

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 378-043**  
**Interviewee: Gail Gutsche**  
**Interviewer: Diane Sands**  
**Date of Interview: April 18, 2001**  
**Project: Montana Feminist History Oral History Collection**

Diane Sands: This is Diane Sands recording Gail Gutsche, April 18, 2001. Ok, Gail.

Gail Gutsche: Ok, Diane.

DS: Ok, Gail.

GG: How are you?

DS: I'm ready for you guys to go home.

GG: Saturday, maybe. Maybe Monday.

DS: I wanted to talk to for the Feminist History Project, and start by saying these interviews are of course supplemental to a lot of other written material, but they're also, if you put yourself in the frame of mind of not being in the last couple days of the legislative session, but in many ways you speaking to women and men fifty years in the future who might read this interview and want to know about your life, about your activism. So, this section is really talking to people about their life as a feminist activist Montana, and in particular their activism in certain specific issues. So, why don't you just start by talking about how you got here, who you are, what you do.

GG: How I got to Montana, or how I got to...

DS: Yeah, Montana.

GG: I came to Montana, to Missoula specifically in 1992, and I came from St. Paul. I specifically came to Montana for love—it's true—and actually still am in that same relationship, so. But as soon as I got to Montana, first job I had was working at Planned Parenthood of Missoula, which is now part of InterMountain Planned Parenthood, but then in was Planned Parenthood of Missoula, as the Development Director and also the Public Relations person. So, in terms of getting involved with the community and getting involved quickly on a level obviously around reproductive rights and pro-choice issues, I quickly became involved.

I arrived, I know I arrived in March, and then that fall I got recruited to put together a pro-choice voter ID project, which we did that election cycle and then the next election cycle. So, I started out as activist in Missoula, that's not the first activism I did but just even landing—I felt like I was barely here and I was already really active in the community. Interestingly I think

Missoula is a community that welcomes, that promotes, that breeds that, whatever your issues are. Lots of folks working on all sorts of kinds of issues in Missoula, and they're supportive of each other. Not only organizations are, but individuals are.

So, that was my first kick off, and I worked at Planned Parenthood for, I think, three or four years in that position. Did a little bit of lobbying at the legislature, not a lot. That was when we first had the beginnings of the anti-choice legislature taking over, and a Republican legislature that was also anti-choice, and a Republican governor. Just shortly after I got here was the end of Schwinden, I guess, because I don't even remember Schwinden. Through my work at Planned Parenthood I was involved with the Reproductive Rights Coalition, which actually began in 1991, so they'd just begun—

DS: Actually it started long before that.

GG: —as officially the Reproductive Rights Coalition?

DS: Yes.

GG: Ok, well that's...whatever.

DS: But it was up and running.

GG: It was up and running, and it's running stronger now, and I've been involved with it, well since I've been here obviously. So, that's really my beginnings in Missoula.

DS: Why don't you talk about what happened, I mean no one arrives as you did full blown in Missoula as a activist, as you say you learned that earlier. Where did you come to be an activist, and particularly a feminist activist?

GG: Salt Lake City.

DS: How?

GG: I moved to Salt Lake City in 1979 and I worked for a feminist publishing company called Network, and it later became Webster Publishing. Network was the particular magazine, a monthly magazine for and about working and professional women. I started there selling advertising and quickly started writing articles, and eventually doing editorial work. It was owned and published by Karen Shepherd, who later became a congresswoman but not at that point. She was very political obviously, and all of us were very political in our own right. We worked hard to get Frances Farley, actually, elected. She missed by literally, literally they were like write-in votes; they were the ballots that came in at the very end.

Anyway, the things that we wrote and covered in Network, and it certainly wasn't everything I wrote, but were the hot issues of the time of—it was abortion and domestic violence. Childcare issues were huge because most employers didn't have it, and particularly in Salt Lake. So, and we did a Roe vs. Wade March, maybe '81 or '82, and around the Mormon Temple—only one hundred of us. It was during Conference, during Mormon Conference, there were tens of thousands of people there. It was a little scary because there were so few of us and there were so many of them, and we had signs and we did it. There was maybe one hundred of us, but fully ten of us were from Network, and ninety other people from Salt Lake, so.

It was interesting to work at a feminist publishing company in Salt Lake, because it really was a little oasis in the desert. People often ask me about that, "How did you ever survive in Salt Lake?" Well that's how I survived, and thrived. Not only did I love that work, but they were very supportive of me politically and activist-wise and every other way.

DS: Good training for being in the legislature.

GG: It was good training for being in the legislature. It was good training for doing any political work or issue work. We did work, like I said, on a couple campaigns—Frances Farley is one that really sticks out. We really worked hard to get her elected to congress, and didn't. But we also published—Network published—twice called *The Women's Index*, and it was a listing of women's services and businesses, and although there were some of those being published in the United States, because it was Salt Lake I guess, we got on the Today Show. So, we got national coverage on it. What we did also, besides publish it, was obviously encourage women to utilize the services and the goods and the products and the businesses of women. All of that I think is part of how you get folks networking together and working to support each other. We did publish the *Index* twice in the early eighties, I would guess '82 and '83 or something.

Also, Gloria Steinem came out to speak, and so I got to meet Gloria Steinem. Obviously she was speaking everywhere, but she came in conjunction with the *Index*, so we actually got a chance to meet her and talk with her personally. She was definitely my hero then. Still is.

DS: What effect did that have on you? What did it mean to you?

