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Interviewees: Janet Scott and Jane Ragsdale

Interviewer: Lael Gabrian

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Lael Gabrian: ...here today February 27, 2003 with Jane Ragsdale and Janet Scott on behalf of the Montana Feminist History Project (MFHP). G.G. Weix is sitting in. We are in Janet's home, and my name is Lael Gabrian. Thank you guys for being here with me.

Jane Ragsdale: Delighted.

LG: I just wanted to start off and have each of you maybe describe a little bit of your initial involvement with feminism or activism in general, aside from WORD.

JR: Shall I begin?

LG: Sure.

JR: Jane. I don't know whether I have ever done anything at all deliberately to advance the cause of women. I'm not certain about that. The whole feminist movement developed or at least that was my impression, while I was out of the country. From '69 to '71. I was in Egypt at that time. And we didn't have any relationships with Egypt. We had, and so we had nothing written in the English language, because my husband and I were both news junkies, was very difficult initially, but ultimately it seemed quite peaceful not to know what was going on. (Janet laughs) But, in any event, when we came back in '71, after two years, both the feminist movement and the ecology movement had started. And to me it was like a new world. People were using words that I didn't know and so I've never felt that I have caught up with either one, quite, but that's not entirely true, but very like it. So, I think I would be hard pressed to give a definition of feminism. Now activism is a different thing it seems to me. At least activism in the service of one cause or another. Is that what you mean?

LG: Yeah, yeah, if you'd like, definitely describe any other activism that you've been involved in, if you don't define it as feminist, or not, either way.

JR: Well, here in Montana since '97, or so, '96-'97, I came in '96 after I'd retired from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I had decided that since I had been in international affairs and that had been my academic training I was going to acquaint myself with domestic questions and issues. I was especially, and since this was a new state, and a marvelously different state, I decided that I would work on something that was not so peculiar to the state. That is, I didn't involve myself in environmental issues because I knew that that was very local, or at least regional. So I thought I would rather, and I had stayed away from active political work precisely because I thought it was important not to, that kind of work requires and is best

done, I think, by people who've known other people for 30 years. Know their children, and they know their families, and they know a lot about them. They're sophisticated in a way that I couldn't be about this scene. But I was also very deeply interested in issues that had to do with low-income women and children. So, that's what I focused on, and it came to be what I focused the "In Other Words" programs on. That was sort of, has been my kind of niche.

LG: Okay.

Janet Scott: Well, this is Janet. I have a similar tale to tell about, about feminism, and such, as Jane. I think partly, I grew up admiring my father a great deal more than my mother and it wasn't until I was in my forties that I found out that my mother had been sexually abused as a child and had a lot of this passive-aggressive behavior that I just detested. I had a pretty good explanation and began to notice that my father, in his very quiet understated way ran the show. So, there was a period of time when I really identified more with men—the men's world—than women. I recall, sometime near the end of the 1960s, my then husband who was also a power freak, accused me of being a feminist. I was reading, the feminist magazine...oh gosh, I'm pulling a blank. Anyway, he accused me of reading this feminist magazine that I had never seen. He was adamant that I was being unduly influenced by this. Ha, so I went and read it! (laughs).

That was kind of the beginning of an awareness of the connection between my interest in progressive politics and environmental issues and just beginning to see the connections with sort of fair play for women. Then, as a single parent, getting out of teaching the jobs that I had for, well until I retired, were all jobs that had never been held by a woman before. By then I was fairly conscious, and started noticing myself doing kind of jugular vein baring to the men, the way animals will do. The men didn't know quite how to, what to make of me, and were obviously uncomfortable. So, I would start playing the clown or acting silly or something to reduce the threat. All the while thinking, "Isn't this weird, is this really me doing that". Ultimately, women moved into those positions, every single one of them. So it was gratifying in that respect.

