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Oral History Number: 421-001
Interviewee: Suzy Hunt
Interviewer: John "Jack" Rowan
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Note: The interviewee and Judi Chapman's daughter Varen Chapman have edited this transcript for accuracy.

Jack Rowan: All right, so we are at the Foxglove Cottage. It's a snowy February, or January morning. I'm jumping ahead of myself. Here with Suzy Hunt to do an oral history interview about Judith Larson Chapman.

Suzy Hunt: Yes, good morning.

JR: Good morning.

SH: Judi Chapman, for want of a better...She was my best friend, basically. The truest, dearest woman I ever knew. I first met her when I was a student at the University of Washington [means the University of Montana]. We were in married student housing. Both of us were single parents. She had two girls, and I had a girl and a boy. And they were kind of stair-step children. The youngest was Varen, and then my son Jonathan, and then my daughter Deirdre, and her oldest daughter Tonia. But all close enough in age for them to play, and they were great friends. We shared babysitting jobs, and we shared dinners—her dreadful casseroles [laughs] and my dreadful pot roasts—and it all worked out great.

She was even then, maybe more especially then, because it was in the late '60s, '70s, a very political time, and she was always involved in politics. Everyone in those days was involved, at least peripherally, in politics. I mean, they knew about it, and they knew the issues because it was the talk of the time. It's not like the celebrity culture now, at all. So the celebrities in those days were people like McGovern and Robert Kennedy...and Nixon [laughs] and those people. We talked about them, and they were important to our lives. Judi was instrumental in getting people involved. She was hugely important. She knew every issue, she knew the sides, and she got me out stumping for McGovern on a number of occasions—going house-to-house, calling people on the phone, getting people out to vote. It was very...it was fun because you were there as a group and you felt committed, and you looked to her for that kind of passion. She was a tremendous person, an inspiration really, for everyone.

There was a time when I got married again, and then got divorced again. [laughs] During the interim when I left my husband, this...I wasn't living at married student housing any longer. I had to leave my house, and I arrived on Judi's doorstep in the rain with my two children and my cat. She said, "Well yeah, come on in." So I lived with Judi for about a month-and-a-half, all squished together in married student housing. I've never forgotten her, how she just said, "Well, come on in. It's raining out there." That's how we sort of...after I got my divorce, we

became...because I, then, saw her on a daily basis, we got more involved. Over the years, we never lost contact.

I'm an actor, so I moved around a lot. Judi in her capacity as the assistant to Pat Williams, who was then in Washington [D.C.], came to see me in every single one of my productions in Texas, in, of course, New York City, which she just came up from Washington, D.C...Cleveland, when I worked there. She came. "I'm coming. When do you open? When can I come?" She was...there was no even asking, it was, "I'm coming." And she was kind of like my biggest fan. After my mom, [laughs] She was my biggest fan.

And I thought...I jotted down, I jotted down some of the things that Judi loved and Judi hated. Number one on her list of hates were Republicans, and it really didn't matter if they were good Republicans or liberal Republicans. She was kind of a straight-ticket girl. There's just no other way to describe Judi. When she got cancer years later, we named her tumor after Trent Lott, and any other hideous Republican that was annoying us over the airwaves. She hated vegetables, and would only eat like peas, maybe, and only if they were cooked within an inch of their lives. She was a total meat and potatoes girl, raised in the Dakotas by a man who worked for [J.C.] Penney's, so and yes, he was a Republican, too, so.

And we were laughing one day, she had...When I moved in with her later on when I came back to Montana after a long theater tour, it was summer. It was May, it was gorgeous in Montana. She said, "Well, why don't you stay with me?"

