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Interviewee: Carolyn Wheeler
Interviewer: Diane Sands
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Diane Sands: Well it's always good to start at the beginning, Carolyn. The things I was thinking to talk to you most about have to do with the development of the Women's Studies program, the early days of that, and also the other community and general feminist activities. So why don't you start by just telling me how you got to Missoula, when you were there, and what kind of life you had when you were in Missoula.

Carolyn Wheeler: Okay, I went to Missoula first in August or September of 1969. My then-husband, Juan, was going there to graduate school in zoology. For a year, I worked as a bookkeeper for a construction company, Felton Construction Company, which did major utilities contracts all over the Northwest. I did bookkeeping and accounting and midway through that year applied for a job teaching at the university. I had taught English at the University of Missouri for three years before we left there. That's what I got my Master's degree in English [was] in Missouri and there, had taught composition, writing classes.

There was a similar position at the University of Montana, although there was no PhD program so they didn't use graduate students, for the most part, to teach the composition program at the university. So that was the job I applied for. They had just, by then, three people full-time to teach composition or the introductory writing class. I started doing that in the fall of 1970. For the first year or two, I kept a very low profile. That was the time of a lot of antiwar activity and meeting a lot of people through groups that were organizing demonstrations and protests. That's when I first met Stephanie and Barbara and got involved in some women's groups that way. As I recall, the real impetus for that was that we were involved in sort of Marxist discussion groups about the war and organizing activities for that.

As happened in those kinds of groups everywhere, the women in it began to think that there would be some benefits in meeting separately and talking about some of these things, just basic dynamics like feeling we weren't being heard in meetings and that we might feel more comfortable taking more leadership roles and talking more in the meetings and having more input into what kinds of decisions were made about what we were doing if we met separately and talked. I think that's what we were doing at the same time when we started doing consciousness raising groups that were just strictly women's liberation kinds of things, but there were also some women who were meeting as an adjunct to the antiwar stuff that we were planning.

We kept those kind of separate women's meetings with the other political stuff going on for years because once we got involved in developing the Montana New Socialist Party, we did the

same thing. We had women's meetings separate from the general party meetings, from the larger group meetings so that we could get more comfortable talking about all this stuff and not get talked over. I'm trying to think of a polite way to say that. It's not like we were always interrupted. It was just the classic thing. It still goes on in any kind of meeting that a woman says something and there's just kind of polite silence and then a man in the room says the exact same thing and three other men say, "What a great idea." You don't want to sound fascist, but didn't I just say that? So we just thought maybe if we practiced a little among ourselves, we'd be able to make ourselves heard and really reinforce each other. So that was kind of going on. We in the background, in addition to these women's meetings, liberation and consciousness-raising group meetings, we got involved in at the same time.

Back to the teaching. I joined the Teachers Union and found a group there who were doing a study of faculty salaries. Just through their study, they saw my name down on the list of someone who was paid differently from the men in my department. The other two men had the same job I had. I thought, "I wouldn't have known that because it just wasn't that cool to ask how much money they make." I had been told the salary for the job. It was a lot more than what I was making as a bookkeeper. It was a lot more than I had made teaching at the University of Missouri.

I didn't think to ask for more than that. I thought it was a set salary for the job, so fine, I'd take it. Then I found out I was being paid—it wasn't that much, it was only 500 dollars less a year—I went to the chairman of the department and said, "Why,"—I don't know if everyone, if it was suggested that we do, but I was just curious. I went and asked him, "Why am I not making as much money as Lowell and Marshall?"

He sputtered a little bit and sad, "Well Lowell has a family to support." His name was Lowell Udo, who had five children, a bigger family than I had.

But I did say, "Well, I have a family to support too. You remember. My husband is a graduate student and we have a child. He's not earning any money. Remember? That's part of the whole background I gave you when I interviewed for the job."

He said, "That's right."

I said, "Also, Marshall has no children, and his wife works. That doesn't exactly explain why he would be making more money."

He said, "Well they have more experience."

I said, "Really? What's their experience?"

"Well, Lowell taught for three years before he came here."

I said, “Right, so did I.”

He said, “You did?”

I said, “Come on, Merrel (?), I thought that’s why I got the job.”

He said, “I guess there’s absolutely no explanation for why you’re not making as much as they are, except they asked for more.”