GG: Well she—I found her to be, besides an incredibly strong, intelligent, thoughtful, well-reasoned, humorous woman, she was also very personable. You've probably met her your own self several times, but she was personable and friendly and acutely interested in Network as an organization, but also individually what we were doing there, and spoke with us at some length personally. We had this small party with maybe just ten of us with her, and we actually got a chance to listen to her. You know politically she was probably quite a bit further to the left than I was at that point, but I was moving that way rather rapidly.

So, I think she had a pretty big influence on me. I think it occurred to me that it was possible for women to be like Gloria, and be successful and really make a difference in the world. So, I'll

always remember it obviously. I happened to be really ill when I met her, so I didn't have the same connection I might have today, but. Anyway, that was my beginnings of—I would say actually prior to then, back in high school and even in college a little, because that was during the first Earth Day was when I was in high school.

DS: When did you graduate from high school?

GG: '72, I think it was that. But the first Earth Day was '70, so I was a sophomore and we definitely did a bunch of activities around that including planting trees, and I don't know, we did a bunch of recycling and clean-up and stuff. But I had never thought about any of that before, so that was a little bit of a start there.

When I was in college, that was the Vietnam War and the end of Vietnam War, so we were active a bit around that. So, I guess I wouldn't say my very first was in Salt Lake, but that was when I started working with a feminist publishing company. I mean I never worked in a feminist organization prior to then, and then it was just like total immersion as opposed to occasional forays into whatever—Earth Day or whatever. And I grew up in a Republican, conservative family and they still all are. So, it was definitely a move for me to follow my own beliefs, especially my own political beliefs but also on issues, which for me a lot have been environmental and reproductive rights have been sort of the two areas where I've spent a lot of my time and energy.

DS: So, how did you grow to become a feminist from a Republican family? How did you first come to think of yourself as a feminist? What did that mean, and how have you evolved your understanding of yourself as a feminist?

GG: I think I probably first was aware of being a feminist, definitely before I met Gloria Steinem, but back in high school when we were definitely hearing her talk. I used to argue with my dad every night at the dinner table over that, and the more he argued to the right over me the further I moved to the left. We specifically used to argue about Gloria Steinem and what she was talking about, and Angela Davis. The church I went to, which was a Presbyterian church in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, elected to support Angela Davis, I think it was financially, and my dad came unglued. I thought it was a great idea.

DS: When she was on trial for murder as part of the Black Panthers, they raised money for that?

GG: Yes. But I was a teenager, so I was young, and I thought it was a great idea.

DS: First time anyone threatened to kill me personally over that trial.

GG: That didn't happen, but I was sort of solidifying—I don't think I would have said, "Oh, I'm a feminist," but I was clearly identifying with the strong women feminist leaders, and actually being able to make arguments on their behalf, on behalf of their issues and their...

DS: Why? What did it have to do with you, Gail?

GG: I think it had everything to do with me. I mean as a person growing up with two brothers and no sisters, I always—in some ways it was good thing, because my dad really did treat us all the same, and allowed us and encouraged us to do the same kinds of things. So, I actually grew up doing a ton of sports just like the boys, and I grew up also knowing I would go to college—that was equal for all of us. But there was other inequality stuff that I didn't like, especially just around household chore kind of stuff, which I really felt, I felt uncomfortable about it and I was pretty angry about it even as a kid. It's like, "That isn't fair. Why should I do all of this stuff, and they don't have to any of that stuff."

So, I think as I grew politically, and started really listening to the current events of my teenage years, which would've been in the late, late sixties and the early seventies, that I got pretty cemented into thinking that to be all that I could be, I needed to be a feminist, and I was never afraid to say it or afraid to stand up to those issues. I marched in countless, especially pro-choice rallies, but other political stuff as well. So, I don't know. I can actually pinpoint when I think I became pro-choice, it's more difficult for me to pinpoint, "Oh, well I sort of crossed this line here and became a feminist." But I think—I know—in my teenage years I was definitely moving towards it and embracing it, certainly never felt like it was forced on me. So, I'm very comfortable with that.

I know when I was a teenager, when I was fifteen, I started dating this guy who was one year older, but he was one of eight children. His parents were married when they teenagers, and his mother was seventeen and I think his dad was eighteen. By the time she was twenty she had four children, by the time she was about twenty-six she had all eight. When I knew Mike he was telling me about that fact that his mom didn't want to have all those kids, and I said, "Well, why didn't..." It was really a mystery to me, because my mom and dad obviously used birth control, and he said, "Well, you know we're Catholic, we can't use birth control," and I said, "Oh."

Then he told me this story about his youngest sister, who was I think about eight at the time, and the circumstances of her birth, which was that when his mother became pregnant with her she went into her priest and said, "I cannot have another child. I cannot," and abortion was not legal. He said, "Well that's obviously not an option for you," so she had the child. But when he told me that coupled with she's not allowed to use birth control, all the bells went off and I said, "That is the most unjust, unfair thing I've ever heard of; She has no control of her reproductive health and she is not allowed to have an abortion." Of course when I was in high school, well actually a year after, was when Roe v. Wade was enacted. I just thought—I was outraged, not at him, just at the whole circumstances of that inequality and how unjust that was for a woman to have all those children when she truly didn't want to, but did obviously.

DS: So how did that become activism on that, what's your first involvement in something that is more organized?

GG: I think...I'm trying to remember the first time I marched in a pro-choice rally. I don't believe there was any in high school, or that I knew of. So, it would have during college. But also during college, in fact in high school—I think lots of women could repeat this story—but my best friend and my roommate got pregnant, so I was the one who went with her. By then abortion was legal, so I went with her up to the clinic, and was sort of the whatever, the accompanying person. And I saw how those clinics worked, and the kind of counseling that happened, and what good care she got, and the treatment was really respectful, and all of that. Although, I wouldn't call that an activist; it was an active involvement. It wasn't activist on behalf of a lot of folks, but it definitely cemented what I already knew from back in high school that this was a right that women had to have and that we had to protect. And that we had to allow for all women, regardless of, in particular, their income, which is still the big problem, because women who can't afford abortions still can't get a legal abortion.

DS: Hold on a second...are very specific click moments in the Steinem thing, and others have a series of things.

GG: My click moment with that was definitely when Mike told me about his mother. Then I did some volunteer work in St. Paul for the Planned Parenthood, did some phone surveying. Definitely we marched in a couple Roe v. Wade rallies, and in the Twin Cities they were huge. They were not like Salt Lake, they were huge—thousands, five thousand, six thousand women and men marched. I guess I only did participate in those ways, and then really became more involved when I moved to Salt Lake. And then involved again in a different way on a more specific direct level when I moved to Missoula. Because my job in Salt Lake, although we certainly dealt with reproductive rights and abortion, it was one piece of the bigger feminist pie that we were dealing with. Then when I moved to Missoula, then I was specifically working on reproductive rights.

DS: Was that something that you were particularly interested in, or was the opportunity—there was a position available at Planned Parenthood, and there's so few positions available?

GG: It was both, but I was really interested in it, and had been growingly interested in it really since I was a teenager, and becoming more and more convinced that this right we were going to have to work to protect, as we are still working to protect it, for a long time. That it was going to take a lot of us to stand up for that right. Certainly it was a job opportunity, there's no question, but as you well know, it's not like working at a non-profit is a great career opportunity in terms of making good money or benefits or any of that stuff. So, you do that for the love of the work, or you don't do it, and I really did like it. I hadn't ever done development work before, but I had been a writer and editor, so all those skills just transferred directly to grant writing and fundraising letters. It wasn't even new skill learning, it was just moving them to a different compartment.

DS: Why don't you tell us about Missoula Planned Parenthood then, and what it generally did and how you fit into that?

GG: Missoula Planned Parenthood, when I first started there, did not do abortions. It wasn't very long after I got there that we started doing abortions, because Blue Mountain Clinic was—there was the arson at Blue Mountain Clinic. I don't even know the year, Diane, I'm sure you do. '93, '93, so that makes sense, because it was within the year I started at Planned Parenthood. We were, I wouldn't say we were forced, but we were certainly—our Board got right on top of it, and said, "There's no provider now in Missoula,"—no clinic provider, obviously there were some individuals.

So, Planned Parenthood Board got right on top of it and within—it was short—within a month we had the abortion clinic up and running once a week. It's still running, and Blue Mountain is of course up and running and also does abortions I also believe weekly. But it was interesting to watch, and I was staff, but it was interesting to watch the Board gel over it really quickly and move really fast to fill a gap, and there was a gap. It was a good year, year and a half before Blue Mountain was up and running again. It was a long time, longer I think than most of us thought it was going to be. So, we certainly didn't perceive it as competition, because they weren't running, and like every other clinic it's not a very big percent of the overall business that's at Planned Parenthood.

I certainly didn't have anything to do with any of the medical stuff, all I did was fundraise, run events like the auction, write fundraising letters, and do a bit of the—well, I did do the legislative piece in terms of the Reproductive Rights Coalition, and the little bit of lobbying and testifying we did, which wasn't a lot. So that was my piece there. I worked half time—well I guess it was twenty-two hours a week, just over half time. But Planned Parenthood now, for the first time since I have lived in Montana, actually had a lobbyist at the legislature. That was really important, because there were three lobbyists. There was Planned—this year, this session—there was Planned Parenthood, and Montana NARAL, which has always lobbied, and then ACLU actually, and she did lobby other things, but they gave here a big chunk of time to work on reproductive rights. Considering that we had ten or eleven bill drafts, and six actual bills that were introduced that were anti-choice this session, and those three women, they defeated all of them in a very anti-choice legislature. So, it was really an accomplishment. I thought it was a real incredible accomplishment.

They did it in a lot of ways. They targeted those few swing legislators who they could. They, especially in the Senate not so much in the House—more august Senate—were able to get leadership, even Republican leadership, to see the light on these really evil and unworkable bills. They maneuvered really well procedurally, and got the members, like Steve Dougherty, Senator Dougherty, and Senator Hallagin to make the right moves at the right time to kill these bills. Certainly more successfully in the Senate than in the House, but there's fewer members and a little more experience there. So, Planned Parenthood has changed. They're now under



the guise of InterMountain Planned Parenthood. At the time they were, I believe, the only Planned Parenthood in Montana that wasn't part InterMountain, back when I worked there.

DS: Correct. Right.

GG: About three years ago.

DS: Right. So, now it's Billings, Helena, Great Falls and Missoula.

GG: Right, all under that. So, I'm pleased to see them spend some time and effort and money on lobbying over here, because as long as we continue to have an anti-choice legislature, both in the House and the Senate, and a governor who's anti-choice, and we just went from one anti-choice governor to unfortunately our first woman governor who is also anti-choice, we need more than one person even though it's only a ninety day session. It's too much for one person to do; it's just not possible. Montana Women's Lobby always has been really strong in this obviously, and did help out with efforts this time, but again Montana Women's has a lot of other issues that they cover besides reproductive rights—that's one of a whole platter. Whereas those—well especially JJ Strait from Planned Parenthood and Stacy Anderson from Montana NARAL—all they did was reproductive rights, and Beth Brenneman from ACLU did eighty percent reproductive rights. It made a huge difference, and I think the legislators will tell you that, both in the House and the Senate.

DS: Well it's an interesting combination of three lobbyists, one of whom is an attorney and deals with it from that angle, one of whom's a provider and deals with it from that angle and the other is an activist, so you have three, the convergence of the three of different components of it as well.

GG: And three really different personalities, and I will say gleefully "youthful", all of them thirtyish, all of them, instead of fortyish, fiftyish, which is great, because we really need them. We need that younger set, and not that thirty is so young, but thirty and younger we need working on this issue.

DS: You've been such an activist for a long time in the legislature also in trying to pass legislation that provides for insurance coverage for contraception. Where is that at, kind of what's been going on with that? We defeat all the bad bills, what are we doing to move anything that is positive?

GG: Ok. Did we have two or three? We did introduce the contraceptive coverage bill again this session and it was introduced last session. To the best of my knowledge that's the only two times it's been introduced in Montana. Last session it was carried by Mary Anne Guggenheim, who sadly was defeated this time by Dave Lewis, but this time Christine Kaufman from Helena carried it. Actually last time we did a little better, we got it out of committee last time. This time

it died in committee when two, or maybe three, of the Republican cosigners voted against it in committee.

But that's the kind of pressure they got from their caucus, and it's not surprising given that our Speaker, Dan McGee, has as his higher mission the call to end abortion, and has said so publicly, on the House floor, in the newspapers. Before the beginning of the session he talked about it, said it was a higher calling, literally, for him. So, that's the kind of pressure the few pro-choice folks they have on that side, and there are some, get pressured to vote even against something like contraceptive coverage. So, it did not get out of committee. We did have a great blast attempt, Christine attempted to blast it on the House floor. I spoke, obviously, in favor of that blast as did a couple of other people. We got, I don't know, forty-five, forty-six votes. But we couldn't get it out of committee; we obviously didn't pass it this time. Will we pass it in the future? Some point we'll pass in the future, but not with our numbers as far apart as they are in the House and Senate, we can't get it passed.

The other bill we had was carried by Tom Facey, a proactive bill this session, and it was, well, we pared it down. First it was a comprehensive, factual-based sex education, and then we decided that had no chance of going anywhere. So, what we pared it down to was that school districts had to report back to OPI about what they were doing—just tell us what your curriculum is, tell us where you get it, and then we'll look at it to see if it's factual based.

Again, this didn't get out of committee. They weren't going to let any of this out of committee, but you know what happens—I think that can work is it's a good educational piece. We got, in particular, the contraceptive coverage bill got a lot of good press, and it shows their true colors on the anti-choice folk. Okay, you're opposed to abortion, but you're also opposed to contraceptive coverage as matter of course for anybody who gets insurance and gets the rest of their medications covered—how does that make any sense? So, that exposes them. We didn't get as much exposure on the sex ed bill, but we did get, I thought, really good coverage on the contraceptive coverage bill.

So, those were the two, and there was another strategy to that, those were the two proactive, and we really thought long and hard about doing it. We nearly did a third one which actually came out of the Law, Justice and Indian Affairs Interim Committee, which I sit on, but I wasn't at this committee meeting when this happened. The physicians' assistant bill came out, as well as another attempt at banning so-called partial birth abortion. The physicians' assistant bill that came out of the committee would have simply said the legislature agrees with the Supreme Court finding that physicians' assistants can in fact perform abortions in Montana. It is a great finding; it's a great court victory for us. However, upon...

DS: Following the loss in a previous legislative session where that was...

GG: And that was '95 or '97? Were you here?

DS: '95.

GG: Yeah, so what happened was there was a bill passed in '95 that banned physicians' assistants from performing abortions in Montana, when in fact...

DS: It really applied to only one woman, Susan Cahill.

GG: When in fact there was only one, Susan Cahill in Kalispell. So, this bill came out, and it was a committee bill so it came out from the top Law, Justice and Indian Affairs Interim Committee. It was a great idea, but upon further reflection and a lot, a lot of soul searching, both on my part personally because they had put my name on this bill to carry it, but also with National NARAL and Planned Parenthood and ACLU, we decided it was a very dangerous thing to do. We did not have the votes to hold it or pass it, and it could have changed it in any way, shape or form they wanted. In fact not nullified the court decision but made the court decision look very weak.

In the end I said, "I don't want to do this," and I just never picked it up. I just let it languish, but meantime running parallel on that track Dan had put in the second bill. I didn't, but also out of the committee was the so-called partial birth abortion—this would have been the third attempt to ban it by this legislature. It had already been passed twice in '97 and '99 to ban so-called partial birth abortion, both times held up and overturned in court. This would have been a third attempt, and the way they were trying to get around it this session was to define viability. Well that also came out of the Law, Justice and Indian Affairs, so these two bills were LCs, were running their course parallel and I was literally on the phone daily both to Stacy Anderson at NARAL, but also to legislative servicemen, "Anybody pick up that bill yet? Is it still in L.C.?" I said I want to be talking to you at five o'clock on the last day, because if they are going to pick up this bill I may have decided to pick up the physicians' assistant just to give them—

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

GG: So, that was, and again that was a real strategy play. I'm sure they were watching just as closely to see if I was going to pick it up. I understand that, but nobody ever picked it up, and in fact nobody was assigned that bill when it came out of committee, because it was Speaker Dan McGee's bill. As much as he is a maverick on this issue, I don't know if it was because he was the Speaker or whether it was because Tom Beck in the Senate said you need to stay away from this or some combination thereof, but he never put his name on it, and he couldn't obviously find anyone else to put their name on it. So, it just never happened. There was a second bill—and he never picked it up, I never picked it up, so those bills just died. They just went away because they never became bills. There was a second so-called partial birth abortion in, I think Dwayne Grimes put it in, and he never did anything with it either, I don't know where that went. So, we didn't have to deal with that issue this time.