Or, maybe it is I said, "I'm staying with you," because I want to be here in the spring in Montana. So, I moved in. I didn't have my children at that time. They'd grown up and gone away. But I was going to cook dinner one night, and I said, "Well, what do you got in your cookbooks?" I looked, and I had forgotten about...She had this cookbook from South Dakota or North Dakota, one of them. It was one of those Women's League [Junior League] cookbooks, and it actually had a section for fish. So, I turned to the fish, and there was one recipe. It was a tuna casserole with potato chips. She said, "Well, that's the only fish I'll eat." So fine, we had something else that night, but she didn't like fish, she didn't like veggies.

And she didn't like organized gardens in the sense that she loved native plants. Really, Judi was one of the first people that I was aware of who recycled and who looked to native plants as a mainstay in your garden. She was one of those kind of girls. Me, I was raised with English gardens and some sense of organized [organization], and you don't, you don't have flowers in amongst the weeds, etcetera. So we had a war there when that spring, when I stayed with her. I wanted to put in...She had a large yard so, and flowers and weeds. A lot of weeds. So I said, "Well, I'll make a garden for us."

She said, "Okay." So, I hauled in all this dirt, I hauled in all this rock. I made a rock wall, a raised bed, la, la, la. Planted it with the flowers that I purchased with my own money, put it in, and then she took...After it was all in, and we're just waiting for it to look gorgeous, or I was,

anyway, she took this large can of wild flowers [seeds] and native plants and sprinkled it all over that bed [laughs] while I was gone one day. All these plants, you know, they just came pouring out of the ground, and she would say, "See, look at that mullein. Isn't it beautiful?" I was just like, you know, it was crunching out my peony bush. But anyway, that's what she...Those were her hates. Not a very long list, because the list of her loves is extraordinary.

Top of the list, top of the list—Democrats. She was an ardent supporter. This is important to remember, is when Mr. Clinton was running for president the first time, there was a large segment in Montana—the Indian vote—which she always was very close in contact with Indian voters in her time. She basically traveled around the state organizing the Indian vote for Clinton, and it's one of the reasons why Clinton did so well in Montana, is because the Indians voted for him en masse practically.

I think second on the list—that love list—is rock and roll. She was an ardent fan of rock and roll and went to concerts all the time whenever she could. She had in her house, she went to the second Woodstock. She had in her house her muddy shoes. She was a member of the mud people, if you remember, in the second...There was a mud contingent. She brought her shoes home, and she encased them in glass and hung them on the wall. The Grateful Dead, of course, but every rock and roll band she loved, and she went to see...I went to see Bob Dylan with her twice and Tina Turner and Crosby, Stills and Nash. She was an ardent old time rock and roller, but she embraced all rock and roll. I don't know if she liked rap, but I think she probably would. She was just a very cath...she had Catholic interests in rock and roll.

When Judi, when Judi had a spare evening, Judi always would go out. Her favorite bar in town was Charlie B's, because of the embrace of culture at Charlie B's. Everyone from biker people to Indians to quasi intellectuals from students. The age was great, too. From young people to old people, it was a very mixed kind of place. Excuse me. So, she'd always want to go with someone. She didn't want to just waltz into Charlie B's by herself. So she was always after me to go with her. Well, I like Charlie B's, maybe once a month, maybe. But no, "You have to go with me. Just stay for a little while. Just stay." No, and so she would just get me to go, and...But she would never want to go alone. So you always felt guilty if you kept her from her Charlie B's.

She loved tennis, and when I lived in New York City, she traveled up to see the New York...out at Arthur Ashe Stadium, the U.S. Open. I didn't go with her but she went, and I don't remember who she saw but I assume it was Andre Agassi, because that was her favorite player. She was just nuts for him. I mean, nuts for him. Used to argue vociferously for his particular skills as a tennis player. One time I went down to Washington when she was living there, and we went to a tennis match down there. I forget the name of it, but Andre Agassi was playing, and I saw him play with her, and I saw how rabid she was. We had attempted tennis in our younger days when we lived in married student housing, and we went out frequently in the warmer weather to bat the ball around but neither of us were any good. We mostly chased balls all day. But she loved tennis.