LG: What kind of positions were they? The ones...(unintelligible)

JS: One was as a purchasing agent for a chemical company. Then another one was as a contract negotiator for an aerospace company. Then, contract manager at the Jet Propulsion Lab for space stuff. Ultimately as program manager for that, and (laughs). A friend, male told me when I took a contract technical manager job there, that our superiors had said that, "Well, this was a very sensitive job and you couldn't have Blacks or Indians or Mexicans or women or so, you know, people like that doing that job" (laughs). So, it was, just in the process of, of trying to earn a living. There was an element of that. When my son was born I was working at the Jet Propulsion Lab. There was a little, bitty exercise room in the basement of the building there that I found out about. I asked the administrative assistant in our section, you know, it obviously you needed a key to get in, and he got up and he closed the door. Clearly a man who

never used the facility himself (laughing). He got up and closed the door and, and sort of whispered that, well that “that was a facility that was for management, and that I would be able to use it, but not to let anybody else know about it because most people couldn’t.” Oh, it was a piddly little thing and then I discovered when I got in there that women had only two hours a day when they could use that facility. Well, there was a sign-in sheet and I started tallying up what the usage was at various blocks of time. It turned out that there were more women using that facility during those two hours than men used it all the rest of the day. So, I made copies of this and started agitating and then it dawned on me, “Wait a minute, these are tax dollars. They can’t just say ‘women can’t use it and secretaries can’t use it’ and so forth”. So by kicking up a ruckus I got that opened (laughs). But it was always a surprise to me to encounter those kinds of things.

I did get very exercised and write a lot of letters and stuff about abortion rights. The whole feminist movement kind of thing came after involvement in other things.

LG: So, how did you both come to then, you sort of explained this a little bit, but then, how did you come to participate in collective work that did focus on women?

JR: I don’t think I know. As I said, I wasn’t aware of making that choice. Or I didn’t do it deliberately. I was aware on a personal level long, long ago. I was born in 1929 and my childhood was in the Depression, my adolescence during war. I knew by the time I was fifteen or sixteen about Rosy the Riveter, and the fact that women were then taking quite unusual jobs in war factories and things like that. But I remember brooding a lot about the jobs that women had. Now it occurs to me that it was odd that I was so sure that I would always work outside. I don’t know why, except that my mother was a singer. She was a professional singer and maybe that was partly it. But I remember thinking in those war years that for educated women the choices were teaching and nursing. And for less educated people they were secretaries and housemaids. That was about the end of it. So, I thought about that a lot and somehow, I can’t remember how this happened, thought “dance is a field that’s women, that is, belongs to women.” And so, I decided, without having any training at all, or any reason to think that I had any ability “that maybe that’s what I would do. I would go into dance.” I knew something about modern dance. I had a really terrible teacher of modern dance in high school (Janet laughs). There was an equally terrible person in the college that I went to. But right after college I went to the University of Wisconsin where there was a really superb modern dance program. So, I made that choice because it was a field where you wouldn’t compete with men. That women were dominate in, and that struck me as a good thing to do.

JS: I’m just a few years younger than Jane, and so, my big influence was probably the 1950s, which was not (laughing) I mean I missed the Rosy the Riveter thing. That was not on my radar screen. The ‘50s were not conducive to thought of any kind (laughs) at least in the, in the environment I grew up in. I certainly didn’t want to get involved in anything that was going to involve competition with men. However, perhaps because my father was so adamant about women not having jobs...I sneaked off when I was probably about ten to get a job cleaning the

refrigerator cases at a little corner store because I hated to ask for money. I just hated to, hated to have to ask for everything. I got my tail tanned when he found out (laughing). He was furious. That may have been what cemented it in my mind (laughing) that I wanted to work. But, I think what swayed it, I mean originally, I headed towards teaching. I figured that was work well with, combined with family and stuff like that. But what I started realizing was that I'm not extroverted enough to be able to teach without it taking a lot out of me. I didn't want to talk to anybody (laughing) when I got home from work. My skills are really stronger in areas that suited me to work in male-dominated jobs. I just sort of slithered into that, plus the fact that, that ultimately I was a single parent and I had to earn more money than I could doing something else. But, it also was infinitely easier for me.

I was on Boards of Directors of childcare centers and it just appalled me that people with Masters degrees who were working in early childhood education, which was hard. I mean, I used to just marvel at how they did that day after day after day. And they made a tiny fraction of what I was earning, being paid maybe I should say, doing something that really wasn't exhausting at all. So it was in large part happenstance that, that got me into it. As far as organizations, I think without exception, well, with the exception of the abortion rights and reproductive choice kinds of things, they all started with a broader issue, and that was how I got involved. And then, as I was involved longer I began to see the connections with feminism, women's rights, social justice, and that sort of thing. So it, it wasn't a frontal assault (laughs).