This is a long way of coming back to what I was talking about earlier. The proactive bills that we did introduce, part of the reason that we did that, a) so we could have a good message out there, and those messages weren't about abortion--comprehensive sexuality education and contraceptive coverage, that's not about abortion. So, those were good message to have as the Reproductive Rights Coalition, but also we wanted to keep them just as busy as they're keeping us. We get tired of all the time having to line up the testimony, and they had to the same thing. Even though they knew those bills had really small chance, they lined up all the testimony against them. They had to spend all the time on them just like we did. Probably did some strategy meetings like we did. We just thought that was a smart thing to do strategically, and not just be backed into the corner of having to battle against these six really negative anti-choice bills.

DS: You've talked about it some, but for the future why don't you talk some about Reproductive Rights Coalition. Particularly, I think a good example might be getting ready for the session. Who's involved? How are decisions made relative to particular focuses primarily trying to come to some consensus around legislative action? How does that happen and who plays in that, and what's your role in that?

GG: I have participated in that Coalition like I said earlier, I guess for the nine years that I've been in Montana, but there's lots of groups who are involved. Some are involved really actively and a lot, and those are Montana NARAL, Blue Mountain Clinic, Planned Parenthood, ACLU. Those four groups I would say are definitely the cornerstone groups, but they're not the only groups. University Women on occasion have been in, BPW on occasion come around, Montana Nurses Association, so there are other groups depending on the legislation and the timing. The Coalition primarily meets during the legislative session. On occasion we do meet in the off year, mainly just to check in maybe, and say, "What's up?" We start meeting in earnest four or five month before the legislature, and then during the legislature weekly. Anybody, actually Human Rights Network was really active this time as well, and so was Department of Health and Human Services, and so those are some other players.

DS: Women's Lobby at all?

GG: Sorry, Women's Lobby, yeah. I just don't have the list in front of me. So, those folks got together and immediately, way back when I was talking about tracking those other two bills that came out of Law, Justice and Indian Affairs, they're already tracking every L.C. out there—good, bad and ugly. Like I said, there were eleven I believe and six got introduced, so about half got introduced, and they're tracking them, and they're also sort of targeting and tier-ing them. Okay, if this comes up, what's going to be our fist priority, second, third, fourth, hopefully we won't have too many after that, although they had to go all the way six this time.

So, that's what they did as a group. I did participate as a legislator, but frankly more when the legislature was on, because they would hold the meetings right across the street and I could just go over there at lunch and participate. In particular around the fetal rights bill that was introduced, this time by Bob Davies, and Christine Kaufman's contraceptive coverage, we did a lot of strategizing around, well on Christine's 'how to pass it' obviously, and on Davies 'how to kill it,' but there were other ones that we dealt with.

The pharmacist's clause, which came up late, and what that is, is it allows an exemption for pharmacists to say, "Well, I don't want to give you birth control," methods of whatever sort they serve through the pharmacy, which would be mostly the pill, but not only. So, we didn't think it was a good idea, we actually killed that one in committee. Anyway, that's what they do as a Coalition. They meet, they strategize, they agree. You know, because you've participated longer in this coalition than I have, but there've been sessions where we had trouble agreeing on what the legislation was going to be that we would either offer or work against, but not this time. It was pretty amazing.

DS: It's usually much easier to agree on what you're going to oppose than on what you are going to support.

GG: Exactly.

DS: And your capacity, you're there now in the capacity of being a pro-choice legislator, but in the past you've served on that end as the president or chair of NARAL or Montanans for Choice.

GG: Right. I'm the Board Chair for Montana NARAL and that's why I have, and have been in that position three years, and prior to that on the board for probably three years. So, I've been on the board in some capacity for, I think six years is accurate. Actually I just—a week from now I'll be going to Washington D. C. to participate in my first National NARAL Board Meeting. So I have been involved on that level in a...

DS: Are you going on the National Board?

GG: Yes. My first board meeting will be the 27<sup>th</sup>, whatever a week from Saturday is, and that will be interesting. I will continue to serve in my capacity as a NARAL representative on the Coalition, but frankly our director Stacy Anderson is at every meeting. I go to as many as I can, and I don't make it to very every meeting.

DS: You've been on the board for that organization through two or three directors? Was Eliza Frazer there?

GG: Yeah, Eliza, Kristin, Catherine, I guess we're on the fourth. Yeah, NARAL has certainly undergone a lot of change in the last several years. We've had Stacy now for two, she's just beginning her third year. She's actually doing a great job. She is really committed, and she's...

DS: I'm probably going to talk to her as well, but in the position of being a board person what would you say—I mean why are you an activist within NARAL when there are lots of other organizational choices, and what do you see as the mission of NARAL?