I said, “I understand.” So I got a little lump sum pay for making up for three years of pay difference.

The really important part of that for me was that it was kind of cross department way of meeting a lot of people and meeting some women who were doing that analysis. Men were involved in it too. There were some other women that were in on that committee that I met then who were physically married. They were (unintelligible). So shortly after that when I think Judy Smith was probably the first person who approached me to ask about doing something with Women’s Studies. I talked to Mary Cummings about it and we started having meetings with other women on the faculty, other people on the faculty.

Although I decided a politic way to do that was to go to the chair of each department because I went to the chair of the English department to ask if I could do something before we even started doing any interdisciplinary courses. I asked if I could do something on women in literature and he laughed at me and said, “What do you mean? What would that be, a course on Jane Austen?” He just named the one woman writer he could think of. I said, “Well if you don’t think there are enough women writers to constitute a course on women writers, maybe I could do something on…”—this was for freshman, an introduction to literature—I said, “Maybe I could do something where women are characters and just talk about women in the literature.”

He said, “Oh that might be interesting.”

So I did that for a couple of years. Maybe that’s why Judy thought to. I think I might have already been doing that just out of my own interest. Maybe I started doing it right then. My original three-year appointment in the English department was extended, at my request, to five years. It was just in there at the same time I asked for an extension and to do these new classes that I think I started trying to develop the interdisciplinary thing. I first did a lecture series that I think they called a symposium, on women. We had the psychology department and the home ec department, and the anthropology, sociology, and Judy Smith, and probably you, and I did just kind of topical lectures.

DS: That was in 1974.

CW: Yes, okay. Then the same group of people worked to develop some courses we could offer for credit. I think we first just did a free public lecture. They called it a symposium. I'm not sure which year that was.

DS: It's all in the papers.

CW: Right. Then Mary Cummings and I did a course on liberation and oppression of women for credit in social work and sociology. I think it was also in home economics that got into it. I just was their team teaching that and people couldn't get any credit in the department I was in for that course. I did some of the lectures and then led one of the discussion groups for that course, which must have been in '74 too. I wrote this memo to anyone, I didn't put names, but I hand-delivered it to women that I knew or had heard of in different departments. It was asking them to think about what they could do in their disciplines. Some of the reactions were memorable because Maxine Van de Wetering became such an important person in the whole academic development at the university instantly gave a lot of credibility to everything we did. She initially reacted by saying she couldn't even imagine what that would be and what was I talking about? It was a little like Merrel Clubbs' reaction. Her conversion came after 30 or 40 seconds and she just started thinking what it could mean to do history.

She too thought more of the images of women and the attitudes toward women as revealed in philosophy over thousands of years because I think the first course she taught during that summer was probably Women in American History. I remember a few years later after I was no longer teaching at the university and was working on another degree in history, I was her teaching assistant when she did one on women in philosophy. That kind of went back to Plato and Aristotle and more history and science in philosophy and perspectives on women. So she and I always had an interest. I don't mean she and I alone, but I had a similar interest in hers in the way that dominant culture viewed women and how that affects how women think of themselves, more so than didn't think of history of women as being so much about the women's movement and women's activities as more than images of women and the roles of women in general in society.

So the courses I did, the initial things I did on images of women and literature were just novels and stories where women were characters. Part of what I took when the other thing going on in my life with women's groups of all types was that in the teaching I did, I wanted to figure out ways to make women in my classes feel more comfortable talking. So I taught a lot of these classes in small group sessions. I would have 30 or 40 people in a class. I would meet with them, and never more than five at a time. If I had whatever number of men, I'd make sure they were spaced out in these groups and there would be several women and a man. By some point, I remember there were only one or two men in my classes. They were mostly women. So it wasn't that women were talking because they felt intimidated by men. Still, women seemed more comfortable if there weren't too many other people around.

We got more interaction going with small groups of people. It was fascinating because everybody really read the same book. This was like the perfect job for me. I got to pick books, get a bunch of people to read it, and come and talk to me for hours at a time. In different groups, people had very different perspectives and reactions this stuff. It was really the most fun thing I ever did in like four years in both the English department. When that five year thing was over, I taught for two more years in the humanities program. I developed additional courses in more like the history of women. I used a lot of novels for that too because I still liked it.