JR: I'd like to put in something there. What Janet has said makes me think of, and that is that when I was going to graduate school a good deal after the normal time to go, I got the first of all immense scholarships. Just huge, government scholarships, to go into the Southeast Asian history, which was my field. Because we were learning during the Vietnam War that it was important, we ought to know something. So all of this money was pouring out. I think of that now with gratitude and astonishment, in comparison to what youngsters have to go through now. And how much stingier the stipends usually are. But that aside, I also after, after my big government largess was, was exhausted, I still had some more work to do.

I got a scholarship that had been funded by the Carnegie Foundation. The women who got it were all women who had returned to school later in their lives than most people get those degrees. Many of them were single mothers, which was a big surprise to me. I didn't know there was such a big population of single mothers in the sixties. Anyway, the reason I'm telling this story is that the woman who had got all that money and made it available for a great many women doing graduate work at Wisconsin, at some point was describing the population. Who were going through, and she noticed by doing some, I think probably relatively easy comparisons, that a very large, much, much larger number of the Carnegie fellows, as we were called were getting our degrees, were finishing the Masters and the Doctorates than the ordinary population of Wisconsin, and I guess elsewhere. So, she did a study of that and we were asked to say what impelled us to finish our work. Much later I found that, I would remember being told that there, there was nothing. We had nothing in common, but, but one element, and, and that was that our fathers had encouraged us...

JS: Mmm-hmm.

JR: ...And I was quite startled by that, and then suddenly remembered my father always thought that I could do anything I wanted to. He never, never suggested that I couldn't, certainly didn't put anything in my way, as your father did in terms of outside employment (laughs). So, I just wanted to add that, I had forgotten about it until Janet spoke of it.

JS: Well actually my, my father's position was sort of a mixed bag. There was the old Germanic, the head of the household provides the money. I was also older than my two brothers and I worked alongside my dad when he built our house. One, my first jobs, and I was very proud of it, was straightening nails because during war they were rationed, and so when you bent a nail it had to be straightened again. Then after I got good enough at that I'd move on to another task. So, I grew up seeing myself as a team member, in what still are considered pretty masculine kinds of tasks.

My daughter in fact, who's 35 now and recently married a couple of years ago said her husband is a good do-it-yourselfer. She said, "You know people always that say you marry your, your dad—I married my mom!" (laughter). When she was very small, she had a playmate over and something got broken. The little boy that she was playing with came into the kitchen and said they were talking about what to do about this problem. He said, "Well, your dad can fix it when he gets home." Serena said, "Daddies don't fix things mommies do" (laughter). So there was a whole another side to that that I think was very influential in making me feel like I could do things that my mother would never have dreamed of doing.

LG: So, how did you both come to Missoula?

JR: I came as a retiree. My only family, I have one child, a daughter, lives and teaches here. She was having a, a child of her own, her first child, and I thought "Oh, you know I'm going to see that baby two weeks a year, if I don't move." It was very hard for me to move because I had lived for 35 years in Madison, in Wisconsin, except for some years abroad. It was hard to make that decision, (clears throat) but I'm glad I did it.

LG: And what year was that?

JR: '95. I had just retired. I didn't have a job to hold me any more.

LG: And you had taught as a professor, is that correct?

JR: I taught as a professor but for a very short time. What I mainly spent my last maybe 16 years doing was directing outreach programs of various kinds for an international studies program. Wisconsin has a huge number of area studies programs. They were very strong, especially in third-world studies. So, I was doing outreach with librarians, news people, and business people.

I spent all that time trying to propose to people that the rest of the world was interesting and useful and we ought to pay attention to it. I was just thinking the other night that Bush is doing that (laughs) now. 9-11 did it in a way that that we never could manage. I also did a lot of work on peace-war studies. We had a major program beginning with lots and lots of money. It was amazing how money just poured in for that. Ultimately the program failed because Wisconsin is a research University and though we had big money from MacArthur to support time off for people to develop courses, we were just stunned and very, very, deeply disappointed when a great many people who had participated in our smaller programs said “No, they really couldn’t branch off from their disciplinary work that much.” So that was a disappointment, but it was all very, very interesting work. I was very happy in that job. I did some radio work too, by the way.

