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Interviewee: Lois Hove
Interviewer: Dawn Walsh
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Dawn Walsh: Hello, Lois.

Lois Hove: Hello.

Dawn Walsh: I'd like to start this interview by asking you basic background information, first of all when and where you were born?

Lois Hove: I was born in Tracy, Minnesota in 1933, March 28.

Dawn Walsh: And then did grow in Minnesota?

Lois Hove: I grew up on a farm in southern Minnesota, and when I left home at 17, I went to Minneapolis, Minnesota. First I went to a fundamentalist school, called Northwestern College for a couple of years, and then I realized that I wasn't going to be able to do anything with my degree from there. So I transferred to the University of Minnesota and majored in English with a History minor.

Dawn Walsh: Okay, I'd like to go back to the time when you were growing up on the farm before you went away to college and ask you what your home life was like in terms of conversations about peace or war or any type of social activism that was happening from any of your relatives. Was that a part of your growing up experience?

Lois Hove: Well, my parents were both very involved in voting and issues that were going on in the community. When they got together with their friends they always talked about issues, and they always voted. And they talked a lot about issues around the dinner table. So I grew up around people who were conscious of political life and how it affected us. Of course, when I was young the Second World War was going on, so that was a big thing in our lives. I could see how, even at a young age how war affected our society. Even though we had no war here, it affected our society anyway.

Dawn Walsh: What are some of the ways that you saw it affecting society?

Lois Hove: Well, the shortages, and people couldn't buy cars. People had to be very careful with their tires, because you couldn't buy tires, and you couldn't hoard tires, because you were only allowed to have so many. And then, a lot of people went to work for the War industry factories. Of course, there's a lot of the young men that went off to war. My oldest brother went to the Second World War. He never left this country. He was on a ship that was off the

East Coast. So he didn't participate in the War that way, but he was on the front. He was part of guard that posts submarines. They were looking for submarines, because he was in the navy. So that's how it affected our lives.

Dawn Walsh: And then, as far as the dinner conversations that you spoke of, can you remember any particular issues or topics that you participated in, or that you heard, at any rate?

Lois Hove: Well, no I really can't. I think it was probably—you know, I was pretty little. I just remember that my parents were very involved, and my dad was on the school board for a long time. And then, he went to work for the Agricultural Department. He was still farming, but worked for the Department of Agriculture. I had my first job working in the office where he was. Of course, I guess I had a little pull getting that job. It had nothing to do with war and peace.

Dawn Walsh: So were you involved in any war activities as a teenager?

Lois Hove: Nothing. No, nothing.

Dawn Walsh: Or any social activities?

Lois Hove: No. I think that that came later in our society. I think at that time, people were pretty much—people went to the service and felt that it was their duty, and it was an honorable thing. I don't think that they're—I think that came more with the Vietnam War, that people began to see the dangers of us being in war, and being in war that we weren't going to win, and just how hurtful that was to the society.

Dawn Walsh: What are your feelings today about World War II?

Lois Hove: Well, I guess I think that was probably the last time that the U.S. was involved in a war that really affected the whole world. We got into that because of Hitler, and people saw the danger of somebody who wanted to conquer everybody. So, I guess I don't have as great of bad feelings about that War as I do about others. My husband was in the Korean War. And, of course, that was in another country too, and he was wounded in that war and spent six months in the hospitals. But anyway, that war was fought—we thought we were helping another country. I don't know if was really any legitimate reason for us to be in that war or not, or what would have happened if we hadn't gotten involved in it? Maybe China would have just taken over Korea, I don't know. But it's still a mess, because we still have that war with North Korea. That was never resolved really. But more recently, the wars that we've been in are the ones that I have really been opposed to. For example, us helping the Contras in Central America and South America, going into Grenada and Panama and Iraq and some of those. It seems like we're fighting those for the corporations that were there, rather than that we were doing

anything for our own people. It wasn't saving our country from anything; it was just saving those corporations that were there. And that's I think really illegitimate.

Dawn Walsh: So you see the connection between economics and war?

Lois Hove: Oh, yes, there's a lot. And then, right now, even though there isn't a war on, we're selling arms all over the world—the biggest seller in the world. So it is certainly is an economics thing. I think how I got into Women for Peace, I guess was when I went to Central American with a Lutheran church women's group, and we talked to people who were on both sides of the issue there. We went to El Salvador, and we also went to Nicaragua.

