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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 049-015, 016
Interviewee: Frieda Fligelman
Interviewer: Kathy White
Date of Interview: November 11, 1976
Project: Montana Women's Oral History Project

Kathy White: We were talking on the last tape [refers to oral history interview OH 049-014] about your piano lessons and about the sister that gave you the music lessons. You were just now telling me about your home discipline more specifically in East, where you were brought up.

Frieda Fligelman: My father ran away from home without telling his parents, and he always considered that he was a bad boy because he ran away from home. But that was the only bad thing I think he ever did, and he was afraid they'd shine him. I told you—

KW: About him coming to America?

FF: Yes, and when I asked him how he found about it—about coming at all—he told me how agents from the steamship companies went around these...to Southern European areas and gave away these leaflets.

KW: We talked about that on our last tape.

FF: But my father, when we'd come home, and he'd say, You mustn't do that; you mustn't do this.

We'd say, "Well, Willie does it or Annie does it," or something.

He would say, "Well, we are civilized people," civilized—I think. Yes, I told you that.

KW: Yes.

FF: Well, that made such an impression on me. Civilized—what is that? I always wanted to know about civilization. We had a book, a great big book on the floor...We had two great big books that were too big to put on the table. In those days, nearly everybody had a combination desk and bookcase. Sometimes it was just a bookcase on the side of the desk, but we had a bookcase on each side of the desk—all one piece of furniture. You've seen those in old...and underneath in the middle were great big books. There was a full sized unabridged *Webster's Dictionary*. The other was about half that size, and it was called *Panorama of the World*. And days when we couldn't go out if it was too stormy we would...we could look at that book, you know. We'd sit on the floor. We always loved to travel on account of seeing it, and to see all these wonderful places and elves (unintelligible).

I love to ride on camels, and I got a picture of me riding on a camel. I would like to get my—

KW: We'll have to get you to get those—your photographs—out sometime and go through those. I'd love to have a copy of a picture of you riding on a camel. (laughs)

FF: I had a friend whom I met at the... That was when I was living in the YMCA...Excuse me, YWCA in Cairo. We would get a group that wanted to go out into the pyramids, and we'd go to the American Express and they had certified Arabs that would lead the camels, you see. They went along. I remember once, we'd take a lunch that was made for us at the Y, and they'd give us lovely, lovely chicken sandwiches. You see, the Arabs are like the Orthodox Jews. They do not eat ham.

I remember the first time we gave the Arabs—each one of us gave our Arab leader, you know, that was holding the camel and leading and all because he was just walking, he wasn't galloping along like they did. We gave him one of our chicken sandwiches, and he gave it right away to the camel. We thought, Oh, if we had known that, we would've given him one of the sandwiches that we didn't care so much about, you know. But, we wanted to be democratic, and gave him our best sandwich. We found out that they thought it was ham.

KW: Ham. When was this?

FF: Or pork. They thought it was pork.

KW: When were you in Cairo?

FF: You see, I left here at the end of 1920. I don't know just when...I bet it was November or December. It was right after my sister's second child was born because I was New York when that happened. I took care of the older child and then after that I went to...what I went to was Palestine.

I told you that I got a job within a few weeks after I was there.

KW: No, you didn't. But before we get into this part of life, why don't we go back and talk a little about high school in Helena and what your—

FF: Oh, but I want to tell you. Even as children we—

KW:—early academic career. (talking at the same time)

FF: My father...his father got up at a five o'clock in the morning and lit the lamp and studied before he went to his little shop where he made his living. Then he would come home, and his wife would keep the shop and study the Bible and the Talmud, which is like a...encyclopedia. I keep forgetting about when that that was in the Middle Ages. The Talmud, I think, is the

commentary. They'd study, and we always got the idea that life was for studying. Don't you see? That was a natural thing and to study. He would read us good things. He read to us on Sundays—Tom Payne's *Rights of Man*. Imagine reading that to little children.

KW: We talked about that.

FF: Oh, we did.

KW: Yes. What I am interested in finding out about is—

FF: High school?

KW: When you were high school did you—

FF: I had made up my mind to go to college.

KW: You had?

FF: Oh, yes—

KW: When did you make up your mind to go to college?

FF: I can't remember now.

KW: When you were a small child?

FF: Hearing about people going to university and reading about the great men who went to the university. Of course, as I realize now, it was a beer hall and a wine stapa. They would discuss things. You see, at our home—and I thought at everybody's home—we would discuss all kinds of world events at our dinner table. Because we took *The New York Sunday Magazine* and *The New York Times Magazine*, I told you about that before, and I told you about us taking a (unintelligible). You could hardly call it a religious journal. It was analogous to the *Christian Science Monitor* as a journal. It had world events in it, but it only came out once a...I don't remember whether it was a weekly or monthly. Then we'd discuss those at the table. So we were always discussing world events. Don't you see?

KW: So when you were in high school, were you preparing yourself to go on to college?

FF: Oh yes. We took the college prep courses. There were courses given, three diplomas given—different diplomas given. You made up your mind when you went into high school practically—of course you could change—which diploma you were going for. I don't know, maybe a fourth of the class took college credit.

KW: How many girls?

FF: A quite a few of the girls who graduated me from grade school didn't even go to high school. They went to private prep schools, you know.

KW: Private prep schools, or finishing schools?

FF: Well, they were either one or...I mean the same thing you could call them.

KW: Well, were they college prep schools?

FF: Well, you could get into college from there.

FF: Now, for instance I don't think Genevieve Walsh...I think Genevieve Walsh was sent off to school. You know, Senator [Thomas] Walsh's daughter?

KW: Yes.

FF: I was thinking of all the people that you ought to interview.

KW: I know.

FF: Just look here I got...here's my—

KW: You have a list?

FF: —from graduating from high school. You want to see that?

KW: Oh, I see. You showed me that before here on the program.

FF: Let's see, the college prep.

KW: Yes.

FF: Well, we had to have Latin, and Belle says one, at least one, another foreign language. I thought we had to have German and French and Latin. I had German and French and Latin.

But the way it was taught crazy. But not as crazy as it is today. It's much worse today, and because...Well, Belle can recite page after page and tell you the number of the page of German grammar.

KW: You had to do a lot a grammar, right?

FF: Well that's all right to go through, but we didn't learn the...until we got the second year. We had a professor from Iowa—from the little Coe College in Iowa. He had two years at the Heidelberg University and learned funny stories. We can recite those today in German.

KW: Okay, so you took languages. What else did you take beside languages?

FF: I feel very guilty about what I took in science. I took an easy science that was called...It was about the weather and it would be called ecology today—something like that.

KW: Or geography maybe?

FF: Physical geography—that's what it was called, but it was easy compared to chemistry or physics. But I regret not having (unintelligible). But we had a marvelous Polish woman teaching mathematics. The things that I can remember that teachers said today. Why should we have to learn this, about logarithms and things that didn't make any sense to us? She says, "To know what the human mind can think of...what can think of." That inspired me so. Just what the human mind can think of. Don't you see? She didn't even realize what she was saying, I guess. She said "Want to know that because this is what the human mind can use," and the engineers used this.

KW: Ok, so you took all those courses. Did you decide what college you wanted to go to when you were young? Did you discuss this with your parents? How did you...?

FF: No, but I knew people who had gone to different...I knew we could never go to what today is called Ivy League, because that was expensive. It costs—in those even—1,000 dollars a year to go to the Ivy League. But I had quite a few cousins whom my father had helped through college at the University of Minnesota, and I had heard lovely things about that. One of them was a Phi Beta Kappa, and so I knew about Phi Beta Kappa quite early, because she was about five younger than I am. So she graduated. I knew what was happening when she graduated...

KW: She was five years younger than you?

FF: Older, yes. She was finally one of the - on the Board of Regents of that famous college in...that Norman sent his son to, because he wanted to send his...He wanted to send his children to school where there was no "ra-ra," where they'd learn something, you know. He wasn't going to send his son to Yale where there was too much "ra-ra." Where they had a lot of students...teachers who were just graduate students. That was because the great men were busy writing books, you know.

But I had teachers in college that I can remember to this day, marvelous teachers, and I don't remember them writing books.

KW: Well, you went to the University of Minnesota—

FF: Two years. My second year there, a professor came down from Minnesota and told how...from Wisconsin. John Arkcomans (?)—he was a very famous man in those days—and told about how they teach economics and political science up there. You see, I was going to do my best I could to help the suffering people of this world.

When we were young, every time we had to do something, we saved money. We got a weekly...what do they call it for children? A weekly allowance, but we had to put it in a box. At the end of the year the family would take a...would have a picnic or a vacation, you know, with our cousins too. We would have a family picnic. But we hardly ever...we couldn't go to it. We couldn't have the picnic because a big disaster—world disaster, a pogrom—came along and we had to give this money to these people. So I knew that there were (unintelligible) but I never...that there was terrible poverty and terrible troubles in the world that had to be looked after.

KW: You wanted to make a career doing something to help people?

FF: I didn't think of it as a career. I thought of it as being busy, keeping something to do, to do it. You had to do something with your life, and if you were a doctor then that was, well, that's career too. But, I knew I didn't want to, I could never be a doctor. I never wanted to be a doctor.

KW: Did you think you might marry and be a mother and do—

FF: I never dreamed that I couldn't marry. I never dreamed that I wouldn't marry. I don't think any young person...They just took that as a matter of course. Because my mother used to say to us...I say my mother, I mean because she didn't know she was our...I would always say she didn't know she was our stepmother. Oh, she did her duty, but she wanted to bring us up right. She didn't just do it to mean. She thought it was bringing us up right, because she used to say, "If you can't play the piano or write recite, you will stand in the corner and cry when other people can." (laughs)

I said to her—I remember one day—"Others children's mothers watch them while they practice the piano, and you never sit and watch us."

She said, "If you don't practice, it's your loss, it isn't my loss. I'm not losing anything, you're losing something. It's up to you." When I said other peoples' parents sit...all right.

KW: You were talking about your idea was that you, to do something with your life, that was you had a life to do something with.

FF: But we all had to.

KW: If you had in mind you would marry, did you figure that you would do something other than raising a family?