It was more traditional an actual history of women in America, but it was using novels to kind of talk about what women's lives were like. I continued to do that in small groups. I probably lectured once a week and then it was small group discussions (unintelligible) so people would talk more. Meanwhile, it had really caught on with a lot of people in other departments (unintelligible) courses were developed and offered by others that I sometimes got to sit in on. I mostly would just hear about them indirectly. I went to everything Maxine ever did, every class she ever taught.

Our initial idea had been, I think, that we would try to develop an actual academic women's studies program, maybe not a major in that, but enough courses that someone could have a kind of emphasis on women's studies with things in various departments. I don't think we thought initially that it should be a separate discipline. We thought we should use the people who were already in their established departments. There was a lot of talk about that academically, whether that kind of course offering garnered more respect if it were through the departments as opposed to being kind of a separate.

The reality was that nobody was going to pay anybody in some separate program. So we had to use the people who were already in jobs and then the wonderful volunteer people like Judy. At some point she must have been getting paid somewhere. She did an awful lot for these programs and classes as a volunteer. One of the indices of how unseriously this was all taken was- I remember when Margaret, then Jacobsen, and now Kingsland first came to town. She approached Merrel Clubb in the English department with an interest that she had in teaching something in women's studies or women in literature. I'm not sure how she phrased it.

He remembered that Carolyn had that same interest and suggested that she go see me. She and I sat and talked. This would have been in '75. Wasn't that interesting? What does he think I can do for you? I'm in no position to offer you a job. I'm thrilled to meet you, but you could come and do a lecture in one of my classes. I don't know if he just thought we'd be good friends or what. It was just a way to get her out of his office and out of his face to send her to talk to me. It was kind of funny; I think the English department was very ambivalent about the notoriety that my presence there might have brought to them. There were many people not at all pleased that I was doing this and not literary things through the English department. When my contract was finally terminated, my memory is there was some small group of people who

were objecting to that. It was something I decided to challenge through the union and through the other organization of professors.

DS: What is that? AATU?

CW: That's the teacher's union. Then there's that thing that Jack ran or whatever, was head of. Because the problem was by after five years added to my three years in Missouri, technically I should have gotten tenure. This, apparently, the English department really handled (?) the fact that I taught before I got there or they never would have extended my contract to the fifth year. AAUP, the American Association of University Professors went to bat for me saying that you know, under the professional rule she really should have tenure now.

I was challenging, just in general, the department's philosophy of keeping people in an instructor position so they were not tenure-track and then turning them over, which they had been doing for years. The same kind of rhetoric we challenged everything on, that this was exploitation of people who were by their own assessments doing a really outstanding job, but to avoid giving us tenure they'd have to let us go. The other two, the men who had started when I had would have been happy had I been successful in challenging (unintelligible) and much of my efforts. Both of them were writers, so their primary interest in life was just having enough money to support what their real lives were in terms of their writing, whereas I really wanted to teach and wanted a way to keep teaching.

I was told to go talk to the other senior members of the English department and explain to me why this was sort of an impossibility. This is, mind you, almost 30 years go. I will never forget Jesse Bier. When I walked into his office he said, "Carolyn, (unintelligible) I don't want to see your face." He swiveled in his chair and looked out the window behind him during the rest of the conversation. I don't think I have ever seen anyone act out so literally something they had just said. I was very struck by that. "I don't want to see your face," meaning "I don't want to think about you as a person and what your particular needs are because I have to do what's right for the good of the department, and that is to make you all leave because we don't want to be stuck with people in tenured jobs who aren't going to be happy here forever, teaching only English composition.

I was a very soft-spoken person, so I just said, "Well this is a little patronizing and a little condescending for you to decide how I might feel. Wouldn't that be my problem and if I didn't like the limitations on what I could teach, wouldn't it be up to me to choose to leave?"

He said, "Oh, but you wouldn't. You'd just pressure us and pressure us until finally we'd be letting you teach Shakespeare because you'd be a member of the department and we'd have to keep you happy."

I said, "I would be happy to teach."

"No you wouldn't. No one in their right mind would be happy teaching for their entire career."

So they were very, very, very angry that I had taken this outside the department. I guess that was the first step, talking to them, and they hoped that would make me understand. I did understand, but I still didn't think it was right. So they union and the AAUP people were doing whatever they did. Ultimately, I had an interview with the president of the university and he said, "You should be happy to know that we're changing in the policy. We're not going to allow them to have these non-tenured track instructor positions. Of we can't change this retroactively to your benefit."