Dawn Walsh: And what year was this?

Lois Hove: '84. I came back from there feeling that we really had no business being in there, and that we were hurting the people. The people who were fighting there were fighting for freedom. They were called communists, but they were really fighting for freedom, and the freedom to be able to unionize and do things to help the poor, and because they were doing that, they were called communists—and our country was backing the ones who were repressing that. They were calling the Contras freedom fighters but, actually, they were the ones who were repressing freedom—I felt after having been there and talked to so many people. I think that, probably, was when I started going to Women for Peace. I probably just saw it advertised or else I had friends who were members and started going to it.

Dawn Walsh: And so, before this time were you involved in—in, say, college or after college—in any type of peace work or social activism?

Lois Hove: Not as far as war / peace issues. I was active in social activism as far as poor people in our society and children, but no war and peace issues. That came more when I was here in Missoula, because when I lived in Minnesota I had little kids, and I was pretty much busy with raising my kids.

Dawn Walsh: And so, were you in Minneapolis during the Vietnam War then?

Lois Hove: Well, no. No, I left Minneapolis in '68, because my husband was transferred. He was transferred to Duluth first, and then we moved to Staples, Minnesota, which is a very small town. Then we lived in Moorehead, Minnesota, and in Moorehead was when our third child was born. Then from there we moved to Missoula, which was in '77, and in '77 the Vietnam War was over. So when the other women in the Women for Peace group talked about the Vietnam marches, I wasn't here then. And we didn't have—I wasn't aware of any in Moorehead. I know there were in other parts of the country, like in the East Coast and on the West Coast and in some other college towns. I guess, probably, if we'd still been in Minneapolis I'm sure there were probably at the University of Minnesota, but we just weren't living there then.

Dawn Walsh: So you weren't very active in Vietnam activity or anything like that, you were raising your children?

Lois Hove: No, no. We were opposed to it, but we didn't do anything about it, either one of us.

Dawn Walsh: So, again, you really became active as a peace activist once you got to Missoula and got hooked up with Missoula Women for Peace?

Lois Hove: Well, actually, it was before that when I went with this Lutheran church group.

Dawn Walsh: And how did that come about? How did you get involved in that issue, or how did the church get involved with that issue?

Lois Hove: Well, Augsburg College in Minneapolis has a center which takes people on trips all over the world, not to the usual tourist places, but to places where there are social problems. This was advertised, and so I decided I would go with them, and it wasn't very expensive. It was a very minimal cost to going. So I signed up to go, and our kids were not real big, but my sister-in-law happened to be staying with us at that time. She had broken her back, and she was recuperating from a broken back and staying at our house for, oh, probably about six months. So while she was there I felt I could leave and the children would be looked after just fine between her and my husband, and so I left.

I think it was a two-week trip, two and half weeks, something like that. And first we to Mexico to Cuernavaca and spent a few days there sort of getting prepared. We got some background information on both El Salvador and Nicaragua and how this all led up to the fighting there. Then we went to El Salvador for—I think it was four or five days—and then the rest of the time we were in Nicaragua. We spent quite a bit of time in Nicaragua. So I think that was probably when I got the most activated. I felt that—as a Christian I felt that I should be doing something. My emphasis is more on action while we are living and not so much on the looking for whatever is beyond, which is the emphasis for a lot of people I guess. But anyway, I think that's what we should spend our time working on is making life better here on earth while we are living.

Dawn Walsh: So can you speak about some of your experiences in South America, say, a conversation that sticks out to you or a person that you met that still remains vivid in your mind or something that you saw?

Lois Hove: I remember some of the people talking about their experiences teaching, going out to teach people about freedom—what democracy was about, and they were doing a type—well, it liberation theology. They were teaching the people that they should start doing something to make their lives better, and that they could work together to do things to improve their lives and their communities and their families. And when they did this, they

would be called communists. Some of them would—you know, it sounds like a very simple thing to us what they were doing—and yet some of them were killed. They would disappear because they were going around talking to people in the villages to try to get them to make their lives better. That really made a big impression on me that such a simple thing as teaching other people to try to get some power, individual power, and take control of their lives and their economics a little bit more that would cause somebody else to be so afraid of them that they would kill them or torture them or put them in jail and things like call them names. So I thought that was pretty bad, and that we were on the opposite side in our country. It was pretty scary.