FF: Oh, I want to tell you that everybody that wasn't a (unintelligible) that had a little shop...from that on up had 24 hour a day help in the house. We never thought that the housewife in those days. She did things in the house but it wasn't her whole life. Now, all afternoon my mother—if she didn't to a bridge party, but more than once a week or a tea party reception more than once a week and not always that week—then she'd sit on the porch in summer and read a novel. She read, what we call classics today, because we had them there, and she took out one after another. I can remember her reading (unintelligible).

KW: But we've already gone—

FF: Oh, have I?

KW: Yes, you talked about that, but what I'm interested in is how you thought of your life in terms of doing something useful, and what, how that incorporated in your college career?

FF: [talking at the same time] Well everybody I knew belonged—I call it lower middle classes. They didn't consider themselves lower or higher, I think, just people. They're just people, and they all belonged to organizations that looked after poor people. We didn't have a profession of social workers. You look these housekeepers took over and looked after the poor people that came to town.

They were all busy helping, and then they'd go and help the hospitals and do this and do that and raise money, held tea parties to raise money, all this. Then they all...a whole family. If there was a speaker came to town, the whole family would go. The people belonged to, they'd have season tickets for lectures. We had wonderful lectures in the early days, up in that building right there.

KW: Back to Madison. No, you weren't in Madison, you were in Minnesota.

FF: Yes. So I told my professor of economics, I would like go where they teach like that. He said "Why don't you go up to summer session?" I think I've said this thing before.

"Oh, I would like to just, to have regular work there." So I went up there to summer session without coming home, and we didn't come home every weekend. We didn't come home for the whole nine months. So I went right out to summer session there. I just announced to the folks that I was going to summer session. While I was there, I got a...You couldn't change from one university to another if you have anything less than say a B, and I get a conditional. Did you ever hear of a conditional? A conditional is not a failure, but it's the next thing above a failure. A failure you have to take the course over, but a conditional you have to take an examination.

That meant I wouldn't be allowed to go there, and as I couldn't. So I made up mind, and I wrote to the professor, "I'm sure that this is mistake because I've always got As on my papers, and you always treated me as if I were a satisfactory student." Because he, when there was something to call on, he always included me amongst the people he called on to recite.

He said, "No. I was very sorry when I read your paper. I expected you to be an A student, but when I read your paper—your examination paper—I had to give you a conditional." Well now you don't just give a conditional for that. So, I think I kind of insulted him when I said I would like to go and teach where they teach like that. Because he wasn't at all interesting person. He had no experience. He was something out of a book.

KW: So, what did happen? Were you able to then go?

FF: Well, so I said, "I can't stay here and take examinations. I'll take it. Can't I take it at the (unintelligible) Have them give it to me at the school because I couldn't stay away longer." I had to go home for a few weeks, and I didn't want to have to explain it to my folks why I am staying longer.

So I came back, and I arranged that they would at the high school. I don't how they could've given it to me in the summer. How they opened the school to give that, or whether I went to Board of...The local Board of Education maybe gave it to me,. Maybe I had to pay 17 dollars to take it. I have no idea what was in it, but I didn't like it. I'm not very good at passing examinations. I pass them, but I always feel that it's just mere chance because when I hear what they sometimes ask, "How do you compare this person with that person with regards to this," I can't remember. I can remember various theories, but I don't remember who said them.

KW: But you ended up going up to school in Wisconsin?

FF: Then I went back, and took my sister with me and her friend who was in one of the earliest classes of library work. She graduated. She got Phi Beta Kappa, and she was the librarian at the historical library for quite a long time. So we got on the wrong train going. We had to change trains, and we had [voice drops to a whisper] all kinds of trouble getting there.

KW: Where was it?

FF: [talking at the same time] Oh, I had a room all—

KW: [talking at the same time] Was it Madison, Wisconsin that—

FF: I had room in a lovely home all picked out for us in the third, in the attic that had been made up in a professor's across the street the university. It was going just lovely, and just as we were leaving the house, a telegram came from that lady, "We are sorry, that we are giving up

that house. My husband is going on a leave of absence, and you'll have to look for another room when you come." When my mother saw that she began cry, and she didn't want to let us go at the last moment.

I said, "It will be all right. The university takes care of the students, they have rules, they know where you can go." Course we couldn't call them up. We were waiting for the cab to come to the door to get us. And so, well we didn't have a very nice place to live that first year.

KW: Belle was with you?

FF: Yes. And Belle Strand—Belle and I shared a room and our friend had the next room. We were the only ones in the house.

KW: Why was it that you weren't living in dormitories?

FF: Oh, that. There was just one dorm, one small dormitory that wasn't big enough, and it was a kind of big wooden shed. (laughs)

KW: They didn't make women stay in dormitories and keep them under lock and key then?

FF: There were a lot of rules about it, but those were taken up early. You see there were 1,000 women students there—when we were there—and the dormitory only held say, maybe 100. All the rest stayed and then maybe say 300 or 400 or 500 stayed in sorority houses. In those days, there were no Jewish girls in sororities, and they wouldn't take Jews. Belle got elected president of SGA (Self Government Association), and, although she didn't belong to a dorm—a sorority—but they voted for her just the same. Of course we had something like that happen. A Jewish girl in Missoula got elected president of the girls, of SGA or whatever, and because she didn't belong to a sorority either. Each of the sororities had one of their girls running, but no one wanted to vote. Now this was the talk, "Let's vote for the other ones to get in." After all the largest number of students were not sorority, so in spite of the fact that she was Jewish and didn't belong to a sorority, she was elected president. So, it happened there too.