Another one of her loves was travel, and she was a very good traveler. She'd pack a very tight suitcase and very light, and knew how to travel well and bought travel clothes and went everywhere. She traveled down to...she was an Indian Affair...she was an advocate for Indian Affairs. When I was down in the Arizona at a theater, she was down dealing with the Hopi Tribe. Did I pronounce it correctly? She went down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon to visit one tribe. I can't remember the name of that—

JR: Havasupai?

SH: Yes, yes, the Havasupai, thank you. Yes, the Havasupai. She traveled down in a helicopter, and she said, "I was so," she'd never been so terrified in the helicopter. I said, "Well, you should have taken the donkey down, dear," knowing how much she loathes the idea of traveling by horseback. I knew my...I knew I would get some rather profane gesture in my direction. But no, she was down there, but...So she traveled everywhere. She also worked for Head Start, and she investigated schools and tried to improve the level of education in those places as well. So she was extremely involved on many levels for Indian Affairs, and her travel took her there.

When we got older, we went to Europe together, and we landed in in Rome. I have a picture of us in Seattle...She came to Seattle and we took the plane from there. I have a picture of us sitting there in the plane on our first journey—first leg of our journey—and both of us look so happy, both of us were so excited. I hadn't been to Europe for years, not since I was small, and so it was a very, very exciting time for both of us. We had a great time, and we roomed together. To say that Judi snored doesn't cover it. It's kind of like a large conveyor belt noise that continues and then it kind of slows down, and then it kind of goes through the rough cogs and then it starts again. It was an extraordinary...and I had things like hearing plugs, ear plugs, and fat lot of good that did me. She was a very generous traveler too. She just wanted to go wherever you went, and except for the walking part, she wasn't a keen walker. But if it involved a taxi or a bus or a tram, she was your girl. She was always fun, and she always wanted to have, "Oh yes, let's buy a bottle of wine and have a picnic," and "Oh, that cheese looks good." She was an extraordinary...She had great sensual joy for living. Just remarkable. She had good taste in almost everything in regards the food that we ate over there, except when she was in America. She drank rotgut wine. She would buy box wine. I would like, I would like shake my head. I said, "You can afford to buy a good bottle of wine. Why do you buy that?" But she would, she would go ahead and buy it, so...she drank her box, and I'd drink whatever I could afford to buy, and then that was it. But over in Europe, she was great, and we had a wonderful time over there.

One time in Rome, Varen joined us, her youngest daughter. A splendid individual. We picked up these Italian guys and went clubbing, and they took us for a wild ride all over Rome to the heights so we could look down and see the city. Then he took us to this club called Jackie O, which was the hot spot. It looked just like a pickup bar to me, but what do I know. Anyway, we did have a good time, and we danced that night and it was fun. Probably had too much to drink, but—

The other thing Judi loved was the news. In those days, the news on TV was you first got your CBS news, then you got your ABC news, and then it closed with the NBC news. I mean, an hour-and-a-half of the same coiffed individuals telling you the same story, basically. But Judi listened to every one of them. Just drove me nuts. The other thing she loved was the Sunday movie of the week, this kind of ghastly film about the latest illness or the latest whatever. But I guess what it was, is that the movie of the week was generally something about women's issues, even if it was told in a rather melodramatic way and badly acted or what. But Judi was really...on Sunday that was it, the movie of the week, and she would watch it. I'd nod my head and go to sleep.

She was a huge fan of Indian art, and she had lots of it. And Judi is indiscriminate, I have to say that, about art. She had everything from magnificent Havasupai art and beautiful Crow art and all kinds that I wouldn't be able to identify, down to the meanest piece of crap that she might have bought from some roadside schlock dealer. She had it all over her house. The culture of the Indians, as expressed in all of its art form, was in some way, well, it was beautiful. It was all there, up on the wall for everyone to look at and to assess and to...and share. She was non-discriminating that way. She adored Monte Dolacks. She had Dolacks all over her house. Ducks swimming in the bathroom, diving into the toilet, the gorgeous eastern skies of Montana with the...with the mesas and all that. She was just in love with Monte's art, which is, of course, gorgeous.

