laughed at us afterward. There was one woman, a Republican legislator, who was at the talk who was just dumbfounded. I didn’t sense it. It was a good experience for us to do that, you know. It gave us experience to go again, and another group went with the Jeannette Rankin statue program. I wasn’t involved in that, others were. And so, I think it just give—you know, the more you do the more courage you have. So it was good.

Dawn Walsh: And so, a couple of things that you’ve noted here, the tax day activities on tax day, can you talk about your involvement in that?

Nancy Erickson: Well, I have just made cookies and signed up and given away the information. Jeannette Rankin has been great on that. Pat Ortmeier was one of the first people to really put together the factual material and do that, and Flo was out there rain or shine, with an umbrella



in the snow. But everyone in the group took part in that, so we just try to get people down to take the shifts. I probably won't this year because I can't speak very well right now, but if people can't come they bake cookies. So it's a good thing to do.

Dawn Walsh: What types of interactions have you had as you've given out this information in the past?

Nancy Erickson: Oh, some of it has been very negative, you know, but, usually, people will accept the material. Sometimes they are surprised at the amount of money. We've gotten coverage in the paper, sometimes, with the huge dollar bill or the huge sign that was made. I think that was in the paper several times. Then, people are all of a mixed bag—they avoid us sometimes. I can remember making signs saying, "Honk if you agree with us," and there will be people who will honk and cheer, and so it's fun. People like to eat, so they will come and buy stuff. I mean, people donate—people would donate \$5.00 just because of the cause. So it's fun really; it's a fun thing to do.

Dawn Walsh: And what then, what are some of the things that you do with the money that you raise as a group?

Nancy Erickson: Well in the past we have supported national speakers who have come through from W.I.L.P.F. and contributed to other national—Ursula Bowring and Carolyn Furs (?) is one that comes to mind right now, who is interested in...Gosh, that was years ago, maybe eight years ago...just diverting the money that was used in military bases to peacetime uses. That got totally lost, and it was such a good cause. But she came to speak. So, people would come to speak and either stay at someone's home or we'd put them up in a hotel or something like that. And then we contribute also to other people with whom we agree. I mean, this El Salvador war was one in which we had a number of people coming and talking to us. And so we always tried to sponsor those things. We don't want to be a fund-raiser for other groups, but still we sponsor things.

We try to pay people something, our own people. Andrea Olsen was our representative to the UN—well I think when she came back to talk to us about things, I hope we gave her a little bit of something. But there would be just things like that. We did all these billboards, and of course now we all hate billboards, so we're probably never going to do another one, which is good. But I can remember Jean and I going to the very conservative billboard company, and he was so nice—he was very nice, accepting our money with pleasure. I think it was \$400 or \$500 per billboard, so it takes a lot money to do that.

Dawn Walsh: What was the message on the billboard?

Nancy Erickson: Anti-missile message, you know, Jean might remember those messages. I'm trying to right now, but I just don't remember what we said. But it was something we all agreed on and—who knows. Who knows what the effect was.

Dawn Walsh: Another event that you've noted here is the Clothesline Project, and I haven't spoken with anybody about that yet.

Nancy Erickson: It was Connie Skousen, who was president at the time, and I that were the people who were involved in that. And it was a nationwide program to help women and men deal with the seeds of violence. I mean, this was in 1993, so seven years ago. And now, it's almost a cliché, I think. But at the time, it seemed to have been successful in Oregon where it originated, and so we kind of copied their model and worked with the sexual assault therapist and Dr. Fitch who was at the university and other therapists. They set up meetings with people all around town in different school districts to come and make a T-shirt if you had any problems. The idea is that by "art shall you be free," I suppose or something, but what we did was just try to scurry up many T-shirts. We turned them wrong side out so that the emblems on the front would be hidden, and then we bought paints—Missoula Women for Peace sponsored the whole thing—and we bought paints for everyone. And they got to get together with others and talk—talk about a problem they had, and then after—and then they had the clothesline—we hung everything up on clothesline.

Again, who knows what effect this had. I mean, there may have been a disconnect, but maybe in a few people it really did help. And we hung out all these T-shirts, and I don't know how many we had, I mean 60 or 70. It was fortunately a sunny day, and it was a day project. Then afterward, I think the YWCA took the T-shirts and used them in a display, so it reached a different group of people. Then, people were to reclaim their T-shirts, and so, I don't know what happened to the rest of them. But before they left us for the clothesline—I have a photo studio where I photograph my work—and it would be easiest for me, so I just photographed them all and then did slides of them and then color photos so we would have a record of the work and of people's feelings. So you have that, although I have no idea if Jeannette Rankin has the slides or not. I just don't know what happened to the slides, so we need to look into that perhaps. But anyway, the feeling was it was fine, but there's no follow-up on how effective it was for those people who were involved, the young people who were involved, whether it was helpful to them or not.

Dawn Walsh: How's your voice holding up?

Nancy Erickson: It's fine. It'll be good. I'll be mute the rest of the day; I'm just going to work in my studio.

Dawn Walsh: Now, I think you mentioned that you were not involved with the Jeannette Rankin statue going into DC?

Nancy Erickson: No, not really, just supported it, you know, but I didn't follow through. Connie and Flo and Alice, but I might be leaving someone else out, so I hate to mention names.

Dawn Walsh: Yeah that's fine, just kind of getting a sense for some other things that you've been involved in. I know about—one thing is the peace potlucks that I understand from some of those conversations what came the idea to start the Jeannette Peace Center.

Nancy Erickson: Yes. I think the Jeannette Rankin Peace Center was really instrumental in doing those, and then people would come. I was just one of those who came. And I know this is where we had our national speakers meet. We would have the potluck first, and then they would speak. So that was where some of our own money went. Yeah, it was a wonderful idea. It still is. But I wasn't really instrumental in creating that.

Dawn Walsh: Now can I ask—I guess I have it right here—you are a mother, are you not?

Nancy Erickson: Oh, yeah. I have two daughters, one is 40 and one is 38.

Dawn Walsh: And you raised them here in Missoula?

Nancy Erickson: Yeah. They went to Missoula public schools.

Dawn Walsh: And can I ask a little bit about your role as a mother in terms of, you know, instilling ideas of peace and, interestingly, since you grew up in not an activist home, and then you raised your children in an activists, can you talk a little bit about what that was like?

Nancy Erickson: Well it was interesting, because we have an older daughter, the one who is now 40, who was not a bit interested in being associated with us in this movement. She was an early teenager with no interest in what we were doing—whatever it was, she wasn't too hot for it. But we have also a younger daughter who went on everything, two and a half years younger, and she also went then with my friend Susan Roberts with her children, and those children were on many of the parades. I mean Terrell had no hesitation. It is interesting because on environmental things later, years later when she was in grade school, late grade school, there was a hearing on something that was happening in Pattee Canyon. I was just amazed when they asked for comments she stood up and articulated her comments about this environmental issue in Pattee Canyon, and we were just amazed. So it went through. She's still an activist in the capacity that she is able to in her job as a wetlands specialist in Hawaii. She is trying very hard to save species and work on that, work with ranchers and convince them that this what they ought to be doing, and this is what they may not be doing, or they won't get a permit or something. So she has been very, very effective in that work.

Our older daughter, meanwhile, has changed. She is teaching Women's Studies at the University of Purdue at Fort Wayne, and she's teaching History. She's completely become a feminist, and so it kind of comes around, eventually—a fact for which we are extremely grateful, and not just because it reflects on us, because I don't think it has anything to do with us, but it happened, somehow. So that's good. I feel very happy about their chosen careers and their friends too—all those children of Susan Roberts and Dexter Roberts are all finding their

way in different fields, and they are all activists, but then, both parents were. So I have to say in their case for sure, I could see it. They could say the same about us, I suppose. So any other questions on that line? It's humorous now to look at it. But it was truly a tragic situation with my mother, because it was difficult and right to the end we were estranged essentially, because, as you understand Dawn, politics are absolutely everything to us and, of course, they have to be the right kind of politics. I mean it was just hard.

Dawn Walsh: Were you able to talk or to try to bring up the discussion or was it just something that you just knew you didn't even talk about?

Nancy Erickson: Well we just...she held firm and we held firm, and so it was very difficult. I mean she's not somebody who was in favor of social security and welfare. I mean, those are differences that are very...so we could talk about some environmental things, and we could talk about the children some. But, you know, when you're doing the war, and everything seemed as if would crash, it just felt as if everything was crashing. I mean, certainly the old values had crashed, and we knew that, but others didn't, and it was a quantum change that universities would never be the same after that and so on. Hence, because of all that—I mean, this environmental program, the Round River Program for young students, I mean beginning students at the university. It was really an innovative program in the Humanities and feminism and the environment. It was just, you know, it got lots of criticism but they were able to it at the university, so it was nice. I always wanted it to last long enough for the girls to be part of that program. But then, that wouldn't have worked with their father in it.