GG: Well, it's the mission of NARAL as opposed to service providers like Blue Mountain and Planned Parenthood, who actually make sure women get the reproductive healthcare they need to get. NARAL on the other hand, both statewide and nationally, is the political branch of pro-choice. So, they do the legislative work and the lobbying and all the C-4 and PAC work that, frankly, Planned Parenthood in this state does not even have a PAC—did do some C-4 work this time, but for years has really only done C-3 work. So, that's the mission of NARAL.

I have been involved with Planned, and I sat on the Reproductive Rights Coalition as the Planned Parenthood rep when I was in that position, so I've kind of continued in the Reproductive Rights Coalition through moving through different organizations. I've been not as seriously involved with Blue Mountain, but some—I've helped out with their race and stuff. So, I don't know, they're all working on women's reproductive health and making sure that it is safeguarded. I'm not sure that I actually so much chose a particular one. I did Planned Parenthood for several years, now I am doing NARAL. I'd certainly—I'm a client of Blue Mountain and help them out voluntarily on a more limited basis. Personally though the political work is more interesting to me rather than the provider work. So, it makes some sense to me that I'm with NARAL on a longer term and more involved including now moving up to the national board, because well a) because I'm a legislator, but I was involved with this long before I was a legislator. I like the political—I liked working from the political realm. I like being able to maneuver within that realm, but also to try to influence policymaking. So, to me staying with reproductive rights work that I can be politically involved with would—that's where I would see myself going in the future as well as my most immediate past.

DS: We've talked about your influence in the political arena. You also were very instrumental a couple of different times in the election aspect of this, not just the legislative aspect. Why don't

you talk some about the Women's Vote Projects and what was trying to be accomplished and your involvement in that.

GG: Prior to coordinating the Women's Vote project, I coordinated, and we touched on this briefly, two pro-choice voter identification projects out of Missoula where we literally called registered voters—we hoped they were registered anyway, they were supposed to be—and surveyed them to find out where they were on the pro-choice —I guess if they were sort of pro-choice, or mostly pro-choice, or not at all pro-choice. Then we utilized that information to try to elect pro-choice legislators and Congress. We worked on Pat Williams campaign, Max Baucus, and some who weren't successful, Jack Mudd. We might have done some for—no. Anyway, so we worked to identify those women and men who were pro-choice and then to mobilize them to vote for those folks. Then in...

DS: Who is the we?

GG: Those projects were in Missoula, and so there were certainly lots of groups involved actually. WORD, Women's Opportunity Resource Development, certainly gave us volunteers. YWCA gave us some volunteers. Missoula Pro-Choice gave us a lot of volunteers. What I did was coordinate all those volunteers and made sure that they understood and could accurately deliver the survey and record the data. Then we processed the data, etc, and we were happy to share it with the candidates as well.

One big success was getting Jeff Weldon elected. He fully credited us for getting him elected to the State Senate in Montana. So, that was the "we". It was local to Missoula. It was Missoula volunteers. We worked in conjunction with the Democratic Party in so far as we shared resources—their phones, their space, which they were doing phone banks. But volunteers were separate, and the whole survey was separate, and they needed to be actually. Both times that we did that we coordinated with the Montana Democratic Party, but in Missoula. There were other pro-choice voter ID projects going on throughout the state but I was not involved with them, in other cities. Then in—was it '95 we did the Montana Women's Vote Project?

DS: Yes.

GG: Which actually was something you cooked up pretty much, Diane. It was after we saw the tremendous drop-off of Montana women voting. So, what election was that? Was it Clinton?

DS: In reaction to—yeah, it was the '96 election.

GG: And they just dropped off in droves—Montana women. We studied what was available for, I guess, exit poll information, etc, and we saw that Montana women didn't vote. They voted in really low numbers compared to what we believed they had voted in the past. So, again there were a lot of groups—and this was statewide—groups who came together. Particularly strong factions, I thought, out of Great Falls, the BPW folks up there.

DS: And the AAUW out of Great Falls.

GG: The AAUW, maybe that was it, sorry.

DS: Shirley.

GG: Shirley, yeah, ok, AAUW. And Billings put together—Christine Phillips, who had been the director at NARAL briefly, had moved to Billings and was really good, and Joan Hurdle, who is a legislator in her last term here, were instrumental in the Billings piece. There was a pretty active group, Helen Kerr, in Bozeman, and she worked with another women. So, that was statewide. Then Missoula, of course, and in Missoula it was easy to sort of tap those same volunteers and those same groups who had been active on the pro-choice voter ID project. But the other cities we needed to do a little different coordinating. We did meet statewide several times. It was a little difficult, because it was—once I took my car off the freeway doing 70 mph on my way there, because it was winter for a large piece of it.

We had a pretty ambitious goal of surveying 20,000 Montana women to find out what issues motivated them. We asked questions around where they stood on pro-choice, reproductive rights, domestic violence, education, childcare, environment, and we had a long survey—long, and it...

DS: I believed we'd had some assistance from Celinda Lake, a national pollster who was originally a Montanan and trying to craft that and make it consistent with other polling questions so there would be some continuity.

GG: What we wanted to find out though was what issues motivated these women and why they didn't vote. Then we asked the demographic questions as well, of course, income and age and number of children and those kind of things, and party identification—how they self ID'ed. The survey was really long and we had, the only paid help that I know of was me. I was paid to be the statewide coordinator. I believe everyone else worked volunteer. At some point we actually hired Linda Stoll to work part time on it. She actually got paid maybe ten hours a week or something.

DS: She was in the capacity of being the last MAPP MontCell director.