But by then I had been offered this thing in the humanities program, which initially was to fill in for Maxine who was on a sabbatical for a year. Then they somehow found money for another year when she came back. Then they created another position in the humanities, but it was going to be half-time humanities and half-time women's studies. They had 700 or 800 applicants for that job. I was one of three being interviewed at the end of this long, long process. When I was selected and Dean Solberg called me to say, "There's no funding for this position anymore, so sorry."

DS: Was the year that the cuts came to the faculty…

CW: It was '77 so I think it was about that same time. So I'm not saying that wasn't true, that there wasn't money, but it seemed awkward, coincidental.

I later learned though that he had been visited by Adler (?) (unintelligible) from the English Department who was up in arms at the idea of my (unintelligible) position. At that point, I applied to the History Department as a graduate student, and in my second year learned they went to them to and didn't want to let me in as a student. So I think people in the English Department were really really upset at me some very deep level. Which is what I meant about ambivalent. I think they were glad that they had someone on their staff who'd been involved in these early disciplinary programs and the write-ups that this person was volunteering and teaching this class across campus because there was mostly positive reaction to that from the students and the academic community leader. But it was like I was this person who had turned on them or something. They were being very indulgent in letting me teach this thing I wanted to teach, that I thought was very important and tried to turn that into a permanent job against all the rules which is just not the sort of behavior they would expect.

But I thought it was really over the top to try to keep me from becoming a graduate student in another department. (laughs) Gee, this really isn't a very good position (unintelligible). They didn't want me (unintelligible).

DS: But you did become a graduate student in the History Department?

CW: I did, and I was, for a little while, I was a teaching assistant. The program, the Ph.D. program in History is pretty much on its last legs. There might be one or two people in it, and all the professors there were strongly urging me to go somewhere else. I was, at that point, studying late-19th century American social cultural and intellectual history, proposing a thesis that was going to be an exploration of…Get this, it was going to be how the great 19th century revolutionary thinkers—by which I meant Marx, Freud and Darwin who had revolutionized their respective disciplines—had failed to offer anything of assistance to the development of the critical feminist theory that would have similarly revolutionized the lives of women. It was all just a take off from that one line there at the end of Emile's [Durkheim?] book about the history of the women's movement where he said what was wrong with the American feminist movement is that it had its Lenin without its Marx. That was his summary point about the whole suffrage movement that women had shown a genius for organization at the end of the 19th beginning of the 20th century, Carrie Chapman Catt and all of the brilliant strategy but then it fell apart because there'd never been a theory for women's liberation. Isn't that very condescending and patronizing too? My reading of earlier feminist writing suggested that there had been lot of work, a lot of theoretical work, but it did seem that there was something missing there that really could have brought this all together. I thought it has to be because of the world view of people at that time and I'm going to understand it. Needless to say, I never got very far in that project.

After, I don't know I can't remember, three years in the History Department looking at the ages of tenured faculty in English, History, Humanities, it didn't look to me as if I would get a teaching job at any institution for another 30 years because everybody was my age. "I'm going to have to wait until they're all ready to retire before I break back into this field so I think I'll go to law school." No…Actually first I tried…I decided I would get the necessary certification to teach high school and I spent two years taking education courses and did student teaching and got my certificate so I could teach history, English, and humanities or whatever they called it in high school. And wrote 300, 400 letters applying for jobs all over the world, but not a single answer and that's when I decided to go to law school (laughs) which I did in Montana from '82-'85. By then I found law school overwhelming in the first year or two, and I pretty much did nothing else except study and then got out of town in '85 and came to D. C. No, first I went to Phoenix for three years. I clerked for a federal judge down there. So I came to D. C. to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1988.

DS: What do you do there?

CW: I am in the appellate division. We handle the appeals in the commission cases wherever they're tried around the country, all appeals are handled in Washington. I'm an assistant general counsel; I supervise five attorneys who actually do all that work. I'm in a little tiny teaching role with five people, and I teach a lot of writing and a lot of legal analysis in that job. But not much literature. (laughs) I keep joining book groups trying to find that experience again. But people don't read the book; there's no way you can make people read a book and come in and talk about it.

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

DS: Okay, Carolyn, let's go back to the beginning.

