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

TAPE LOG

Dr. Margaret Andersen is a Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at the University of Delaware. She is also executive director of the University of Delaware President's Diversity Initiative and co-chair of the Diversity and Equity Commission. She served as Chair of Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program from 1981 to 1985.

Name of person(s) interviewed: Margaret Andersen

Other people present: none

Interviewer: Kenneth Adams

Date of interview: April 23, 2012

Location of interview: Interview took place in Margaret Andersen's office in Hullihen Hall at UD

Special conditions (noise, interruptions, etc.): Some sound test segments

General description of contents: Describes educational/employment/childhood background, lived in Georgia so potential racial issues may have impacted her future. Started to question these issues in college, not super involved in movements because of workload but volunteered in women support groups. Came to UD to finish her dissertation. Burgeoning group of WOMS faculty, wanted to strengthen position in sociology first. Describes how she "tripped into" WOMS and created a course on gender even though primarily interested in race issues. WOMS retreat. Development of minor v. major at first. How race/gender studies interconnected. Resistance to program. Proudest accomplishment in UD WOMS – institutionalizing the program. Office of Women's Affairs. Comparing UD's program to other universities' programs. Competition among interdisciplines. Set an example for students that they can do it.

Recording Format and disc number: Video interview

Total Running Time: 30:51

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TOPIC SUMMARY

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1:12 Introduction Discussion of educational background, first of her family to graduate from college; importance of education in the home; early love for school and learning. moved from San Francisco to Georgia at age 10, later to Boston then back to Georgia; discusses different racial profiles of the areas in which she lived; fascination with these differences made a mark on later interests.

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4:50 Discussions about racial issues take place in the home? No conscious discussion, as a child not inclined to analyze the situation in the desire to fit in – didn't really begin to grapple with these issues intently until graduate school.

5:32 Discussion about education and women's movement while in college. Began at Emory then transferred to Georgia State; was a full time worker as well as a full time student, so mostly dealt with survival during first two years of college though knew civil rights and women's movements were burgeoning around her; in junior year began to analyze issues of race more carefully. Graduated in 1970 before the full force of the women's movement got started; had only two female professors during entire undergraduate career.

7:17 Attended UMass Amherst for graduate work, was not involved in 'movements' due to the heavy workload of graduate school. Volunteer with a women's support group to address women's issues, but studies as a graduate student focused on race; no women's studies courses existed at the time.

8:34 Discussion about why she came to UD while still working toward Ph.D; Came to U.D. because she needed a job; came on a contingency contract with understanding that she would complete her dissertation, which she did in October of 1976.

9:26 Discussion about state of the women's movement on campus at the time. Burgeoning community of women, both faculty and staff; relatively small number of women faculty. Women's studies existed but had been left without a director by another faculty member's sudden departure. Most of her first two years were focused on establishing herself in the Sociology Department, honing teaching skills but remembers that a number of informal meetings began to spring up to discuss the role of women on campus and to provide support in career management.

10:42 Discussion about academics and activism. Considered the very presence of women in faculty positions that had previously been dominated by men to be its own form of activism – working through the institution to improve status rather than working against it or engaging in street activism

11:39 Asked about 1973-74 formation of the Commission on the Status of Women. Does not recall specifics since she arrived in the fall of 1974 and vaguely remembers being a part of the commission but focused primarily on teaching during her early years.

12:19 Does not recall details about formation and participation in Women's Studies Committee;

12:43 Discussion about Women's Studies program and her involvement with it. Describes how she 'tripped into' Women's Studies – only one course available in Women's Studies at UMass with only 9 students; no courses on women in the Sociology Department, only the 3rd woman hired as a faculty member in the department; came to U.D. primarily to work on issues of race, but created a course on sex and gender.

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14:19 Discussion about retreat organized by Dean Gouldner in Lancaster PA to discuss the future of the Women's Studies program. Need for discussion as a result of program director's departure; several junior faculty sent to come up with recommendations on how to structure the Women's Studies program. