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Interviewees: Various members of Missoula Women for Peace

Interviewer: Dawn Walsh

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Dawn Walsh: Hello, this is Dawn. The first question that I'd like to ask everybody is—well, first of all to state your name in the tape player, and then I'd like to ask you to let us know when the year was that you got involved with Missoula Women for Peace and what was the event or the inspiration that led you to get involved with this particular group.

Florence Chessin: I'm Florence Chessin, and I was one of the founders of Missoula Women for Peace. We started in January of 1970, during the height of the Vietnam War. I had been involved in a couple of other peace groups earlier, one of them was Missoula Peace Group in 1963 when we started the—showed the Hiroshima exhibit in Missoula. There were a lot of marches, peace marches, starting in 1966, and some of us got involved in those. And through the Democratic Party, also met some of the women like Alice Campbell and May MacDonald.

In 1970, a friend of mine, Betty Moore, and I decided to have a tea and ask women that we knew that were sympathetic to the peace movement to join us, and then we decided to form Missoula Women for Peace. A lot of women were concerned about their sons being drafted into the Vietnam War, which we thought was a bad war. We didn't feel like it was justified going over to Vietnam and killing people. So a lot of women joined the group at that time because of their concern for their children. And from there, we just have continued onto today.

Dawn Walsh: Alice, do you want to say anything?

Alice Campbell: This is Alice Campbell, and I have been a part of this peace group since January of 1970. I had been opposed to the Vietnam War. My whole family was opposed, but not marching as much as I did. I joined the marches. I joined everything that spoke out against that war. That was the most unfair war that ever happened, and I know how Jeannette Rankin felt. So, I'll continue with someone else.

May MacDonald: Our family moved to Missoula in 1960 and—my name is May MacDonald. I live at 741 Woodford, here in Missoula. Our family moved here to this city quite a few years ago. As the papers and the media continued with their reporting of the War and its atrocities, I became more and more alarmed, especially as I had three sons who would likely—very, very likely—be inducted or drafted, and I thought it wasn't enough to condemn it verbally, I should do something about it, politically in every way that I possibly could. So, Flo Chessin contacted me and I was very glad to join her group, and have been a part of it ever since. I feel that we do what we can by contacting the people in high office and letting them know how we feel by

voting for the right men, who oppose war and see the folly of it and the uselessness of it. We intend to continue our efforts until we can't do it anymore.

Valerie Clubb: I'm Valerie Clubb, and like May I had three sons who were coming up to be drafted for the Vietnam War, and that was really a terrible war. I came to this group, as I remember, by way of Betty Moore, who was a member of our group sometime ago, and a wonderful person that I remember with much pleasure. I was—this was in the early 1970s□ '71, something of that sort, that I started, and I was with the group for quite a while when I dropped away for about 15 years—not that there were not atrocities during that 15 years, and I was working—that was one of the atrocities [laughs].

Anyway, I'm back now, and we continue to have peace-related situations. For example, this year, and it's an election year, and of the four people who are running not one is against the death penalty. Not one of the four is against the death penalty, and we have had a recent example of how the death penalty can be cruelly mishandled and can be, and has been, used in a terrible way. I've come to believe that we have no right to kill others through our judicial system anymore than in our wars. I'll pass this on to Mary.

Mary Taylor: Hi, I'm Mary Taylor, and I've been a kind of sporadic member of this group since its inception. I was part of the Hiroshima exhibit. And I think may take some things further. One of the things that I think the peace group should be really proud of—Women for Peace—were the stands that we took on tax day, where we sat out in front of the post office and handed information out to people about the menace of war of any kind, but especially of nuclear war. I have a history—my father was a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation in World War II and suffered because he was a pacifist. So, I have a pacifist background and I think it's even more imperative now because we are still building bigger and bigger bombs, and much more lethal bombs than even the terrible Vietnam War. So, I hope to become more involved. I too had a job, so I haven't been active, but my heart is with this group.

Sandra Perrin: I'm Sandra Perrin, and I live at 302 Pattee Canyon. When the war was going on, I was in San Diego. Also during the time I gave birth to my son, and it is at that time also that I realized that if I wanted to make a more peaceful world for my son, maybe I should be involved politically. That's exactly what myself, and mainly my husband at first—he was a student at the University of California and very involved in informing future draftees about not going to war. He even became violent at one point.