JS: Oh, that’s right.

JR: Yeah...

JS: I came here about the same time as Jane did although, I had bought this house several years prior to that. My son was born when I was 43. I divorced his father about six months later (laughs), so I just assumed that I’d be working until I dropped. Then, it started to dawn on me that I was spending a lot on private school tuition. That housing in Pasadena, California was very expensive. That maybe I could find a place where he could go to public school and, you know, I would be able to, to take early retirement and start doing the things I really liked doing. Aerospace, everybody thought it was “oh gosh, isn’t that exciting, da-da-da-da”. The only, the main thing exciting to me about it was that I did it (laughs).

JR: That you had that job? In that...

JS: Yeah, yeah that I...

JR: ...certain chance...

JS: I had a chance to do this man’s job (laughs). But when I became comfortable with it and had a reputation. I was looking for something that really interested me (laughs). So, it turned out that I could retire with some health benefits, just about the time my son finished the K-8 school that he was attending. It all kind of fell together. I came to Missoula, kicked the tenants out of the house and came up here. But, there were two areas of things that I really wanted to do. I wanted to spend a lot more time playing outdoors. And secondly, I wanted to spend a lot more time in activism than I had been able to do before. That really prompted me to leave.

LG: So, then how did you both become involved with “In Other Words”? Were there other activist activities that led you into that, or... just how did you come together in that project, I guess?

JR: I was in an exercise class with another producer of "In Other Words" and why she asked me I don't know. She, she just brought it up. It's a woman, Beth Judy, who works on "In Other Words." And also is better known to KUFM listeners as the Plant Detective. I always thought that maybe my daughter Amy, who knows Beth Judy, had said "You know, my mom used to work in radio" or something. I didn't, I did, or that's not quite true, I'm getting mixed up here, I did radio interviewing as a part of my job in international studies for about six years. So I did, I treated international news, and choosing topics and then got faculty to speak to them. Quite often I was asked by some of the faculty or administration if I would interview so-and-so who was coming from Germany or South Africa. I'd prepare that, and I did half hour interviews which then had to be, I did about two a month, and they had to be then chopped up, talk about technological trouble (laughs). I've been in technological trouble for all this time (laughter). It was very hard to chop them up in five-minute segments so they could go into a magazine format early morning program. At that time, initially, we were using cut and paste tape. I had such a tape machine in my office. I then found that this wonderful guy who was working for me loved to do things like that and was good at it. I was delighted to assign that to him, and he did it. But, I finally got on to interviewing, sort of in five-minute segments in a half and hour. I tried anyway, although of course it, that didn't work all the time, but, so I did have that experience. I finally had to give it up because I just grew too busy. I had that experience. Beth Judy always declared that she didn't know it (Janet laughs). So she always declared that this was an accident. But for me it was a happy one because I had loved asking questions and getting answers. I just loved doing that, and I liked doing the research and it was a wonderful way for me to get acquainted with issues.

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

LG: So we were talking about how you got involved with "In Other Words."

JS: Mine's sort of backwards from Jane's. I never liked public speaking. Once I finished giving management reviews and stuff I thought, "Good, I won't ever have to do this again." But after I met Lyn and Judy Smith through other activist stuff that I was doing after I got here. They came by one afternoon and said, "Well, there's this radio show that WORD got started and, and do you think you could (unintelligible) get involved in that?" Just the opposite of Jane, I said, "Oh gosh I'd be happy to do the technical side of it" (laughs). So, that's how I started. It was reel to reel technology. And as Jane said, it was, you actually cut out pieces of the tape and pasted them and so forth. However, it sort of sucked me in because it was so interesting to talk to and so forth. So I think quite soon after I got involved in it, I started doing interviews. I found that with good interviewees, it was just so interesting that I forgot to feel ill at ease (laughs). I ultimately really enjoyed it. But my main contribution in some respects as been helping with the technology stuff. We went from reel to reel to cassettes to digital mini-discs. Technology that has been continually upgraded. The machines, you go in to expect to, to edit a program and the machines are all different.