Dawn Walsh: So did you have conversations about America's involvement and get a feel for what other people felt like?

Lois Hove: Well, they felt that it was not the American people—they were pretty adamant about the fact that they felt that this was something that the government was doing or the people in power, and that the ordinary people were just sort of being led along. So they didn't really have any hatred toward us; we were very well *treated* when we were there. But they really were afraid of those airplanes—they called them the "blackbirds." I guess they flew quite low, American planes would fly very low, and it would be so loud that it was very frightening for people there.

Dawn Walsh: Did you see any of those planes while you there?

Lois Hove: A couple of times, but they weren't a lot of them when we were there.

Dawn Walsh: Was it frightening for you to be there?

Lois Hove: Well, it was a little bit, thinking well what would it be like if they started bombing while we were right here—we'd be "poof"—American citizens being bombed by American planes, but we weren't.

Dawn Walsh: Were you ever in a situation where you were afraid for your life?

Lois Hove: No, not really. Although, we in El Salvador thought there were an awful lot of soldiers every place with guns. You know, every place was guarded. There'd be five or six soldiers in a block standing as you walked along, and you'd know that if you'd made the wrong move something could happen to you, but nothing ever did. We were okay.

Dawn Walsh: So did you meet people who had friends or relatives who had disappeared?

Lois Hove: Many, uh, huh. Then we had dinner at a Lutheran pastor's home who had been getting a lot death threats, and he still does, because he helped a lot of people who were made homeless. He started a refuge or camp for them, and at that refugee camp they would teach

them skills so that they would be able to work again. So he was under attack a lot. But one time when he was really being threatened, a lot of Lutheran bishops from the U.S. went there just to be with him. They felt that by their presence that they could protect him, because they wouldn't do anything to him when all of those observers were around. I don't know how long they stayed there, but they were there for a while and the reason was just to give him protection. But I just heard recently that he was getting death threats again. So I guess things are not as good there as they were for a while, either, in El Salvador.

Dawn Walsh: Did you stay with any local families while you there?

Lois Hove: No, no I didn't. I think we stayed in hotel, in a big hotel, not a fancy hotel, but it was a large hotel downtown, probably a place where a lot of Americans stayed, because there was safety in numbers.

Dawn Walsh: So how would you describe yourself changing from before you went on this trip to after the trip?

Lois Hove: Well, I think that the reason that I changed was because I realized that somebody had to—we had speak out about what we saw, and if we didn't it wouldn't be worth anything. It wouldn't have any meaning.

Dawn Walsh: So in what ways did you speak out when you got back to America?

Lois Hove: Well, I wrote letters to the editor, and I was interviewed by several TV stations. Also the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* called me, and my interview was in the Saint Paul paper. Oh, we wrote letters to Congress, all of us who were on the trip. That lasted for quite a while—various things would come up and, you know, we'd get busy and all of us write to our Congressman about the issue and that the U.S. should not be involved there.

Dawn Walsh: And what kind of an effect did you think that you had and the other people who spoke out on the issue?

Lois Hove: I considered...I think it did make a difference. You know, you don't know how much difference it makes, but I think that people all over the country were doing this writing and were seeing the same thing happening as they traveled down there. And so, I think, together everybody made a difference. I don't think my letters, probably, made so much difference, but all of us together I think helped.

Dawn Walsh: And then I see that you were—participated in marches against the Iraqi War. Could you speak about your involvement?

Lois Hove: Well that was when I was a member for Women for Peace, and we decided that this was a war that was just being fought because of oil. So, we didn't hesitate. We got together

with other groups and lots of people marched. The thing that we didn't like, my husband and I, was that if there were any people in the march who were dressed sort of different or were acting strangely or something, that would be what the press would concentrate on, instead of the fact that there were people in this march who were professors from the university and lawyers and legislators and just ordinary citizens who were marching. But they'd concentrate on somebody who acted up or looked funny or something, and that would be the impression then that people would get of the whole group, even though there were a lot of people that marched in those marches. I can't remember if we did two, one or two. But I remember some of the Women for Peace saying that the audience—or the people along the streets—were so much nicer than they had been during the Vietnam War. They said that there were really some very uncivil name-calling and spitting and things like that in the earlier marches. But there wasn't any of that in this march against the Iraqi War.