Dawn Walsh: And so, obviously, you just have mentioned about both your mother and you holding firm in your beliefs, what really comes across as I hear you speak, that your strong conviction in your beliefs in peace activism and animal rights and women's issues and the environment is very strong within you. Can you comment on what is it that keeps you going with these strong convictions, what is it that keeps them so strong for you? What motivates the continuation of those feelings?

Nancy Erickson: I think even if we can't take credit for change, I think that, at least for me, I would still feel this strongly about these various areas. And every once in awhile—it was amazing, I went to a quilter's meeting, Contemporary Quilters in Seattle...I think it was Seattle. I try to go to as many as I can now. People came up afterwards and said, "Well I saw such and so piece of yours, and do you know that we changed our lives because of that piece?" I said, "Well how could that be?" They just said that their children fell in love—I was working with the world's largest rodent called the capybara, a South American rodent—"Our children wanted to know about this rodent, and so we looked it up, and then we read the statements that you had, and we put it together with the rodent and the woman and the destroyed landscape□□" and she said, "You know, thanks." It meant so much that someone had actually paid attention to the content of the work, not just how it was done. So those are little things that are hopeful.

The other is that when people come to visit the university, which is the university here—for instance, the Art Department sponsored Sue Coe, whom you may not know. She's an artist, activist who works for the *New Yorker* and lives very poor, walk-up apartment in New York City and does freelancing with various newspapers. So you see her work—it's always socially active work. It has to do with animal rights and with the rights of workers. She is British, and she has done a major work on slaughterhouses in this country called "Dead Meat", and her drawings are beautiful. She's a wonderful graphic artist with a great deal of feeling behind the work. She came to the university and spoke in the Art Department. I doubt that one person converted, you know, but nonetheless, it plants seeds in the audience. It was packed at the university's Urey Lecture Hall for her lecture.

Her lecture was full of beautiful paintings, all of them having to do with animal issues and with human issues—she doesn't exclude people—and all of them beautifully presented with incredible humor. I mean, if you can speak of when she was beaten up by somebody. She was with a group of girlfriends, and she was mugged in New York City and the man had a knife. She said—but my friend had a black belt, and so she said, "Get out of here. Get the police. I'll take care of this guy." I mean there was blood. She did a painting of blood everywhere. But, you know, violence was part of her own personal life, just as it has been part of many of our lives—mine too. It was just amazing that she dealt with it with such good humor,

Then she came to our drawing group as part of the group one day, and one person actually changed—our model changed and became a vegetarian as a result. I don't know if she still is. But, you know, these things happen. Her statement, which I can pass on, which is very important, is that we need to together count the small victories, and that's what she does in her work. It's good to keep in mind small victories and to rejoice in them, even though they're teensy weensy. So that's good. She was a wonderful person.

Dawn Walsh: That's a great message. So I just want to start to close up the interview and just want to give you an opportunity say anything that has come up for that you haven't said yet—any closing remarks, any story that you thought of that I haven't asked about directly.

Nancy Erickson: I think that this group of women, the Missoula Women for Peace, are just a wonderful group of women for many reasons, but for one reason, they're not afraid to take on the hard issues and to be unpopular. That's very important. They're not middle of the road. And it's the older generation—I mean I looked at my older friends, Flo and Alice and those who are now dead, Gladys and Betty Moore. They're just not afraid to take on the issues and to ask the good questions, to meet with our representatives and tell me, "Well you shouldn't be doing this."

The other thing I would say is with regard to the animal question, which I think I'm the only one in the group who's a vegetarian, I don't know, but is that in the end justice will be served by us all becoming vegetarians, and that it will happen anyway, because the earth cannot support the cattle we're eating. And trying to convince—Max Baucus trying to convince the Japanese

diet to change to buying our cattle, for instance. When, of course, they've been doing quite well, given their heart attack rates versus ours. So it will change eventually, and that's a very important issue to me. But, you know, people have to do it in their own time. So that's all I have to say about that. Thank you for taking time, Dawn. I'm really glad you're doing this for us.

Dawn Walsh: Thank you.

[End of Interview]