JR: And Janet can manage that.

JS: Yeah, it's easier for me than making arrangements, setting up appointments for interviews.

JR: But Janet did wonderful interviews. Especially your school interviews, often with as many as four people in the studio with her which it takes a lot of juggling in that tiny room, and doing it beautifully.

JS: Well, that was, it was easier, I felt that I had to take less of an active part (laughs) if there were a whole bunch of people there.

JR: All talkative, yeah (laughs).

JS: Yeah, so a big milestone for me was starting to do telephone interviews. That was quite scary because they were usually with people I didn't know but, that ended up being again so interesting that it was just fine. I've enjoyed a lot of the contact with other producers. And with people that come in to talk on the show and the music, getting introduced to different kinds of music. So it's been definitely a fun thing to do.

LG: So "In Other Words" had already gotten going when you two came in?

JR: Oh, yes. I think it may have been running for 20 years now...

JS: Yeah...

JR: ...don't you think?

JS: ...a long time.

JR: Something like that.

LG: When did you (both get involved?) (overlap).

JR: Well, we both got in '96, or else '97, neither of us can remember.

JS: Relatively recently.

JR: Yes...

JS: Yeah.

JR: But, it was started I think by Judy Smith and Christine Kaufman who is very, very deeply involved with the Montana Human Rights Network and is now in her second term as a legislator in Helena. I interviewed her not long ago. She recalled at the end of the interview that she had been one of the people who had helped to start "In Other Words." So it's always been a women's program, and I would guess it's at least 20 years old now.

JS: Yeah, one of the that I had to sort of keep resetting was I'd get excited about an issue, and the connection between that issue and women's interests were obvious to me. It took a lot to get accustomed to making them more explicit. Beth Judy, for example, would jog me occasionally, and say, "Well okay, this is a feminist radio program, now what's the connection?" (both laugh). That was also really an interesting process for me because, for Jane and for me that overt connection had not been a part of our thinking, particularly.

JR: Well, for me in some ways that was a little simpler, although your education programs were very obviously of great interest to women. I always thought almost everything was of interest to women. So I didn't worry about that very much. I also was since social justice for women and children was, has been the main thing I've been dealing. Social justice may be not quite the right word, but concerns of low income women and children with a political angle, were the things that I have cared about most. And have worked most on. They were all new to me. That wasn't my professional work, but I always just assumed that women were interested in those kinds of things. It seems to me they really are interested in virtually everything. So I didn't worry about that very much.

JS: Well, it was actually a good goal to pay more attention to the fact that I was very interested in environmental issues, global-corporate stuff and farm-agri-business issues. And to see how these practices were having a disproportionately large, negative impact on low income people,

and on women and children which now has become pretty common. I know that the Sierra Club and a lot of the other environmental organizations have become very involved in that but a few years back that wasn't the case. And I like finding connections, and this was one that was particularly exciting to me, at, at the time. Because not many people were making that connection. I felt thankful to Beth Judy for poking me (laughs).

GW: Is there any other program on KUFM that is based on interviews on a half-hour format?

JS: "Home Ground Radio"

JR: We're an hour format.

GW: Thank you. (Jane laughs).

JS: That's right.

JR: Sometimes we do it split in half-hours, (unintelligible). We often do full hours on the same topic or in a magazine with a number of topics.

JS: I think that was the idea that was presented to me anyway, was to use a magazine format sort of the way. Maybe "Making Contact" is done as opposed to the "Alternative Radio" approach which is a single speaker. That's been fun too in digging up musical pieces that are topical.

JR: It's hard to do (laughs).

JS: It's fun though. It's really...

JR: Yeah...

JS: The challenge is finding all women's groups to do it.

JR: But another challenge is being able to understand the words.

JS: Yeah...

JR: ...you know.

JS: Well, one that maybe John Meyers(?) or somebody found for a show that you were doing that was not women. It was the Austin Lounge Lizard's "The Teenage Immigrant Welfare Mothers on Drugs." (Jane laughs). All my son's friends just thought that was really cool.