GG: That's right. She was MontCell director at the time. Anyway, the survey was long, and we immediately, within a couple weeks, realized it was taking too long. It would take fifteen minutes at least for somebody to administer, which does not bode well for getting a lot of numbers done. So, it took some time working with Celinda—it seemed like it was a pretty long time—three to four weeks to get the survey shorter. Then we used those computerized punch cards, so that we could feed the data into the computer. Actually, the data entry and coordination was all based out of Missoula, and it was Pam Dietrich who volunteered her time,



which was hundreds of hours of work—working with those cards. They had the same problem with the “hanging chads” and the stuff as we had in our last election, but she did get all input and we actually still do have that data.

The upshot was we ended up interviewing and surveying and collecting data for, I think, just under six thousand women. So, we were short of our goal. Still it was a pretty interesting sampling across Montana, and we did collect some very useful data. We found out the top two reasons that women didn't vote were they didn't have enough time, and they didn't know either the candidate or what the candidate stood for and they were unwilling to vote for him or her if they didn't know where they stood on the issues. That was really interesting to those of us who worked in this sort of steering committee of it all and frustrating to because in my opinion men don't care if they don't the issues of a known candidate, they're going to vote. They're going to get out there and vote, and they're going to do the best they can with the knowledge they have. So, it's frustrating to know—although it was enlightening to know—that women, if they didn't have this information were not going to vote. Then we looked at candidate brochures, and sure as heck they don't say on there what they stand for or the issues that they are going to be championing or voting against or whatever. So, then we of course encouraged women to ask those questions—ask the candidates where they stand on these issues.

It's interesting that you bring that up, because Joan Hurdle and I were talking about this last night that we need another project like that in Montana right now. Maybe it's not the Montana Women's Vote Project, but something where we get Montana women to gel and to get motivated politically either to run for office or to help get elected to office or to at least vote for the right people in office. We do need that and we need it soon. We could start right after this legislative session.

The things that have changed in my mind about that is it's not enough to just know that women care about protecting their right to choose. In fact that always comes up pretty low on the list, and it did this time too, although it is a baseline issue for folks who aren't going to often walk over that line. But it's not enough to know they care about funding for education or they'd prefer a cleaner environment, we have to know will they vote for those people who are going to do that. Can we count on them to do something for those people who will champion it? Because that to me was the flaw of both in the survey and in the data we got, and it's nobody's—I mean we did the best could. It was six years ago. But if I were to redesign it today or help redesign it, I would want to ask those questions in a way that would that find out not just the issues they care about, but what motivated them to do something, preferably vote or get somebody elected to office who stands for those issues. I still think we have—I mean I don't have any hard data on this—but I don't think we have women voting in huge droves. We don't have women running for office in huge droves.

DS: So what difference does that make to you, do you think? Why does it matter if women vote? Why does it matter if women get elected?

GG: Well, because if women vote, we vote in candidates who are inevitably better on our issues—or maybe I should just say my issues—the issues that I care about. The ones we just named: reproductive rights, and environment, and funding for education, and domestic violence, and childcare, etc. Once they know when they have the information—because those impact them so personally, all of those—they will vote right, and/or they may run, or get somebody to run. I think that women, as has been the case for hundreds of years, are under-represented politically certainly, on every level, school board on up to legislature. Yeah, we have about, I guess, a quarter of who are—little less—who are women in the legislature, but it's not enough. It should be fifty percent of us.

DS: So tell me why you think that is? We've been stuck at about the national average, about twenty-five percent now, for several sessions and the majority of them are Democrats. For example, in the Senate there are no Republican women senators. What difference has it made that women are so prominent within the Democratic Party, and in the legislature, and in fact have held some of the leadership positions? What difference does it make?

GG: It makes a difference on the kinds of bills that get passed, or get killed. I think a great example is the women in the senate this time, as you just mentioned there are only Democrat women in the senate this session.

DS: And the Republicans are in the majority.

GG: And the Republicans are in the majority in both houses. They held a caucus on the senate floor about one of the anti-choice bills. It was either the fetal rights bill or it was one of Dwayne Grimes's many bills, but they held it in plain sight of those guys and made their plan and what they were going to say with them all watching. I mean they couldn't hear them, but they just stood in one corner of the Senate and it was clear what they were doing. They were caucusing around that particular anti-choice and they defeated it.

So, it makes a difference. It makes a huge difference. Women voting as block, just like any other group or organization or group of people voting as a block, makes a huge difference. It makes a difference in the kind of legislation that gets introduced. Although I can't say men wouldn't introduce contraceptive coverage, they well may, but we didn't have any chomping at the bit to ask to do it. I mean we had Christine Kaufman carry that. It makes a difference in committees. It makes a difference during the argument, during the debate of the merits or the demerits of the bills, because women bring obviously a different experience, both shared and individual, than men do. They reason differently, and they listen better as a group than men, I think. So, I think it's huge.

We need younger women—not just women, but younger women—and younger progressive women. The Republican women in the House this time are as conservative as they come. They are far, far, far to the right, and there's more of them than have been, maybe ever, but

certainly in a long time. So, they know they can bolster their side that way, and we need—with term limits now. Yes, there are some good things with term limits, although I would never support it. I think term limits are voting people in and out of office. You can lose good folks. I mean we, lots of folks who were termed out, we didn't replace them with women, or women who were termed out didn't get replaced with women. Yeah you get a great guy in there, but it would be nice to perpetrate—it would be nice if women like myself knowing they're going to get termed out would be searching for a woman to run in their stead, so that we keep the build up of women.