Dawn Walsh: Why do you think that is?

Lois Hove: Oh, probably, because a lot of people felt the same way. I think there was a big sentiment against it. Then once the war was declared, that all stopped. That happens a lot, because people don't want their sons and daughters who are in the service to feel like they aren't being supported. So then, the marches seem to stop. But before the war was declared there were a lot of marches all over the country.

Dawn Walsh: And why do you think the media focused on the certain outrageous, more outrageous people?

Lois Hove: Well, I think there's probably two reasons. I think that probably one reason is that the news media always wants to have something outrageous to have on their front pages just to sell papers or to get people to watch TV. But then, I think another reason is that the power—the people in power—in our country don't want us to be against those wars, because it makes a lot of money for some people. So it's a power thing.

Dawn Walsh: So what was it like for you to march against that war?

Lois Hove: It was fine. We knew a lot of people that were marching, and it was a very good spirit, I think in the whole group. We started over at the University—let's see, I think we started over by that Jacob's Island. It seems to me that's where we started. Then we marched down, through downtown, and ended up, probably about by Caras Park, but I'm not sure about that—or maybe we went to the courthouse. Anyway, it wasn't a very long march, but it was from the university to some place downtown.

Dawn Walsh: Did you have any personal relationships with anyone involved in that war?

Lois Hove: No.

Dawn Walsh: Or even friends, or children of your friends—anything like that?

Lois Hove: No. No, I didn't know anybody who was in the Iraq War. I actually didn't know a lot of people who were in the Vietnam War, just because of the age—I was older than that age. It was the Korean War that when I was at the University of Minnesota that was going on—it had just finished.

Dawn Walsh: So you did have some very personal experience with the Korean War, however, in relation to your husband?

Lois Hove: Yeah. I didn't know him then, though, but I knew a lot of other men at the university who were just returned veterans and going to school on the GI Bill. So we talked about it a lot then.

Dawn Walsh: And what were some of the things that you talked about with the veteran soldiers?

Lois Hove: Oh, I don't remember. I just remember my husband telling me later, after we were married, and he talked about how there would be just hordes of Chinese people, just hundreds and hundreds of them. It just seemed like there was so many. And they'd be pushed back and then they'd make some headway again and then they'd be pushed back—about all these Chinese soldiers.

Then my husband talked so much about the refugees. He felt so sorry for the families who were in the midst of the war. Where the war was being fought, they were just homeless. He would say how they were walking along, and they'd have a little knapsack or something that they were carrying on their back, and that was all they had. He felt that was pretty awful. He said at least we got hot meals and a chance to wash up once in a while. But, he said, those people were just homeless—had no place to go. So they were really in a worse situation than the soldiers, because they were being shot at too, just like the soldiers were. If the soldiers were shooting guns, they could get hit just as easily as the soldiers could, so they were really in tough situation.

He talked a lot about that and about the different situations that he was in that were pretty scary. He talked a lot about when he got wounded—what other people said about him when he got wounded—how he yelled and went flying up in the air, so anyway. Then he went to the hospital, and he talked about being in Japan in the hospital recuperating. So that's...I've talked a lot about it with him.

Dawn Walsh: And in what ways did that experience change him?

Lois Hove: Well, I think he could see the futility of war and just how awful it was. For him, it wasn't any glory thing. That's for sure.

Dawn Walsh: I know that the Missoula Women for Peace are a part of the International League for Peace and Freedom are you involved with that and update on what activities are happening with that group?

Lois Hove: I went to one national convention of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and I was very impressed with women's work that was being done. Right now, their goal is to work on educating people about the powers of corporations in this country. So, I'm involved in a study group that is looking at corporations and what powers they have and what we've given to them over the years in this country, which is very eye opening.

Dawn Walsh: Yes. And so, what are some of things that you've learned from that?