JR: Did they? Oh...

JS: They're still talking about it.

JR: Really? Well you know, I heard that on the radio, probably on KUFM, and sang it. I sang that phrase that you've just given to John Meyers. Who said, "I think I know that," and ultimately found it.

JS: Well Jane and I have both used that (laughs).

JR: Yes, yeah, it's a great song.

JS: ...Women musicians or not (laughs).

LG: Well, one of my questions is how do you choose? What are your criteria for choosing women, and music, to interview?

JR: Well, you just look for women who are expert in that subject and, whatever topic you're dealing with. We have so many women in office, or in responsible jobs now that it's really quite easy. I remember doing one on one of the initiatives. One of the election initiatives, probably in '98 maybe, or else 2000, having to do with a fairly arcane tax issue. I think I remember, it was that we would have to vote on every single tax issue...

JS: Oh, yes.

JR: ...that came up. I thought, "Well maybe this is going to be a little harder. It isn't an immediate women's issue," but we found four women, maybe five in state government, local government, county government, school superintendent to comment on what was going to happen to her field if that initiative passed. I've sometimes had difficulty, much more recently, since we've been anxious about a war with Iraq. Since last summer, we've done more, Janet and I both have on war issues. In that case, we depend a lot on this program, as Janet mentioned of doing long distance interviews. There are wonderful, what do you call it, what would we call them? "Main Stream Media"...

JS: "Main Stream Media."

JR: "A Time of Useful Consciousness," that offer people you can interview, both men and women, but they're almost always women, that we can get.

JS: We can usually get women. Usually there are more men on the list...

JR: Yeah.

JS: ...but we usually can get women. There have been a few times when I had to make the choice between a woman who didn't feel quite up on something that I was committed to doing a show on and a man who was in it up to his neck. So I did interview the man in that case. One was a terrific interview from the Rural School and Community Trust on studies that had been done on school size and academic performance. Which was just fascinating. If there's somebody who is impassioned, and extremely knowledgeable, and who's been involved I'll interview a man because it is an issue that is of great importance to women.

JR: And sometimes women won't speak which is interesting in this day.

JS: Mmm-hmm.

JR: I was trying, not long ago, to do a show on a particular kind of insurance. Health insurance, which the state auditor was pushing because we had so many uninsured and so many, mostly low-income, but certainly lots of working families too who have no health insurance. I go to Helena quite often and I monitor the Children and Families Committee and a health care committee working there. I had heard a wonderful woman from the auditor's office testifying multiple times. But when I wanted her for the radio, no, no, no, only the auditor would do. I said, "But I really want women, and I know that you can handle this subject beautifully," but she wouldn't do it. Now maybe, she couldn't, maybe the auditor had said, "any big public thing, I do," I don't know.

JS: My guess is that's what it is...(overlap, unintelligible).

JR: Maybe it is, rather than she can't have been nervous about it. But she refused. In that case I didn't get the auditor. I don't remember what I did (Janet laughs). In fact I may not have done that program or at least certainly not the way I intended to.

JS: I don't think you did.

JR: But, so that's occasionally a problem, but it has very rarely been seems to me. Of course, that's not, when we're interviewing candidates. Of course you interview the men too. You know that would be wrong not to. Well I really haven't usually, I certainly have interviewed some men. Its usually not hard to get a terrific woman, you know.

JS: The other aspect is that part of our mission, the radio show's mission, is to get women involved who otherwise might not be. Maybe like Jane or especially like me. I mean there's no way I would've walked up and volunteered. So, I've interviewed a couple of women that I can think of who had done some really, really good work, but were quite intimidated about talking on the radio show. And one of them was a telephone interview. But because she was the best person, I thought, "Okay, this is an opportunity to break down those barriers,". That's really been fun for me. Getting people who are coming from the same place that I came from, i.e. no

way (laughs), to do it and find out that it's not fatal and, it's, it's going to be okay. So, there's a number of trade-offs that enter into it I think.