However, we left California and eventually came to Bozeman and finally to Missoula. It was through a friend—two friends of mine—that I joined this group and I have been training with them. This is how I consider my situation. However, I like to be informed about the political injustices in this country, and I have been helping as much as I can—baking lots of cookies, lots...even my husband was wondering at one point, "Sandra, what are you doing? Another batch of cookies for the Missoula Women for Peace. What are you doing?" Well, I think it

was—it was good. We brought all those cookies, and people ate the cookies and got interested in the material that we were distributing. So, it did have a reason to be.

Dawn Walsh: When were you doing that?

Sandra Perrin: I think it was in, like in 1972 or 1973, shortly after I came to Missoula. It was through Maggie Black and Julia Todd that I got the information about your group.

Lois Hove: My name is Lois Hove, and I didn't move to Missoula until 1977, so I missed some of the beginnings of this group. I was very opposed to the Vietnam War, but I lived in Moorhead, Minnesota, and I didn't know of any group like this there, so I wasn't involved until Reagan's war, which was in the middle of the '80s. I went with a church women's group to El Salvador and Nicaragua in '84 and really became aware of the awful things that our country was doing to those small countries, and was participating in providing arms and training to the army there, so that they were doing atrocities to their own people. So it was really with that war that I became involved in this group. And I'm not sure what year it was, probably about '86, something like that—I just don't know. But, it's a wonderful group. And, I can remember we marched—big group of people—my husband and I marched with this group against the bombing of Iraq. But, other than that, I can't remember any other march that we were involved in.

Jean Pfeiffer: Hello, my name is Jean Pfeiffer, and I was one of the founding members, or joined Flo and Betty in some of the first meetings. But I was much more involved earlier than that—I think all my life because, as a Canadian, my mother was very opposed to things going on in the British Empire, and she admired Roosevelt tremendously at the time. So, I've been in peace-related groups in high school, college. Then when we first moved here, we were mostly concerned, when we did the Hiroshima exhibit, about the effect of the atom bomb, and felt that it was the biggest scare. So, we did put on this Hiroshima exhibit and, not this group, but a—

[unidentified voice 1]: You know, I think our group did do it.

[unidentified voice 2]: We did, yeah. As the Missoula Women for Peace, yeah.

Jean Pfeiffer: Well, it was the Missoula Peace Group in '63.

[unidentified voice 1]: Yeah, we did it '63, and then we brought another one back from Seattle, and we had it at the library—remember?

Jean Pfeiffer: Okay. And we even had the mayor of Missoula cut the ribbon. It was a very attractive art gallery sort of affair, with flowers and Japanese décor, and we worked hard on that. Then, everybody was becoming more alarmed as the Vietnam War heated up. I suppose that was the reason for the big group being formed in 1970. I have been active all through

these events until—and I really enjoy the group now, because we can at least come to meetings and have shared experiences and have support. We sort of react the same way to different events, and it is really nice to have this backup. It's very much harder to concentrate, because the Vietnam War was a central point for our being, and now there are so many conflicts all over the world and so many things happening that it becomes difficult to zero in on a issue. This is one of our problems right now.

Jackie McGiffert: I moved to Missoula in 1966, and by that time I was very opposed to the Vietnam War for all the reasons that everybody else has given. But, I did not march in the protest march in '66. I felt intimidated by that idea and too new to the community, but I did in '67. I don't think, though, that I was with this group. I think that I knew some of the people, probably, but I don't think I walked with them. Sometime after that in the late '60s I went to a few meetings, but I did not actually join the group. And, I suppose I dropped in now and then in the '70s, but I don't believe that I really started coming formally until just a few years ago.

It's—oh, what do I want to say? I can't think of the word I'm searching for. But, as someone else has said, it makes you feel good to be with a group who are like-minded and so dedicated in their pursuit of justice and of peace, and these women who have been with this group from the beginning, I think that you would have to know them and come week after week to realize how much time and effort—how many postage stamps they've licked, how many telephone numbers to Washington they've dialed. You would be really impressed at their dedication and untiring efforts. So, I guess that is about it for me, and I believe it has gone all the way around the group now.

[End of Interview]