She had this house over on Hilda that she had for a long time with a great big yard. When her parents were still living, they said that they would remodel, help her remodel her house, and she designed the remodel. I was living with her at the time. It was that ghastly summer, that wonderful summer. The house kind of turned upside down, and we had to live someplace else to take a shower for a while. But it was kind of open, and we'd wander through this open thing that didn't have a roof on it or had a tarp or something. But it was a long, kind of protracted period of remodel. But Judi designed the house that she liked, and it was absolutely her baby. From the beautiful tile steps going up to the second story, to the open-air rooms above, which seemed so odd in retrospect, but they were her baby and it looked out on her beloved Mount Sentinel. She had a wonderful balcony off of her office, and her bedroom was also a beautiful balcony, too, down on the first floor. And she designed it. That was her baby. She also did the basement, and that's where I lived. I had this room in the basement which was, in its worst...in its worst...What am I saying. In its first styling it was really just a room that I tacked maps up on the wall because I didn't have anything. Everything was in storage in Seattle. I had a bed down there, and she just revamped it and made a new bathroom and a rug and la, la, la. She just wanted that space to be pretty.

The other thing she loved more than life itself was cats, and the yard was a graveyard for all the cats who had lived and peed and died and got run over, whatever. She had names for them all, and they were all under the bushes buried and things like that. "Oh, don't dig there and put a...there's a cat buried there," she'd say to me. Then, we had cats. We had, in those days there

were the twin cats. The two black cats, what were they called, my gosh. I can't believe I've forgotten. Frick and Frack...no, that's not right. Oh, yeah, that character that Robin Williams played on TV.

JR: Mork and Mindy?

SH: Yes, Mork and Mindy. Thank you for helping. [laughs] And black cat, the cat that was there for years and years and years, the dear black cat.

The other thing that she collected were dinner plates. I mean, she had 800 dinner plates. Really, they stacked and stacked, and there's just no way that you could ever use all the dinner plates. She'd come home from her travels, and there be another dinner plate. I, "What the hell, what the hell, Judi?" She also collected cups with black and white cows on them, and when she died and there was this big rummage sale, they had all these to...they sold a lot of stuff and then gave the money to the hospice people, I believe, who had been so generous during her decline. Anyway, there were all these cups left that nobody wanted. [laughs] So we got to pick out our own cup. I still have my black cow cup.

[telephone rings] Oh, darn it, that...if you want to turn it off, and...because I don't know how to turn it off. [muffled noise]

JR: You were talking about the black cow, the black and white cow.

SH: Oh, right, her penchant for black and white cows. Then she had all kinds of other things black and white cows, like clocks and other dishes and oh, just little figurines. It was appalling. Anyway, I teased her about it incessantly.

She was a very stubborn woman. Stubborn to the nth degree, once she...when she had fixated on something. But that was part of her charm, and I loved her wholeheartedly. Sometimes we had little arguments, and those were because she was intractable and would not relent.

She was terrific around Christmas. She liked Christmas [very] much. She had all these stuffed animals. There was the Christmas mouse, and I remember it from the very first times I knew Judi. She had this giant Christmas mouse, and I think she had, maybe when she was a kid, I don't know. But at any rate, it looked like god-awful hell. Just a ratty old thing that spent its...spent 11 months of the year in the basement, and then hauled up and put under the tree along with a lot of other crappy looking stuffed animals. [laughs]

Anyway, tradition was important to her. Those few things she always made sure. One of the things was that she always made pumpkin bread, zucchini bread, and really good lemon bars. Judi wasn't a very good cook, but lemon bars, she had that down. Man, those were good, and they were always gone first. Very funny woman.