We actually went down this time—and you probably heard this—nationally as well as in Montana, a little because of term limits, in the number of women serving in state legislatures. I just don't think that's a trend we want to support. We got to support a trend of bring up more women and younger women. One way to do that obviously to do that is to work with young women, or younger women to sit on boards, to run to school board or city council, or any elected board in your city or county, so that they get the experience both of running for election and standing up and publicly speaking and being able to take the shots, and all the things that make women—again this is a generalization—but tend to make women more nervous than men and more uncomfortable.

DS: Well, one thing people often say about politics is that it's all about power and that's a dirty word, and frequently the stereotype is that women aren't as comfortable with issues of power as men are. How have you come to understand issues of power, and yourself as a woman holding power in the legislature?

GG: I think women just don't like the rules around it as well. They're less comfortable with the rules in terms of being really aggressive or being able to stand up to somebody who is being really aggressive to you. They are more wanting to accommodate. They're more willing, and I think able—usually good negotiators. So, the rules are all by the old boy's club, but you're playing within the field—you're on the team with the old boy's club. To me it seems that it's more about the rules than the actual power itself, and that may be an individual perspective, but I don't think women like those rules. They're less comfortable with those rules. If they could design their own rules, and they do when they have their own clubs, or their own whatever. They have their own rules, and they operate very differently then when they're operating within the men's rules. But I think women, I mean in this legislature our minority leader is a woman, and I think she's pretty comfortable in a position of power. Last time our minority leader was a woman. We have Kim Gillan this time, last time we had Emily Stonington.

DS: Before we had Vicki Cocchiarella.

GG: So, it's not like women don't get into positions of leadership. They do and they should, and the need to continue to strive for that. Certainly, we don't have any chairs of any committees because we're in the minority, but we have several women, myself included, who are vice-chairs of committees, and when you're in those positions you need to—for me it was like, well

I'll just try this out. I tried some procedural stuff, and I stopped up a couple of bills I wanted to stop up on procedure. You've just got to get in there and get your feet wet.

It certainly helps to have a mentor or two, and we did that this time actually, or leadership did that, they assigned mentors and mentees and Christine Kaufman and I were paired up, which was great fun. They did that for everybody, because half of our caucus is freshman. So every freshman that came in was assigned a mentor and then you got a mentee, and the deal—what we did with that was just check in with them, especially at the beginning. Make sure they were comfortable, make sure they understood how the committees work, make sure they understood how to introduce a bill, etc. There was other training too, but when you're working one on one with somebody you can work a little harder.

The other thing we did this time that was interesting, right away at the beginning Joan Hurdle—within the first, maybe week and a half—and I hosted the Democrat women of the House only at our house and we talked about the pervasive, institutionalized sexism, and what that was like, and how to deal with that. Well interestingly enough a lot of that walked out the door with term limits, a lot. I'd say ninety-five percent of it, no kidding, which was great. These new freshman are not getting taught these old ways because those guys aren't there, but there was already within that first week and a half some women who were having trouble with it. We really just came up with a plan just to be united and to call these guys on the spot on it. If you were with somebody who was getting hassled for some reason—because sometimes it's hard when you're the person to make the call—that you would make the call as the person who was standing there observing whatever. We've had very little trouble with it this time as compared to last session, which I found to be just unbelievable and horrendous.

DS: Examples of kinds of things that women might feel harassed about as legislators?

GG: Well, again, this time really was much calmer, and it's my understanding it was for everybody not just me. But from a personal experience last session for me, really inappropriate sexual comments daily from both sides, just as many Democrats as Republicans. It was not about party—not, not what it was about. But that's very demeaning and very belittling, and in the end it's very disempowering. It definitely affected me. It affected my ability in particular to stand up on the house floor. I was fine in committee, but in front of ninety-nine folks on the house floor I was really very intimidated. I definitely got psyched-out, and it definitely got worse as the session went on. I didn't start psyched-out, but I got psyched-out.

So, we wanted to avoid that since we had so many new women and so many freshmen. We really wanted to step in right at the top and say you don't have to put up with this; we're not going to put up with this. We got leadership involved, Kim was involved. We did one follow-up meeting at our house about halfway, a little past halfway in the session, and people were doing fine. So, that was a really a women's caucus of sort, no question, except that we didn't invite the Republican women or even the senators, because it's just different dealing in the different houses. It was just...

DS: Well, and over the year it's taken different forms. Sometimes it's all women, sometimes it's been just women of one house or one party. But there is then a continual thread for probably twenty years of that actual need.

GG: Yeah, although last session we didn't have any women's caucus and it was certainly clear to lots of people that I was having a hard time. The comment that was made to me was, "You're just really attractive and so that's your problem." I was like, well what is that about; that's not helpful. That certainly didn't do anything.

DS: Appalling.

GG: Yeah it was appalling and it didn't help anything. So this time we just thought if we got everybody together people would feel stronger, and people did feel stronger. They felt empowered to tell these guys no and that that was not acceptable. Then we heard a couple of great tales of people saying, "I just told this guy if he says something like that again I'm going to report it to McGee." And I'm like whoa.

DS: It's a violation of the law, yes.

GG: So, that was really good. I think it was a really empowering thing for all of us.

DS: Well the tape is about out.

GG: Lucky you.

DS: Lucky the women of fifty years from now who will listen to this tape. So, thank you Gail.

GG: Thank you. Thanks for taking the time.

[End of Interview]