KW: When you went to Madison, did you study economics?

FF: Both of these universities were great universities in those days.

KW: Madison and Minnesota—Wisconsin and Minnesota?

FF: Yes, that Minnesota all its life had a great medical school and a dental school and good law school.

KW: What did you study when you went to Madison?

FF: Oh, just general things. But I can remember, I think, every teacher I ever had and the wonderful exploration that I was in the state of all the time. But I had no one to talk to. I knew loads of people to say hello to, but I never knew anyone to discuss anything with.

KW: So, your idea of what the university was didn't pan out; people sitting around discussing great things?

FF: Well, I felt that they were there, but I didn't know them. Don't you see? I didn't belong to anything, so I didn't know them. I wanted to know about the history of English language and about all these languages spoken, and I took the second year Old English and Middle English. I'm so glad today that I did, you can't imagine. The person who taught the Old English wrote after that, and he became—his name was Vertram—and he became a very famous scholar. Then the biology—I took a course. We had to have a science. I thought that I was just full of wonder at all times, about the biology course. I thought I'll take it pre-medic, but after six weeks they said, "Those in the pre-medic course will continue with the..."—I've forgotten what—"...the cat and those who are just are taking this as just a general biology will continue with the frog." I thought I would rather cut up a frog than a cat. So I took the general.

KW: (laughs) Oh my, that's how you got out of medicine?

FF: No, I just thought I'd try, maybe.

KW: Did you think about being a doctor?

FF: No, but I thought it would be nice to take a pre-medic course, in case. I didn't think about it as a passion, you know, but I thought that it would be a nice thing, you know, to help people. I was going to say something else...

KW: Did you graduate from Madison?

FF: Yes, in 1910.

KW: You went on to school?

FF: Yes.

KW: Did you go on to school right after you graduated from Madison?

FF: Yes, I went right on coming home for there, coming home for a summer. I had made up my mind that I was going to get all the college that was coming, you know. I was going to go to graduate work. I knew a marvelous young man in the medical school in the (unintelligible). But I only met him for a day or two. He was the younger brother of an aunt by marriage, and that's how I knew him. But I invited him to a dance at the—I stayed in the dormitory one year—at

Columbia in 1910. There was dance there and I invited him. He came, but he never invited me to anything and no manners. One man once in my English class at (unintelligible) Wisconsin invited me to a dance, but he never invited me a second time because the people were talking. The conversation at the dance was about football. I must have said, "I think it's ridiculous to be into (unintelligible)." I tried to talk about being intellectual and I never got invited anything that again.

KW: Do you think that maybe that might have had a lot to do with why you weren't asked out more often?

FF: Yes. What I can't understand is why people want to be popular? I don't want to be like other people, I want them to be like me. I mean, with my interests, and I don't so say that's, that my interests are something that I thought up. I was surrounded by it all the time, these interests in great literature and great music. My father used to come home from New York singing great arias from the operas, you know. When my father first came to visit me the first time I was at Columbia in 1910, and he would take me to the opera. He would take me to the symphony orchestra. When we would, in the intermission walk up and down the lobby, and everyone over and over said, "Good evening Mr. Fligelman, good evening."

I said "How do you know all these people? How do you know this man in New York?"

He said, "Oh, he sells...oh, he sells ribbon. Oh, he sells..." you know? (laughs) I always resented it when people said "shop keepers," as if they were ignorant people. My father said, "Business is a service. We are bringing things from places where they don't have them, and it's a service."

KW: I want to go into talking about your career. How did you decide to go to Columbia? You've gotten us into where you're going to Columbia, and you were living in New York.

FF: I had known people who went to (unintelligible) and then I knew this young doctor, Aiden Messin who became a famous child doctor in New York City and he was brought up in Wapiti.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

Interview does not commence until a ways into Side 2.

KW: We were on the question of how was it that you happened to go to Columbia. I think that it is very interesting that you went Columbia, I'm wondering if...

FF: Well, there were people from Helena who had gone to Columbia, undergraduates, and so we knew about Columbia and Harvard. For instance, our next-door neighbor had started out as a cowboy and got rich in sheep, you know. He sent his son to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. How did he know about that? I'd like to know, and he became an engineer.

KW: Well, the question is not how did you know about Columbia because I'm sure that your father must have been familiar with it.

FF: No, not necessarily.

KW: [talking at the same time] Going to New York so often?

FF: Yes, but you see it's a different part. There weren't so many college towns, and people knew the names of what was called Ivy League. You know? And there were...

KW: Was it uncommon for a woman to go to graduate school? How many women that were in your class were confident enough to go to graduate school?

FF: Well, I don't know because I didn't know many people. I was...busy. I had an interesting time at Wisconsin, we were called "radical students" because in those days (unintelligible). There was a fire in a textile factory in New York, and girls...They didn't inspect the factories according to the law and many, many girls got burned to death.

KW: That's the one where the girls got burned to death?