When I lived with her, I had a more conventional way of decorating the tree, and we didn't know that we were very different about trees. First of all, she never went to buy the tree. I went to buy the tree, because she would pick out some scrawny-ass tree, and I liked a nice tree, blah, blah, blah. Anyway, so I'd come home with the tree, and tell her, "We're having this tree," and she'd help me put it up. Then the awkward time of putting the lights on. Judi didn't care about how ornaments and lights went on a tree, it just...She would kind of throw it up there, and where it landed was where it was. It was so random, and the first time I saw her do it, I just said, "Judi, Judi, Judi," and then I started to insert my opinion, which can be as stubborn as hers at times. I said, "No, no, no, the light should string like little garlands from branch to branch, not like that," and we got into a fight. It was the first real fight. It was over such a stupid thing. So then we decided that I would put the tree up with the lights the way I wanted them one year, and she would put them up another year that way. Because we spent a lot of Christmases, I would travel to her house at Christmas, that's the way it was, and it seemed to work out. I just tried not to look at the tree too much on those years that she, quote "decorated the tree." But those were great.

On one of these such occasions I stayed with her—it was before she got sick—I stayed with her, oh gosh, for like a month. She came out...I was watching TV one time, and she came out and she's standing there. I looked up, and there she is, she's standing there in her nightgown. She's got...she had bad knees so she had these knee pads on. She had carpal tunnel syndrome so she had these arm pads on. And she ground her teeth at night when she slept so she had this teeth thing in her mouth. She looked at me, and she said, "No wonder I don't have sex partners. Look at me." [laughs] We howled. She had a good humor about that.

But this is kind of intimate, she never gave up on the idea of having...I mean, it was all part of living was having sexual relationships. She fell in love with a man who lived back East. He and his partner, he was a...they were jazz musicians. Really Piedmont jazz, I should say. More blues, excuse me. I'm not up on my music terms. They were blues musicians. One played the guitar, and the other one played the harmonica. She fell in love with one of them, and he fell in love with her a little, too. They had a friendship and it was good, and she adored him. She had every one of their CDs in her house, and it was Cephas and Wiggins, I'll just tell you that, yeah. They were great. Because she knew Washington, D.C., the gentleman lived in...he had a farm somewhere, and so she went back to visit him, I think, a couple of times. But she wanted to have a good relationship with a man, and like many strong women of equally strong opinions, I don't know if that's off-putting or what. But like those strong women, she didn't have...I'm not blaming men, but she just didn't have sexual relationships that lasted very long. And not just sexual...men and she eventually became friends but were no longer partners.

I remember her saying to me, "Oh my god, I hope that isn't my last sexual encounter." When she...she hadn't had it for a while, and she was older. She, "Oh, I hope that wasn't my..."

I said, "Oh, I'm sure it's not, honey. You have to beat them off with a stick," or something. But she never stopped looking, and I think that there's virtue in that, that that kind of hope that she

had. Hope to get the Democrats ruling the Congress, hope that her girls do well and find their friends, and hope that the world is a safer place for ecology to thrive—for its ecology to thrive—and hope that she would have a lasting relationship. Didn't happen, but it didn't make her lose hope.

The first time she realized that she was [that] there was something wrong, we'd gone for this wonderful New Year's [the millennium] to Chico Hot Springs. All of our friends—we'd gathered there for several days and celebrated the New Year's. She was kind of reticent and a little worried with a little furrowed brow, and she said, "I'm having what you call *déjà vu* moments, kind of like I'm above the events of what's ever happening, looking down on it. It's the oddest feeling, and I have no idea what it is." But she was worried, and she didn't join in in the same gay way that she always did. When she got back, she went to the doctor and turns out that she had this tumor. She went down to California to a specialist, and they said, "We'll operate right now." So they did, and she came home and she was put on this [protocol]...with her children she went down there. Both Varen and Tonia were there with her. It was just a terrible tumor called a glioblastoma number five, which is like the worst damn tumor you can have. She came home, and they put her on a protocol, which was a kind of a national [experimental] thing that you...that it was not accepted medical practice yet. It was kind of a test, really. I mean, accepted by the AMA, but it was still quite in the test stage. It included a drug called thalidomide, which all of us are familiar with from the '50s and '60s when pregnant women had that and the tragedies that ensued. But apparently the thalidomide helped to shrink the tumor, so we were all rather hopeful for it. "Bless thalidomide," and blah, blah, blah. There was a combination, and she took all these pills with great, resolute courage. I don't know how...I couldn't have done it. She just, she was determined, and she was in many ways unwilling to give up the ghost. She denied that she was dying from the very [first], to the very end. She never, never thought that...Varen was getting married that August, and she would be there.