One of the questions that I wanted to talk to you about some of the more details but also somewhat philosophical questions. When did you first consider yourself or how did you first consider yourself to be a feminist or women's liberation? What made that point of view make sense to you? How did you conceive of it back then and how has it changed and what is it now?

CW: I really was one of those people who had that click sensation that between one minute and the next it seemed a whole lot of things fell into place. It was in, sometime between the fall of '69 and the fall of 1970 somewhere in there, through reading something in *Sisterhood is Powerful* or hearing somebody say something. I don't know; I can't really remember the moment of the click exactly. But it was initially from more of a realization that a lot of the internal doubts and limitations were a product of a kind of cultural conditioning, that some of the expectations I had about what is okay for me to do or want to do were a product of having been brought up female.

By that I mean, that I got married when I was really young, 18 or 19, and had a child when I was 19…I'm sorry, 20. I just turned 20. When we were married, we were both students. It just seemed to me if I'm married that that means I do all the housework, all the laundry, all the cooking, all the shopping, all the caring for the child. I didn't question that. My mother had been, and is still, a very strong woman, but she had very traditional ideas that these are women's responsibilities. So she had actually, really wanted me not to ever marry and was extremely disappointed that I got married that young. But I knew that her view was you had to choose between marriage and career. She thought I should choose a career. But her career aspirations for me…When I was 16, she suggested that I consider seriously going into either space science or television because those were the fields she thought. We're talking 1959 or so when she's telling me this. Those were the fields she thought would be dynamic in the future. I said, "This is me." She was so disappointed in English and teaching English because that's what she had done, and she just wanted me to do something she would have considered more exciting.

So she especially didn't want me to get married, and I was a sophomore in college when I got married. She certainly didn't want me to quit school, so she gave us a little financial assistance but she also gave me a lot of stern talk about, "Well, you've done it now, but you've got to keep this house and keep everything going on an even keel and make sure that there's no stress for Vaughn (?) because he needs to concentrate and needs to study."

"I also need to study." (laughs)

She said, "Well, you're going to not sleep because you've got to do all this."

I think of her doing that message even more than my husband did who probably wouldn't have been that demanding about how the house was kept. But whenever she came to visit, I was just like a tornado trying to get the house clean so she would really believe I was able to do all this. I thought that was necessary. So the most obvious thing I remember changing was like between one day and the next, "This isn't fair at all. You should be doing half the cooking, half the cleaning."

Because he was at the same meetings or reading the same things, he said, "You're absolutely right." It was overnight, a complete equalization as we could call of that kind of stuff. I mean we were rigid about it. It was like dish for dish, shirt for shirt. We were going to split everything. I had to learn to drive which I didn't know how to do at the time, and then I had to take equal responsibility for car maintenance. If there's a flat tire, is it my turn to change it or your turn to change it? There isn't anything we're going to accept that is in either one's sphere of responsibility, decision-making or anything else. So in most ways life got a lot easier at that point because I think I was doing way more than my share of everything. After a couple years, we reverted to things you really hate to do, you don't have to do it. I didn't like shopping as much as he did or whatever, and he hated to do laundry so I did the laundry.

DS: How much was your early consciousness and development of feminism or the women's liberation movement related to your involvement at that time in more Marxist perspective of what was going on with politics and anti-war activity?

CW: I was involved in Marxist discussion groups and study groups. We read Marx and Engel's stuff on women and the historical analysis there made a huge amount of sense to me. It was kind of intellectually satisfying that that gave an explanation that I could live with that wasn't as…I mean the Marxist perspective attaches less significance to biological difference and more to the kind of economic forces that may have necessitated particular divisions of labor and the women being relegated to care for children may have made sense in terms agricultural economies that's no longer necessary. It just kind of all fit and made it seem like this should be easy. Now the technology is here to control reproduction. We don't have to be, women in general, don't have to be caught up through their whole lives in the routine of having babies and caring for children. So it even seemed to ring true to me in a way that the material conditions for liberation were somehow there because of the development of capitalism and there was a possibility of women's actual liberation. But what that meant to me was liberation from the traditional role and exclusive responsibilities of the private sphere. But because of my other intellectual interests or academic interests I was reading lots of history. Besides Marxist theory I was reading a lot of history, and it just all seemed to fit to me why it was that—