JR: Once in a while, I remember Lyn interviewing a young woman, of about 17, a single mother who had become quite accustomed to speaking in high schools, about being a single mother at that age. She warmed up and did beautifully. But she continued to be extremely nervous and she would suddenly break out, without any warning, with enormous laughter. Just this great sort of bray of laughter. I think I was tech-ing for Lyn that night. We tech for each other. That is we run the board while the other person is doing the interviewing. I think I was doing it and I remember thinking, "This is going to be horrible to edit because we must take that out. Because she' be humiliated, you know, if we left it in." I don't, I think we must have got you to do that Janet because...

JS: I seem to recall...

JR: I couldn't have done that (laughs)...nor Lyn.

JS: And you know she was on a show in last few months.

JR: The same woman?

JS: I think so...

JR: The same young woman?...Oh.

JS: ...and she didn't do that anymore.

JR: Oh, that's interesting.

JS: Yeah.

JR: I also did an interview, I've done two or three interviews, on mental health questions. In one of them, I had a, a woman here in town with severe mental health problems whose long-time counselor recommended her, saying "She'll speak well, she's articulate and she's reliable," and for the most part she was. She read some wonderful poems at the end. (Unintelligible overlap).

JS: Yeah, that was a nice program.

JR: It was a really wonderful good poetry, and very touching I thought. But she did have, just to put in briefly, she put in two or three wholly off the wall remarks. Sometimes she would pause for such a long time, which I tend to do myself, and Janet edits me out when I pause lengthfully trying to think what I want to say. It took me 13 hours to edit that program, and I was just beside myself when...

JS: Because that was still reel-to-reel.

JR: Yes it was reel-to-reel.

JS: With the...

JR: Oh it was miserable.

JS: ...with the digital mini-discs stuff it goes much faster (laughs).

JR: Well it does if you know how to do it (laughs).

GW: Do you all think that involving girls and boy in audio recording at an early age might make women more comfortable with recording and public speaking?

JR: Hmm.

JS: I've heard on NPR, a program that has high school kids,

JR: Oh, that's right I have too.

JS: No, I think it's excellent. Also...

JR: But how would you do it? How would you set it up?

GW: I don't know. It just occurred to me listening to you describe your experience with "In Other Words" that it would be provocative to imagine an "In Other Words" for young women and girls.

JR: Mmm.

JS: Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

GW: Because I associate "In Other Words" with mature women...

JS: Yeah.

GW: I'm wondering if there isn't an opportunity to try a junior model (laughs) for younger people because I think you're right...

JR: That might be.

GW: ...it is intimidating to be recorded on the radio...

JS: I think...

GW: ...for people who've never been recorded before. But, if children had a chance, or young adolescents had a chance to record themselves on the radio at a very early age, maybe the gender difference in boys' and girls' reticence, or willingness to be recorded in public would disappear. That gender difference might be muted if we gave them all tape recorders at an early age.

JS: I think in general, the kids now are much less intimidated by the technology, the idea of having your voice recorded, and that part of it. So the main thing to overcome I think is the gender difference. There probably aren't nearly as many kids now who would just be terrified...

JR: ...By the microphones or the studio or anything like that. Yes, I would agree to that.

JS: But, that would be a really nice thing to have because there are some really thoughtful kids out there. I have a 21 year old, who recently was a high school kid (phone rings) and they had (unintelligible).

GW: I think the MFHP has led me to wonder how we can build these interviews into a new venue for children in primary grades, both learning about the different women and subjects that the MFHP has documented. Also teaching kids how to use oral history interviews themselves to create new interviews, either in their own families with their mother or their grandmother and their aunt or their older sister, but also to use the whole technology and process of learning from audio-tapes. That's what made me think "In Other Words" as a radio show could also be a venue for modeling a new kind of activity for kids at much younger ages to learn how to do radio shows. That wouldn't be that hard for them to learn to do. Since it was a novel idea twenty years ago to start a feminist radio show interviewing women, I mean twenty years later it might not be so odd to say to boys and girls, "Now you all start a radio program where you interview either other kids or other people that you want to hear certain topics."

JR: It's lots easier to interview people than it is to be interviewed (all laugh).

GW: What is that difference Jane?

JR: Well, I don't know (all laugh). But it, it seems—I can always think of a lot of questions. I can't always think of answers to my own questions, at least not to mine.