I lived with her, I think, the last five or six months of her life, and we traveled around and went to rock concerts together because that's what she wanted. One time when we were in Seattle and we had seen a concert, and we were going on the plane back and there was this ramp. Judi was in a wheelchair. Not because she couldn't walk, but because that was it, she was sick. So let's put her in a wheelchair, and that's what they do at the airport. It was a long way to go. But anyway, there's this ramp going into this plane—the Horizon Air. One of the things that I always wanted to do was to make Judi laugh. Anyway, so I thought, we're going down this ramp and I'll ride on the back of her wheelchair." And I knocked us both over. I knocked us both over. She fell out of her wheelchair, and that was ...all these people descended on us, picking us up, and she wasn't hurt. Maybe she's scraped her knee, she wasn't hurt. But she said, "Oh, you're trying to kill me now. You're trying to kill me." Then she came back to Missoula and told everybody I'm trying to kill her. [laughs]

One of the things Judi had at the end of her life was this fabulous Miata sports car. Before she got sick, she just drove it everywhere, and it was a great joy. Her granddaughter really loved riding with her in it, and she looked great in it. She drove it out to Seattle to visit me, and god, it

was great. She'd always wanted one, so she had one. So I'm so darn glad that she had that towards the end of her life. That was fabulous. It was before she knew she was sick.

After she got sick, the community was great here. The Indian nations came to honor her at this incredible dinner at The Shack restaurant. They brought her beautiful weave...there was a beaded rose. I don't know if it was a necklace or just a wall of hanging of a sort, but it was this gorgeous thing. They brought her pottery. John P. Andersen, a fellow who lives in town, gave her a collection of Buddhas. He had a lot of interest in Eastern art, and he brought her Buddhas and special beads. Other people brought crystals. Whatever worked is how we thought...We had spiritual sessions. We also had sessions where we would have humor night. Not that we didn't try to have humor night all the time, but we thought maybe movie night. So we'd rent funny movies that she thought...she would laugh at and stuff. But it turned out humor night, we derailed it because it was much funnier just to sit around and talk. So we ended humor night that way, and had humor night other ways.

[Break in audio]

JR: So you were talking about with humor night you decided to...it was more fun to just talk.

SH: Right, we did. And we did. We had people over, and we laughed ourselves silly. There were lots of times where we were in pain because we were laughing so hard. Judi would sit there on the couch and just throw her head back. It was great. The last year of her life she was great on having her own rock concert in her...I don't know if you know about this. She gave, on Memorial Day she would give a rock concert in her backyard. Well, she lives in the University District over there underneath the shadow of Mount Sentinel, and she would inform all the neighbors that that's what was going to happen and that they were invited. In fact, almost everybody in the world was invited to this rock concert. She'd go to Charlie B's and there was kind of this flat-out invitation. To prepare for it, she would buy all this box wine [laughs] and a lot of other wines, too. And a huge keg of beer. I was ordered to make the obligatory oatmeal and raisin cookies. One time we made over 1,000 cookies. A thousand cookies. We have a picture of us with crumbs on our chest, just dying. [laughs]. O.D.-ing on these cookies. But anyway, she would invite local groups to come and perform at her rock concert—friends to perform. They would be slated in and over the entire day, I think, beginning like at two, maybe earlier, and going until the wee hours, there were rock bands in and out of her yard. And dancing, and she put up a tent one year because she was fearful of the wind and the rain. And yeah, there was rain and we still had the rock concert, and everyone got muddy and it was cold, but everyone had a great time. She gave several of those. The year that she was very ill, she insisted on doing one, too, and she was in a wheelchair doing it. She died in July, and this was May. [laughs] That was part of her stubbornness. She insisted on the normalcy of her life, which is kind of beautiful.