This by the way the end of the '60s and early '70s there's kind of an academic revolution in every field. I mean in historiography by the time I'm studying that at the end of the '70s, there's this view that history has too long been written by the winners and reflective of the perspective of the dominant class. So even for people who weren't Marxist, there was a lot of interesting writing (unintelligible) the underside of history and writing from the perspective or about the

perspectives of various minority groups and women. It just sort of all seemed to bubble together. But the important thing to me personally was that I thought the oppression of women had a really profound psychological effect on women—that women felt inferior. They are viewed as second-class in these ways, and many women have really internalized that. I also knew a lot of women who were really strong and very positive about who they were, and seemed to kind of blow off whatever they thought was the negative perceptions of the dominate men in their lives.

I knew the working class women that just sort of laughed at men and sort of had their own culture and sisterhood and all that. But I wasn't a part of that. I'm in an academic class or whatever where these negative judgments of the men about women's abilities had probably really had a pernicious effect. Having been interested in western culture and read all this stuff and imbibed it from an early age, it had not escaped my attention that there didn't seem to be women who were writing works that we were studying hundreds of thousands of years later the way [we studied] Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky. Where are these women? I don't know why I haven't been exposed to this stuff before, but reading Virginia Woolf and a *Room of One's Own* and getting some understanding of why historically women weren't in a position to make those contribution instead of thinking it was something inherently limited in women that kept them from…Also realizing that our sense of what is good art or literature or architecture or anything else is shaped by who's doing it and the control of those values, those patriarchal values that may have caused us to overlook. Women who were doing these things for centuries.

DS: Many of those things seem to me to be so much at the core of what much of the energy of the early women's movement, particularly academically, and the development of women's studies focused on, was addressing those very questions that you're raising right there. That shift in perspective.

How do you think that actually changed? Do you think it was that we have made a significant change in moving from one perspective to a more diverse or perhaps even more radical perspective in looking at history and culture from a different point of view as a result of the development of feminism or women's studies?

CW: I'm not in the academy anymore, so it's now an outside perspective. I assume we must have made some significant changes because of the level of anxiety there is in academic institutions about this new multi-cultural perspective, the threat to the traditional canon. Obviously every school that I'm aware of teaches a lot of courses that reflect the contributions of all manner of people who wouldn't be considered worthy of study 30 years ago.

DS: So how is that struggle in ten-year period for you or among the faculty at the University of Montana, because as you said some such as Maxine in one second would have said, "There wasn't really anything to study," and in the next second instantly got it and could move forward on that. Other faculty members totally denied it, probably still do. But many other went

through a much slower process coming to grips with that information. How did that kind of a perspective or information even get infused within the faculty? Where there seminars? Where there just ongoing discussions? Do you think it was just part of the general cultural discussion? Or how did those of you who were on the faculty trying to move some of those issues do that?

CW: I don't know. I think in that little microcosm in Montana, it was a small faculty; and if people knew someone in their department who's now offering these courses, if they were involved in team-teaching or whatever, if they just were at all open to talking to that person they would say, "What are you doing?" I had a conversation with someone in the History Department who objected to the idea of women's history. Usually the academic objection to it was how can you isolate out and look at something from that perspective, you've got to be doing the whole story. He said, and this was one of the people I respected most in the History Department, he said, "If that's legitimate, why shouldn't I be teaching Irish-American history?"

I said, "Why, Dave, I think you should."

DS: And now he is.

CW: And now he is. I think something clicked in his head at that moment too. Why not? But historiography goes back and forth, from the view of what is the proper way to look at American history. You see some universal movement in some direction or point, counter-point. So the trends in historiography as to what's even the appropriate way to think about history keeps changing, and I don't know where they are right now but I think just hearing what other people are talking about opened other's minds to that this could even be interesting. I think the interest of students in it spurred others to get interested in it. As students get interested and want to do papers and research of their own, a body of scholarship begins to develop. I don't know so much at Montana since I'm not there anymore, but certainly everywhere else it's a huge, thriving discipline. I think that people, men or women, who want to teach these things or make this their research area have often experiences significant difficulty being taken seriously and getting tenure and traditional departments because there's still a predominant view that there's something kind of faddish and not really academically sound about these approaches.