Lois Hove: Well, at the beginning of the country that corporations were only for a limited amount of time, and they were only started for the benefit of the people of the state. They were chartered by the state, and when they didn't benefit the state anymore—the people of the state—then their charter was pulled. The attorney general of the state could do that. And so, it isn't like now where they have so much power and they can buy Congress people and pretty much control what's being done in our country. But in the beginning of our country, they didn't have that kind of power.

Actually, the people that started the country were trying to get away from the big companies in Britain that were controlling people so much, so they came to the U.S. to start a new country, and they were going to have the laws were going be that these corporations could not get so powerful. But through legal maneuverings and legal decisions, corporations have gotten more and more and more and more power. And so now, people don't have very much power anymore. All the power is in the corporations. So that's pretty awful that we allowed that to happen as a country.

Dawn Walsh: What do you think can be done about it?

Lois Hove: Well, I guess that there are some laws that are still on the books to insist that corporations be for the benefit of the state, but whether or not enough people can get together...you know. We tried a couple of years ago to pass a law to keep corporations from spending so much money to—well, to keep people from getting initiatives passed, and that was shot down. I think that the Supreme Court—wasn't that the reason why that was? I think that was overturned because of the Supreme Court. So that would have been one method to keep the corporations from having so much power—because they could spend so much money on TV advertising so that they could kill, or keep people from knowing what the truth was, and ordinary people just couldn't afford to have all those ads on TV. So that was one reason why I think some of the people in Missoula decided that this was a good thing to study and to work on, because something has to be done to give some power back to the people again.

Dawn Walsh: So have you been implementing any ideas or is it mostly study at this point?

Lois Hove: We're just studying it, and then I think that there's some lawyers who are working on some legislation, but I have no idea what it is right now. It's just in the beginning stages.

Dawn Walsh: And so is the Jubilee 2000 is that something Women's International League of Peace and Freedom is doing?

Lois Hove: Well, we are supportive of it. I haven't been able to go to any of the meetings. I do know about it, and I've read about it a lot. But it's always been a night when I had some other meeting that I have to go to, so I haven't participated in it. But I'm certainly supportive of it.

Dawn Walsh: Can you describe what that is?

Lois Hove: Well, a few years ago—maybe twenty years ago—a lot of poor countries became very indebted to countries like the U.S. and England and France and the big industrial countries, some of it was just because of arms sales—arms sales to those countries. Anyway, they became indebted to these industrial countries. Because they're poor countries they get charged higher interest rates, and so the money that they're paying back has gotten to be almost more than what they borrowed in the first place. They can never get out of debt. It's just an ongoing thing.

So a few years ago, an international group decided that one way to get them on their feet would be to forgive that debt. They based it on the jubilee, which was in—I think it's in Leviticus in the Old Testament—that every 50 years there would be a jubilee year when people would get their land back again. So this would be a way to help them so that they wouldn't have to spend all their money on paying debt. They could use their money instead to help their own people with health care and education. So that's what is behind that.

Dawn Walsh: Can you speak about what it has been like to be involved in a peace organization that is just for women? I know that over the years there has been some men involved, but nonetheless it's primarily a women's group of Missoula Women for Peace as well an international group, and what that has been like for you as a woman?

Lois Hove: Well, I think that it's a friendship. Our group, we have a very deep friendship among the women, and we really miss each other when we don't get together. But I think, probably, the reason that it's so important for us women to do this is because as mothers we don't want our children to have to go to war or go through war. But also if you're—a lot of times if you're in a group with men, the men seem to take over and do the talking and this way it's only women, so we tend to all talk.

Dawn Walsh: And so what's happening currently in Missoula Women for Peace at the meetings in the last year or so?

Lois Hove: Well, we've been talking about the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, trying to get people to call in about that to Congress and the President; and this Jubilee 2000, we've been talking about; and the corporations—this is all part of W.I.L.P.F.—and also the land mines. We've been opposing land mines. Oh, and that missile defense system that was originally called Star Wars, we're opposed to that; and just the budget—the budget is so big on defense and not enough in human services. Those are all things that we talk about and try to get people to call—call and write letters.

Dawn Walsh: So, what's your experience been with writing and calling at the local level?