When she got really sick, there were lovely people in town. Vivian Brooke, who was active in the...Missoula has this wonderful choir festival—chorus festival. She called up one day, and she said, "Do you think Judi would like to listen to the Botswanan choral group?"

Everyone said, “Yeah”—not only Judi—“we’d like to hear it.” So she brought these beautiful people, these fantastic people—one man and four women. And they were all...they were dolled up in these beautiful, colorful muumuu things. Frankly, I thought the man looked like...man, excuse the expression, a pig in shit. He was a happy camper. [laughs] He had these beautiful women and they all sang gorgeous, and they sang Botswanan songs. We thought it would...Judi was in bed at this time, and we weren’t sure if it would be a good thing for them to be in the room doing the singing. But it was a gorgeous, gorgeous day in July, and they were out in the yard. But these people, they knew better. They were extremely spiritual. They said, “Oh, no. We will sing to Judi.” They all went in and they surrounded her bed. Oh! It was so moving. They sang, and she...Judi looked like a Buddha at the end of her life. Her face was kind of swollen from the medication, and she lay in state, kind of, and she always was the most beautiful girl. They sang, and it was just very, very moving.

Then we went out in the yard, after they blessed Judi, and they all laid hands on Judi, too, and kind of massaged her arms and legs and sang to her. It was just stunning. Then they went out in the yard, and we brought out the boxed wine. [laughs] Judi couldn’t have wine when she was taking her protocol, and after we kicked the protocol out, every now and then she would sip a little wine. But she didn’t enjoy it like she once did. But anyway, we got out the wine, and those Botswanan folks, that’s when they [really] started singing. We started singing, and I sang a song, and then they said, “Sing it again.” So I sang it again, and they harmonized underneath. All the neighbors showed up because they heard these beautiful singers. We had a huge crowd of people, and we left the French doors open to Judi’s bedroom and so she heard the end of the concert. Then we all trooped out to their van singing “When the Saints Go Marching In.” It was a beautiful day, and we were so happy that we knew Judi because it would never have happened without her.

Then this was very soon before Judi died. We got a call from this group of Indian drummers to come, and they wanted to play in Judi’s room and play out in the yard, and they all did. These drummers—there were five of them—and they came in and they stood around her bed. I leaned into Judi and I said, “Judi, Judi. Wake up. Your fantasy has come true. Good-looking Indian men surround you, and they’re going to sing.” Her eyes opened and she smiled and she looked up, and they started to sing and pound their drums—smaller drums—and they sang for her. Oh my god, she smiled, and oh well...there was great joy in that room. Then they went out in the yard with the big drums—this was in the middle of the day—and they sang and played their drums for an hour or so. Again, the neighbors came, and Judi heard those drums.

I have a hard time...[starts to cry] I have a hard time remembering that sometimes because those Indian people represented her life, to me. Their life was enriched by her as she was enriched by theirs. I would never have known whatever the culture was. Born and raised in Montana, I didn’t know Indian people until I knew Judi. And I’m not alone in that. I’m not alone in that. She insisted that they be part of our lives.