DS: Were you on the faculty or involved at all when the lady that was the…Faculty Senate invited Women's Liberation to come and do a presentation to one of their meetings about women's liberation. Were you (unintelligible) with them? This was the session in which Barbara Kozer, I know, organized it—Konigsberg at the time—and I was involved in it. They were meeting over at, I think, the science building, and we had developed a little skit, gorilla theater piece for the entire time, which started coming dressed as all the stereotypes of women in the culture and coming in singing, "Aint' She Sweet, Make You Profit Off Her Meat," one of the anti-Miss America songs. Then reading all of the different sayings about women, folklore about women, and going through a lot of the different statistics about going out and pinching the men and saying "Oh, this one's cute. Look at him." (laughs)

CW: (laughs) I was not at that meeting.

DS: Then Judy McVey coming in dressed as Wonder Woman wearing a gun and reading Marge Piercy's poems, "We're Not Gonna Take This Anymore, Power to the Women." We're all out rolling and laughing to death in the bathroom thinking these guys are just horrified, totally paralyzed, and that was our invitation. They extended an invitation to actually come and talk, which I can't believe we did after that.

CW: I'm sure that got their attention.

DS: Yes, it also got the attention of the paper as I recall.

CW: I was in the Faculty Senate one or two years, but if I was there that year, I didn't go to that meeting. It seems I would have known about the program when you were preparing it. So if I had been a member I surely would have been there.

DS: Were you involved in the preparation of the proposal to the Faculty Senate for the establishment of a women's studies program?

CW: Yes.

DS: Why don't you talk some about that? Because we have the draft document that you have that looks like Maxine prepared which was the argument for it and then through (unintelligible) wrote the response.

CW: You know, maybe I wasn't by that time because that's probably…Do you remember what year they did that?

DS: [Nineteen] seventy-four, seventy-five?

CW: I just don't remember meeting with Gertrude and Maxine on that. Maybe that was—

DS: Gertrude was in opposition to it, and the debate in the Faculty Senate was predominately between them but not solely between them.

CW: I think all I did was talk to Maxine about the content of what was written up, but there may have been some reason to want to keep me in the background at that time because of where I was with the English Department. Because that was the year that I was challenging their decision and raising hackles all across the campus.

DS: When you were talking about the first teaching of the first Native Symposium and then it became a regular class being taught in a pretty different manner than traditional courses had

been taught where you had a faculty member who designed the course and basically taught the course by themselves. And yet those first courses that were offered were organized somewhat differently and led differently. Would you talk about that?

CW: Right, and it's really the only experience I ever had with a kind of team-teaching approach where a group or even just two but even way more than that because for the symposium it would have been five or six people brainstorming about what the content should be and meetings to talk about who would do what and what was a logical progression in topics and who's best to cover certain topics. I remember we really wanted something in psychology but we didn't have a woman. We didn't know if we had anyone who'd be interested in talking about the perspectives of that discipline on women. I think the initial symposium we really were thinking very broadly, receptive to anything anybody thought they could do in their discipline and women whatever that might trigger in their minds. So it was just kind of a fun experience and different from the ways the English Department decides what courses are going to be offered and what text can be used because we were just free to do what we wanted and people were very respectful and receptive to any ideas you had.

That's something that probably changed as the discipline became more entrenched academically. I'm sure that even people doing women's studies now are a little less free than we were in the beginning where we were just using a lot of radical grass roots stuff as texts. No one saying, "That's not really an appropriate thing to have people reading," because we were just making it up as we went along.

DS: I think that's one of the more stunning things that I tell people or their reaction is more stunned to is to say, "They made it up." It was literally making it up whether people had certain credentials or not. It was a time in which there was more permeability between the traditional academic world and people who were interested in this material intellectually but maybe not have those same credentials or hold a position at the University. That the materials came from a lot of different places.

CW: And I think the other thing that's built into the way we were doing it or to our perspective or whatever was a whole lot more interest in generating discussion and having interaction between the people who came to hear us and us. It wasn't just lecturing and just walking out; it was stimulating discussion and hoping something more would come out of that than that people would take notes on what you said as if it were received wisdom. So I thought those classes were a lot more dynamic and people argued with us about what we said or disagreed or got upset or agreed and wanted to talk more and know how they could pursue some of these ideas further. Which was the whole point with the first symposium was just to see is there some interest in this? Because people couldn't…I think what we thought was you couldn't really go to your— (Telephone rings)

[End of Interview]