FF: Yes, and at this point, I know the name of that place, and one of our students and a teacher—great women leaders from the east—came out and organized a Consumer's League and asked us to go around and tell people, Don't buy any goods unless it has a—any clothes—unless it has a label in Consumer's League of America." So when this girl, who had been a waitress in a restaurant and worked her way through college, she organized this. Her name was Florence Two—T-w-o—. She organized this women's group—the Consumer's League. I was in that, the Consumers League, and the bold one, the famous—

KW: Anarchists?

FF: Anarchists came there talk, and the professor E. A. Ross [Edward Alsworth Ross], one of the

fathers of American sociology, said in the class, "I have an announcement to make. There is a speaker, a Communist speaker, was supposed to..." had put up notices that she was going to speak in Bozeman tomorrow night.

KW: In Bozeman?

FF: In Madison. "Somebody has torn down the signs that were put up on the telegram posts and things like that, and I believe that we should be intolerant of such intolerance, and so I suggest...I'm going down to hear this talk, and any of you students that wish to go with me, meet here at the library...in front of the library," which was down the hill. We were on top of the hill in Madison. "We'll go together." So I took Belle and her friend with us although they were just freshman and I was a senior. You see I only went there two summer sessions and one, and I graduated in three years and two summer sessions. I always managed to take graduate work.

KW: When you heard Emma Goldman, let's finish that.

FF: Oh, well, it was the dullest thing you could imagine. Everyone was bored because it was a lot of esoteric, theoretical ideas, and it wasn't dealing with particular cases that we could understand. It was some great theory of wages, you know, and surplus value and things like that. We were all bored.

KW: That's very interesting because Emma Goldman has a reputation of being a very dynamic speaker.

FF: I don't know where that came from.

KW: You don't know where that came from?

FF: No.

KW: I'm very disappointed to hear this.

FF: Well, we thought goodness knows what she's going to say, and she was homely as the dickens. The man she traveled around with...She traveled around with this companion, and she was supposed to...he was the manager of getting her speaking over. But remember, I think there were only about 50 or 200 colleges or less in those days, and today there is several thousand because everything that was a finishing school calls itself a college today.

In a way, the people who went to finishing school learnt more about art and language and music than they ever learn today.

KW: Tell me more about this group of women students who were the Consumer's League.

FF: Now all kinds of famous women that are still talked about today, went around the country making speeches about Consumer's League and social work. There was two or three famous women. One of them became the head of the Children's Bureau in...Because that was the just the start of it at that time—the Children's Bureau in Washington, D.C. and the Women's Bureau. Or maybe it was called Women's and Children's Bureau. I knew some of those women because I had heard them speak. But Belle knew young women who had worked in those departments by the time three years later when she... I could tell you the names of these people...oh, there were very famous ones...

KW: Let's go on and finish in Columbia. Was it at Columbia that you decided to take anthropology?

FF: [talking at the same time] I believe that at least...What? Yes. I didn't take it the first year but I went to...I thought there was enough trouble in the world with the present generation without having to dig up. My idea of the primitive people then was to make them modern, you know. But then I went to hear this famous professor of anthropology. I heard a lot about that after I got there. I went to hear him speak, and I...Well, he was a good speaker. But there's so much more to learn about. To teach these people hygiene, teach them modern things and medicine and so forth that it didn't interest me. But I didn't look at it from the point of view of the universality of the human mind. Well, I began to hear so much about anthropology while I was there and students that I'd run into in the library. Oh, then I belonged...They had an international club there. That was the first time I belonged to an international club. Now I thought I met some of my best friends... I have a book here *A Life of a Professor*. We called him Su Hu, but afterwards they changed the pronunciation and was called Wu Sits Hu. He became the ambassador to the United States later. When he left for Europe he said—before China to go home after he got his PhD—he said, "Next time I come back to Helena I'll fly...come back to America I will be flying here." Lo and behold, he did fly, and I went.

KW: That's terrific.

FF: When I was in California at the time and I went... I heard that he was coming in and I went to the airport. I don't know.

I met that man. Oh he was the most marvelous person. I got to know him real well. We used to eat at a Chinese restaurant about once a week. It was a quarter if you just had the plain lunch and it was 35 cents if you had chow mein instead of chop suey.

KW: Was there Chinese restaurants close to Columbia at that time too?

FF: Well, we called it close. Today it wouldn't be called so close.

KW: Well there are quite few—

FF: It was a—

KW: —not far not far from Columbia even today, and they're old restaurants.

FF: Yes, well this was on 110th street I think. How do you know about that? All right. We used to go down there and...I've met that man in Paris, and in London, and in New...and in San Francisco. I wish I had his letters.

KW: There's so much that we have left to cover.

FF: Oh, I love to talk about...that was a marvelous time in my life.

KW: You took political...What was it the history of—

FF: I took—

KW: —of the Constitution?

FF: I took Constitutional Law it was called.

KW: Was that the class where you were the only woman and you had to petition to—?

FF: Yes.

KW: —hear the class.

FF: I'd love to talk about that in detail.

KW: Well tell about that. It's fascinating. And first of all, I also want to...In light of that, how many other women were at Columbia?

FF: It seems to me there must have been very nearly a 1,000.

KW: So, there were a lot of women students?

FF: That's just the way it seems to me. The graduate women had a tea session that was open every afternoon from half past three to five in one of the buildings. You'd come in and have tea and some crackers.

