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**WOMEN AT THE CENTER:  
HISTORY OF WOMEN'S STUDIES  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE**

**TAPE LOG**

Barbara Hebner served as Office Coordinator in the Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Barbara Hebner

Other people present: Two grand children present.

Interviewer: Marie Laberge

Date of interview: Jan 31, 2013 10:30 am

Location of interview: In Barbara's home

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): cat present, door closing

General description of contents: Discussion of educational background and career. Office coordinator of Women's Studies Program. Served on administrative staff of Commission to Promote Racial and Cultural Diversity. Discussion of effort to get WOMS faculty tenured and move program into departmental status. Discussion of support from departments that cross-listed with women's studies courses. Students loved Women's Studies courses. Discussion of the necessity of Women's Studies at university. Programs and activities Women's Studies involved in outside of courses. Discussion about WOMS major; it was definitely an uphill battle. Effectiveness of Barbara Gates as chair. How Women's Studies affected diversity at UD. Necessary first step in awareness of women's issues and tackling diversity issues. Necessary transition from Women's Studies to Women and Gender Studies. Why Women's Studies is important to people and the university. Gives students tools to make real change in future generations. Response to critics of Women's Studies. Most proud she could participate in the Women's Studies program because something she is passionate about. Teaching was a great experience because of interactions with students.

Recording Format and disc number: Video interview

Total Running Time: 52:26 minutes

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**TOPIC SUMMARY**

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0:20 BA in English/Anthropology, MA in Divinity, certificate in protocol. Career – H & R Block, Bank of America, Rockefeller Foundation, Colorado State University. Never did same job twice, work with astronauts, collected vampire bats, research projects, writing was common theme.

**TOPIC SUMMARY**

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1:31    Discussion about move to Delaware – work on first part of Masters in Divinity, ended at Lancaster. Liked the area and never left. Grew up in Southern California, tenure in ministries ended and worked at UD. Started in president's office as administrative assistant, moved to WOMS because coherent with values. Ended up teaching women and religion as adjunct faculty. Continued ministry part-time, administrative staff of Commission to Promote Racial and Cultural Diversity. Moved to WOMS after commission. Helped ease director into academic process because of previous position at Colorado State University.

4:14    In WOMS for 3 years (1990s). Discussion about status of WOMS. In Smith Hall, still a program, still had to justify existence. Replaced secretary but responsibilities increased dramatically. As office manager, dealt with anything not academic like paperwork/computers/dealing with students, coordinated survey about program's role in community, liaison to other faculty in other departments. Professional background helped her, had good contacts from president's office, easier to get resources

8:00    Discussion of transitions in program: getting appropriate status for faculty (Kathy Turkel, Sue Cherrin), getting additional faculty in on cross-listed basis, moving program into departmental status. Real uphill effort, never enough resources to go around, people didn't think it needed to go from program to department, excited when found out became department.

10:40    Discussion of supporters in university – English department (Bonnie Scott, Barbara Gates), sociology, history (Ann Boylan), Hispanic studies, minority studies band together. Film series.

12:08    Discussion of differences with administrative support and working with department heads in Commission on Racial & Cultural Diversity. Use those contacts for WOMS. Never sensed there was a strong university commitment to have WOMS be a viable institution within university. Viewed as not as serious as other sorts of discrimination, viewed as transient.

16:00    Interruption – close door

16:24    Discussion of student response to WOMS. Students loved it, appreciative, come into office because felt like a safe place, treated with respect, liked faculty members. Made conscious effort to walk its talk even if inconvenient, wanted to make values real.

18:30    Discussion of how student response impacted faculty.

18:45    Skip in tape

18:50    Discussion of teaching Women and Religion. Students felt very useful class, real world application. Discussion of why WOMs important in University and what it provided students. Why important to faculty. WOMS provided basket for students to put in all thoughts and information about women issues, new consciousness.

**TAPE LOG CONTINUED**

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23:40    Programs and activities WOMS involved in. WOMS classes taught and cross-listed. Film program, lecture series during academic day, series of lectures in evenings where a notable scholar would come, academic as opposed to pedagogic, mostly faculty members from variety of departments and grad students.

25:40    Discussion about major and struggle to get major. People had to be persuaded that it was and will remain a viable academic area. Others understood why important. One thought was to combine all minorities into one area of study but so oblivious to nuances.

29:25    Discussion about Barbara Gates administration. Came in for one academic year, most effective administrator ever seen. Reasons why.

33:17    Impact of WOMS on university. Important in making UD more inclusive dealt with and raised consciousness about diversity. Still an uphill battle, reasons why. People who were not comfortable with diversity (LGBT, handicapped, veteran), moved with slowness because so big. WOMS was essential, people had an easier understanding of dealing with diversity issues around color and religion than about gender.

37:50    Discussion about transition from WOMS to Women and Gender Studies and why its important. Personal connection to issues discussed. Concerns for students.

39:40    Most significant contributions of WOMS – providing education to students (men and women) because opens eyes, calibrates intuition, confirms values, develops skills, for university – makes it more ethical, holds academic feet to fire. WOMS made institution more honest. Reasons why university needs WOMS.

44:53    What do you say to critics that say WOMS isn't serious discipline? Discussion about statistics about women in power etc., impact on generations of students which will make it easier to change institutions. Significance of structures and how to make change. Educate generation of students who will have a wider view, better perspective, more information, different skills and they will impact institutions. Changing human consciousness and behavior

48:21    Most proud of involvement in WOMS. Little cog in small section of university but there wholeheartedly, opportunity to participate in something deeply value and essential to salvation of the world. Most fun with teaching women and religion class and student responses.

50:25    Takes three different kinds of people to tell you something before you believe it, to be one of those kinds of people (academic) – by itself not enough, essential to do it, never know if first person or last person.

51:27    Final thoughts – WOMS was one of best parts of life, nothing but gratitude to have been participant, can do it without stint or reservation, left for retirement, ready for next stage of life.