Lois Hove: Usually they write back and say pretty much the same thing, but I guess, if they get enough letters from enough people, then it makes a difference. From what I understand, they look at the numbers or responses that they get to telephone and judge on that basis how important it is to people back home. So we need to, I guess, try to get other people to be influenced by us more than we do. I think we did more a few years ago, but our group is getting older—older and smaller—so we aren't as active as we used to be.

Dawn Walsh: What differences do you see between the younger women, do you see them getting involved in peace issues?

Lois Hove: Well, there have been some that have been real active for a while. Of course, lives are so busy and full that they don't have time. I think that they will be there, but the time just isn't right. I don't know, I may be wrong—maybe it's priorities, but it just seems like people are so busy. Younger people today, their time is so regimented between work and study and children and families that they don't have time for a lot of extra.

Dawn Walsh: So what is it that keeps you going and keeps you active in this type of work?

Lois Hove: Well, we have to—we have to. Those of us who have the time, we have to do something. Do what we can at least. So I don't think we can give up and just let the things go.

Dawn Walsh: Is there any one particular issue that is very important to you personally at this time?

Lois Hove: Well I think that the way the war affects families and people—ordinary people—is what really is important to me. Because you could just see it last summer when there was that war in Kosovo and Serbia how it affected the people there. Suddenly people who were just ordinary, working people are driven out of their homes and they don't have anything. They are on the road. I try to think how would I feel if I was in that situation, and I have hay fever and how would I get along if I was just walking along the road and having to sleep on the ground and that sort of thing, like those people. You know, it would be pretty tough.

And there's a lot of people who are really sick or they get regular sicknesses that you get when you're at home, and here they are out homeless—what do they do? Probably some of them die just because they can't get medical attention, whereas if they were home they could be taken care of or they'd be in a warm place where they could rest. But anyway, pretty tough. That's caused by wars and all these arms that are everywhere.

Also, in this country, I think another issue that I'm very upset about is all of the handguns and the interpretation that some people have of the Second Amendment—that each person is supposed to be having guns. I don't understand it that way. I understand it that it's a militia not an every person. But there's some people that interpret that Second Amendment that every person is supposed to be free to have as many guns as they want to, and I don't believe in that because the countries that have stricter gun laws don't have as many shooting deaths as we do in this country.

Dawn Walsh: So what types of guidelines would you like to see around?

Lois Hove: It's probably too late, because there's so many guns around. But, it's just the mentality in this country that people have to have guns. All the people that I know who are—you would think sort of quiet people, law-abiding people, and you talk to them and here you find out that they keep a gun loaded in their bedroom right next to their bed, sort of scary to me. I wouldn't want to have a gun next to my bed that was loaded.

Dawn Walsh: So what is it about our culture do you think has brought it to this place where people as you're describing sleep next to a loaded gun?

Lois Hove: Well and then also people driving down the road will have a loaded gun in the seat next to them...I don't know. They're just—

Dawn Walsh: Are they afraid?

Lois Hove: Or else they feel that—I don't know if they feel that they have the right to shoot somebody who might interfere with them in some way—I don't know. I don't understand it. I just don't understand it; it's not part of my thinking. I'm always shocked when I hear people talk that way, "Oh, I always have a gun in the seat next to me." This kind of attitude really is shocking.

Dawn Walsh: And that's interesting what you say about it's sort of a rights issue, "I have a right to shoot somebody if I'm attacked or if they threaten me or—"

Lois Hove: Or if they threaten to rob me, or something like that. But, I don't know.

Dawn Walsh: So we're getting near the end of our time, and I just want to open it up and see if there is anything that you'd like to say that we haven't touched on yet or anything that has

come up during the conversation that you'd like to speak about, any closing remarks—you know, anything.

Lois Hove: Well, actually, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom isn't just about peace and freedom, it's also about women's issues and it's about abuse of women and it's about labor issues. When I went to that convention that time, I learned that Women's International League for Peace and Freedom was dealing with a lot of issues that I hadn't—we hadn't really talked about in our group. We concentrate more on peace issues in our group than what the national and international group does. They talk about anything that harms people—economic issues and all sorts of things—which is good, but because our group is small, I guess, and we have some members who want to concentrate on the peace issues. So we have pretty much done that. So I guess that's about all I'd have to say.

Dawn Walsh: Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]