KW: And talk to other graduate women?

FF: Yes. There wasn't so much talk. They were in a hurry to get away someplace, you know.

There were some famous women there, and two of them were in FDR—whom I knew quite well—were in FDR's cabinet. One was Madam Perkins [Madam Secretary, Frances Perkins]. Did you ever hear of Madam Perkins? I remember something she said to me one day. We had come out of a class of sociology and at the door, it was something about moving around—I can't remember what—and I said, "Well, I love stability." I don't know, I just said it like that.

She said, "Look who's talking." They knew I had come from Montana, which was—

KW: Farther than any of them had come.

FF: And they figured...I love, "Look who's talking." I had been around a little bit. The other woman was Josephine Roach, and she owned, she inherited the great coal mines around Denver. Her father was a doctor in Denver. When she was on board when her father died and she inherited his share. She called the workmen together and said that she owned...that if they would help her to buy out the other owners, that she would have them in a committee to run the coal mines the way they thought it should be run. And they did. They helped. They got so she could buy out the...So she was sole owner at one time. That's the story I heard. She didn't tell me, or maybe she did, I don't know. Josephine Roach her name was.

KW: That's an interesting...

FF: She was a graduate of Vassar College. I took a course called...there were two classes in, it was called social work. I'm not going to call in social work. Social economy that's what it was called. I took two courses, one of them was called...One of them was laws of social welfare, social welfare laws. I got a wonderful job from the head professor there afterwards, after I passed my foundation. I don't know what I did with it. It never got published.

KW: What was the other class?

FF: ATthe other one was called, maybe the Philosophy of Social Work, maybe. I've forgotten what it was called.

KW: Tell me about your Constitution Law class. How that it happened that you took that class?

FF: This Josephine Roach sat next to me in one of the classes, and the first day name when they gave out a piece of paper to write our names and our colleges and she was very plainly dressed—dark blue serge skirt that looked kind of dusty to me and a plain little sweater. I watched to see what she'd write for her college. When I was Vassar, I figured she's not going to talk to me coming from a state university. I put down University of Wisconsin, and she started talking to me, "Really!" she said. It was very famous as for advanced, you know, radical place. "Really!" We became good friends from then on. We used to go walking with two other people, and one of the professors on Saturdays very often, but that was just once a month, not every Saturday, because he wasn't...so that was a great thing.

KW: But tell me about the course

FF: I would find out where these courses were...What do you call that office?

KW: Registrar?

FF: The registrar didn't tell me that it wasn't open. Maybe they did and I walked in anyway; who knows. I can't remember 65, 66, 67 years ago. I might have gone anyway even though they had told...So, the professor, Charles Russell Beard, a very famous man—even the average scholar in political science today knows his work—he he came up to me afterwards, "I suppose you're Miss Fligelman."

I said "Yes."

He said, "I have to tell you that women are not allowed in this class."

I said "What do you mean?"

He said, "That's the rules of the university. Women aren't allowed in all the classes of the university, and this is one of them."

I said, "Well I certainly intend...what do you...what can I do about it because I intend to stay?"

He said, "Write to the committee on admission and tell them your reasons if you have any."

When he said if you have any, I could just see he was dying to know what—more about. He said it in such a darling, friendly way. It was modesty on his part. Don't you see? Why should I want to take his course. It wasn't looking down on me for wanting to take what men did. But, it was so obvious that he was modest about life.

KW: That he was such a great teacher?

FF: Why should anyone take his Constitution...I said, "I certainly intend to take this, what do suggest I do? Because that is one of the reasons I came here, to Columbia, to study these things."

He said "You can give your reasons if you have any." It was the darndest thing, I'll never forget, for wanting to take it. So I figured, I was quite upset for a moment, but I said, "I'm going just going to take it." Oh, I had an experience like that at Minnesota. I wanted in my senior...junior year...I was going to take a course on philosophy of religion, and the professor comes up, "This is only for seniors."

I said, "I did not." I don't know where I got the strength to say the things that I did.

The professor says, "You're so literate-minded. You just can't imagine anyone else thinking differently."

I said, "I didn't come here to take extra high school. I came here to college courses—university courses." And I did.

KW: What did he say?

FF: Well he said, "You could." I don't know what he did, but they let me stay.

KW: Now, back to Columbia.

FF: So, I wrote. I said I going to tell them just what I think of them. Because either they won't let me in or they will, regardless of anything I say, so I might as well give them my ideas.

Say, you have to go home. It's getting dark.

She gave the name of the committee, and this famous James Harvey Robinson was on the committee, whom I used to go walking with. But that was later the first day because this all happened before. Don't you see?

I said, "It seems..."—I've said this so many times, I know it by heart. I'm not making it up right now—"It seems indeed unnecessary that an American citizen should have to give reasons for studying the Constitution and law of her country. But since it has been suggested that I do so, I will say that since so many of the humane laws protecting women and children, or humane laws have been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, I have a great...that have been...So many of the humane laws that have been seen as wise and necessary by good..."—I can't say it right now, how it goes but—"These good people have pushed through these laws and considered them worth, and considered them necessary..."—not necessary—"...desirable, and I have a great curiosity to know why."