GW: But that would make it a perfect learning device too because it would teach kids how to ask questions.

JS: Right.

JR: Yeah, I think that would be a, a good thing. (Overlap with G.G., unintelligible).

JS: How to ask questions that can't be answered with a "yes" or "no" (all laugh).

JR: Well that's another problem, but we very rarely have it. I used to have it in my work at Wisconsin when I was interviewing, especially if I was interviewing on a subject that my interviewee didn't want to answer. I did that sometimes 'cause I, I dealt with a lot of diplomatic people. I mean people in diplomacy (Janet laughs). They were very good at evading. Since our object was not to embarrass them, or certainly not to make them angry, but to try to get the answer to the questions. I found that quite difficult. I had said a moment ago that I like asking questions, and so it has always been fun for me, but not always. Another one is when you get the shy person, which happens rather rarely, who does just say "yes," or "no" and stop, and there you are.

JS: Well that's one thing about on the show, we tend to interview activists in various stripes, and they're usually just delighted to talk. So, I've only had one experience that was definitely trying to pull information out of someone. But usually it's, we just sort of feel like, "Oh darn, do we have to stop now?" (laughs).

JR: Yeah.

GW: It would also teach children that activism is not some strange, rare process or activity that only a few people do. Because if they were doing oral histories, or doing radio shows, themselves modeled after something like "In Other Words" that interviewed activists, they might see activism as something that they do everyday in their lives. And that too would be an implicit message of the technology, and the pedagogy, and the content all interweaving.

JS: Especially if, if they talked to people in the community.

GW: They would learn their own world.

JS: Right.

JR: That's a nice idea.

JS: One of the hardest things that I've been trying to correct in my own... It's fairly easy to find people in Missoula or people on a national scale. But KUFM serves western Montana, and sometimes it's really hard to get, Helena is not too hard, but to get people from Great Falls and, and some of these other outlying areas requires a lot of digging, and I don't know quite how to overcome that very well. The Missoula-centric problem is one that we're constantly dealing with.

JR: We always say, prior to a program, "That listeners can get testy if you're concentrating on Missoula, so please try to remember," and very often that's all that's needed. Once in a while when I have a group, I will have somebody jump in after another speaker and say, "and in Great Falls," or "and in Billings," or "this is true also" or "there is a different situation there." Though you do have to think about that, that it's a state, or at least a western Montana...

LG: One thing that...

JR: ...audience.

LG: ...came up in my mind when you were speaking. Is how doing oral histories, or doing interviews like this is a great way to teach kids about history as well. A different kind of history. One of my questions was if you have, either of you have ever thought of yourselves as doing oral histories? Or if you've been more focused on getting out topics in the present, of when you were doing the interviews?

JR: I certainly never thought about oral history. I've just thought of the issue, and often it is current, so I haven't thought about oral history.

JS: I hadn't either. Well, a couple of things reminded me of it. My dad and a couple of his siblings, their family had an amazing family history. So he, one of his sisters, her daughter enrolled in a personal history writing class. I started leaning on my dad who had gotten a computer, a word processor; he always did computer stuff. It was so delightful to find that the quietest kid in his family was a terrific writer. I mean his writing was colorful and graphic and just wonderful. That sort of made me think a little bit more in those terms. Then recently, Sara Weddington was in town. The woman, the lawyer who handled the beginnings of Roe Vs. Wade, and Judy Smith, who had sort of enlisted her in Texas at that time, got together and did a show.

JR: That was a great show...

JS: ...reminiscing.

JR: A really wonderful show.

JS: It just, that's such powerful stuff that it really made me think, "We need to do more of this..."

JR: ...need to think, think about that angle.

JS: I think it's a powerful thing, and it's interesting.

JR: Well, you're both suggesting good things that we could do on "In Other Words" (Jane and Janet laugh).

LG: Well, we're almost out of tape. Is there any last word you'd like to add, on any topic?"

JS: Well, one of the questions that you had noted down here is "How, is there anything you would have done differently?" In the last couple of years I've had some kind of difficult health problems. That's something that I've started asking people that I've interviewed, is when they've been involved in, as activists over a long period of time, how do you keep doing this year after year?

[End of Interview]