One day, this Indian girl showed up. She was young girl—she was like in her 20s—and she had had some trouble. A lot of trouble. She'd had drug trouble, she had been abused, and Judi had helped her. This girl was not wealthy, brought a check for 500 dollars to help defray Judi's medical expenses. Well, Judi, being raised a Republican, had all kinds of insurance, and so that was never a problem. She told the girl that...this young woman, that she didn't need this money. This woman insisted that Judi take it. It would have not been a good thing had Judi not taken it. So she did. She took the money, and then she gave it to the Indian Center. But this...this young girl, her voice trembling, really, telling Judi that she was alive because of Judi. I don't know the particulars of that event, but I believe her, because I know Judi, quietly in her own way, would give money to these people every now and then who needed it. Or worked hard to raise larger sums for people who needed it.

People don't live their lives the way Judi lived her...not very many, you know. So...and when she died, she died really quietly. She just sort of slipped away. I will never forget this, her youngest daughter, Varen. I love Varen, I love her. She's like a daughter to me. She went out of the room, running out of the room crying, "Oh, my mother, my mother." She went home, and she cut all of her beautiful long hair off, [begins to cry again] in her grief.

[laughs] I know it seems...Oh, boy! It was hard. Judi sort of lay in her bed. We covered her with this beautiful star quilt, and we filled it with tokens. She had given me a few things over the years, and I just tucked them right in there, hoping that my spirit and her spirit would go to heaven some...in some way. When the people from the mortuary came to have her cremated, we told him to take that star quilt and all those tokens and to take them with her, and they did. Then her girls took her ashes and put them on Mount Sentinel above her house in a secret place that only they know. When I come into the Missoula Valley, which I do at least once a year, I always look up to Mount Sentinel and say hi to Judi. She was a great, wonderful friend to me, and I thank you for this opportunity to talk about her.

JR: Thank you for sharing some wonderful stories.

SH: Oh, you're welcome. But, anyway. Judi was a great Montanan. Really bright, and I'm...and I know...Here's a small thing. There's this wonderful book called *The Last Best Place* that Annick Smith and Bill Kitteridge put together. It's a very thick tome. [laughs] It's at least four inches thick. Judi is the only person I know that has read it from cover to cover. She said she did, and I believe her. She gave me a copy of it, and there's a picture of it inside, of her and me in New York, when she came up to see my Broadway show. In it she says, "From one Montanan to another. With love, Judi." It is a prized possession of mine. [pauses] Oh, go ahead.

JR: I was going to ask. What brought her to Montana? Do you know?

SH: Oh, gee whiz, she was getting a degree in social work, and she went to the University of Montana. She is a graduate of Oberlin College, I believe. Isn't it odd that I don't know those details before she came here? She was divorced from a man she met at college, I believe, and

when she came back to Montana, she married a Native American. They tried to make the marriage work. They both tried very hard, but it didn't succeed.

When she got interested in politics and became so ardent and so intelligent—a politico—Pat Williams saw her virtue and hired her to come to Washington, D.C. with him. She worked for 12 years in Washington, D.C. as his assistant. That's where she got so involved politically in the practical business of Indian Affairs, because Pat is a great proponent of Indian Affairs. Was then, is now. He also, by the by, was a member of the National Endowment for the Arts committee from Congress, and he holds a special place in my heart because he values the importance of culture. Then when that job ended, she came back and began working for Head Start. I may have these details incorrect, but when she came back she then flew from tribe to tribe and goes up to Browning, goes over to a Colstrip area there. Really investigating their education level. She just did us so much. On the way, so many stories that she...that about her affairs with Indian people that I couldn't tell you. If you met tribal members, they would have their own stories, and I wish I knew where that young girl was who brought the 500 dollars. She would be able to tell you [laughs] about Judi. But she was a great gal.

JR: Indeed.

SH: I haven't seen Varen since I got back from...since I came here to rehearse this new play here, and so I...We've emailed and we've left messages, but we'll connect, I know. She's part of my family.

JR: Well, thank you very much for [unintelligible].

SH: You're welcome, Jack. Thank you.

JR: [unintelligible] an intimate [unintelligible]. It helps give a much greater sense of Judi than could be read in just the...her papers.

SH: [laughs] Yes, oh, it's my pleasure, thank you.

[End of Interview]