After I had got it written, I didn't realize what I had written. I was so pleased with it. But I just read off, and I was allowed to stay. Afterwards I met one of the professors on the committee, this famous, very famous James Harvey Robinson, whom I afterwards went walking with with a group—with Josephine Roach. But imagine knowing people that got into the president's cabinet, women that got into the president's cabinet.

KW: What did he say to you, right there?

FF: Because there was no such thing as calling anybody by their first name in those days. Even when I was in high school we were called Mr. and Miss, and we expected to be...He said, "Miss

Fligelman you have done a great service to the university.” He was from what he called “West Indiana” and he was very liberal-minded. So, I took the course. You know, when you registered you didn’t have to get a M.A. You could go right on for a PhD, and when you registered for a PhD, you didn’t have to take examinations at the end. You just took the courses. Because at the end you took a final, oral and written. You know, all handwritten.

KW: Did you register for a Masters or for a PhD?

FF: No, PhD right away. I wasn’t going to stop at anything.

KW: Did you finish?

FF: Yes, and I passed examinations.

KW: You did?

FF: In 1917, I suppose, or 1918. I forgot.

KW: What degree did you graduate with then?

FF: I didn’t get a degree because I hadn’t written a dissertation yet. That’s a long, long story. That would take about an hour.

KW: Maybe we will talk about that when do your professional career.

FF: Yes.

KW: I want to know about what you did after you were at Columbia. I know you went and lived in Paris. I know that you—

FF: Oh, before that I had marvelous jobs.

KW: What were your marvelous jobs?

FF: Oh, research in social research, sociological research. I don’t remember which I had first. I think I got a job. The first one was doing a history of reform in criminal legislation from the colonial times in 1910 because that was a good ending. I did it in 1911 so that was a good ending. Don’t you see 1910? I did it for the dean of the Columbia University Law School. They asked them to recommend somebody to do this research work. A very famous man who wrote loads of books, and he just...he was what I call a “name dropper.” He’d tell what this person’s idea was, but he had no original ideas. I came to the conclusion that this history of reform in criminal legislation...You see all I had to do was, practically look through table of contents—indexes—and then look up the law. I went through the 49 states...There wasn’t 49, there was

48 or 47 then, I guess, and picked out the laws that we had studied generally about. Then went even back into the time of colonial laws and put them all together. To my great astonishment, I see, for instance, imprisonment for debt. It got more and more and more. I had a line going. First you were in prison for a very small debt and then the prisons got so full, then they raised it and raised it, and finally it was repealed. And that happened that same kind of—

KW: Curve?

FF: Of a curve. I came out by my just putting this stuff together. So one thing after another, and for instance...Then I got a job doing something for one of those social science teachers on history of reform. This wasn't reform—history of social legislation from the beginning of colonial day up to...about the care of orphans and widows. I don't know where this stuff is anymore.

KW: You did research for these people who were writing papers?

FF: But I did it all by myself. No, they were edited. They were doing a big position you see, and then they had people in they were also...They gave the names for their prestige and they planned the whole general thing. As much of the plan they told me was the title. They didn't give me where to go or anything. Then the other one—about history of social legislation. What could that all have been about? I don't know.

KW: What did you do then? Did continue to work in New York?

FF: Then I got another job. I got one job after another.

KW: How long did you work in New York all told, do you think?

FF: I don't know how many, maybe six months on each of those things. Then I got a job with the United States Department of Labor Statistics. That was later. Then I got a job with the United...I came home in 1911. I was here a while. I got myself a fellowship at the University of California in 1913. And during those two, I wrote—I showed you that paper I wrote on history. Then I wrote, got all this material on history—labor legislation. I didn't have it written up, and I just had the cards. They must have thrown them away when I moved. And that I—

KW: Your parents you mean?

FF: No, the library. I left them at the historical library and went to California. But, so that somebody else could've written them up. I had interviewed the people who had got the laws passed—all kinds of things like that—and read the old newspapers and took notes on all that.

KW: You went to Berkeley then in 1913?

FF: Yes, and in 1914 I got a job with one of those Wisconsin professors whose courses I didn't take, but whom I knew real well because they had a summer home next to the home of a friend of ours. We used to play. The students who lived in that quarter played a sort of baseball together in the evenings and weekends. He was a famous professor—Charles McCarthy—who took the Wisconsin baseball or football—I've forgotten—team to Japan. That was the first international game. But he had invented the legislation reference library where they would... The idea was that they, that farmers knew what they wanted, but they didn't know how to get it. These people would write the law for them in a way as far as it could be foreseen make it constitutional, so it wouldn't have to be...

KW: I'm confused. Did you meet at Berkeley again? Again at Berkeley?

FF: Yes, this Professor Charles McCarthy.

KW: So, he should show up again, and you had known him from Wisconsin?

FF: No, I had a friend who got a job with him, and afterwards he became the head of the Economics Department at the university. He graduated the same time that I did—this friend of mine.

KW: What did you study at Berkeley?

FF: At Berkeley? Well I didn't study. I took two courses in anthropology. By that time there was so many foreign students—Asiatic students—that I was interested in knowing about. But before that I...what did I study? Oh, I had wonderful courses. But I went back to Columbia for a year after that.

KW: So that was when in 1915, 1916?

FF: Well I don't know. Su Hu—when I talked to him, he said he was not in...I can tell if I look at that book I got of *The Life of Su Hu* (?)—this big. But, a man from Bozeman writes about him, who teaches at Dartmouth now. He was brought up in China, and he knows Chinese.

KW: You're running all over the country going to graduate schools—

FF: [talking at the same time] Oh, I could tell you forever about these papers.

KW: What did your parents think about what you were doing? How did they regard what—

FF: Oh course they would have liked to have seen me married. You know one reason I looked forward to marriage so... My mother always used to say, "In my house you do what I want, but when you get married you can do whatever you want." My idea of getting married was that you could do whatever you wanted to do. In your home you could do whatever you wanted. As

little children, she told us—

KW: They would have liked—

FF: We had an exalted idea of married life, and my parents got along beautifully together and everything.

KW: But they wanted you to marry. You thought that the time—

FF: Oh, I wanted to marry because they told us such wonderful. In spite of the mean things that she, that we thought she did. She did things that were, did lots of sacrificial things for us you know. Life was wonderful in daily life at our home.

KW: What did they think then of this burgeoning academic career that you, that seemed to be long-term.

FF: Well, they paid for it all. I said, "I'll never ask you for a trousseau." But I could never really. When I got to be 35, and I knew that I was never going get...Today women get married at all ages, and not only that, people with children get a husband. A woman that I know here that belonged to the League of Women Voters, she had four children and her husband was a fireman. He got killed in a fire. And within two years, she was married again with her four children. That wouldn't happen in—

KW: So when you were 35, you decided that you would never marry?

FF: I decided that. I knew I would never get married. I considered myself dead, actually dead.

KW: Was that because you didn't...you hadn't married and you were so disappointed?

FF: Yes. Only that reason. For no other reason. As far as my personal life was concerned, I'm dead.

KW: Was that because of your own view of your life? You were disappointed from a personal view, or were other people disappointed too? Did your family, people regard you—

FF: Well, you see, I was in Europe at that time, and they didn't...we didn't discuss this. But I know that they were. But my mother always said to me, "You're a regular old maid." All my life she said that to me because I was very strong-minded evidently. I don't why she said that. But I remember her saying it.

KW: So, you were brought up thinking of yourself as an old...

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

KW: We were just talking about how finally you had been going to school for a long time, and what your parents thought about your going to school so much.

FF: Well, wait. You see I had so many cousins in college, you know. My father had helped put those through.

KW: So they were used to all kinds of people going to college for a long time?

FF: I think my father had the idea because he would have sent me off to Europe to go to school, to a finishing school or something, and I didn't want to go. They wanted to send me, instead of high school, because we had somebody—a relative—in a school. I was scared to death because there were so many ships going down—sinking—that I was scared. But I didn't begin to tell you the interesting jobs I've had. I just could go on and on and on.

KW: Maybe we should just do another hour sometime. You look like Belle when you—

FF: People think—always think—we're twins. They used to think so, too. We have—

KW: You were telling me about how when you were 35 and you had decided to face the fact that you would never marry.

FF: When I said that I had no one to talk to, I don't mean that I never talked to a single soul, that I was, I mean nobody talked to me to discuss my research, the kind of research I did. They would talk about, maybe...I don't know what we'd talked about. Just nice, just ordinary, but I didn't want to talk about that. That wasn't interesting.

KW: Were you hoping that you would be able to find a husband who could discuss your academic interests with you?

FF: I never thought it wouldn't happen. I just couldn't believe it, you know. I think that's one of the reasons that I never got to feeling old because I was always on the prowl. You heard that poem I wrote? I wrote it to a young man who could've been grandson, practically, a professor. He died about six or eight years ago. How come? But I didn't like the phrase "understand each other." I wanted to put down an equivalent of kick, but I don't like the word "kick." [Quotes poem] "How come we understand each other? You in the prime of life; I statistically dead. Because after 35 women didn't count. You see? I statistically dead and you who are on the quest. I who am on the prowl."

KW: Why do you think you never married?

FF: I think that every woman has chances to get married more than one but not to who they

want. Not somebody that will make a nice companion.

KW: Did you have opportunities to marry?

FF: Oh, listen that's too silly a question for a college girl to ask. You take the cruel people that are married, and they're not all beauties after all. No, everybody that I know didn't get married has agreed with me. That everyone has a chance to get married, but not what they want. You see?

FF: So you never found—

FF: No, not somebody I would have been satisfied with. But I mean somebody that wasn't with the thought that I'd be a good caretaker. (laughs) Caretaker. Well I wasn't going to be married to be a good caretaker. I wanted to be equal.

KW: Was that hard? Was it hard to find a man who would agree to that or who accept that?

FF: Yes. The other is, the average college man didn't marry college women in those days. I know two or three women who married people who only had two years high school maybe college graduates. Both of these women, when I think of now, were honor students when they graduated. But they wanted to have families, and they married somebody that they met in a club that was open to people who were interested in literature. But the men had no education. They stayed married all their lives and they had families because rather than not have children, they just married. But they were nice people, and they did a lot of reading under the supervision.

KW: Do you think that if you were young?

[Phone rings; End of Interview]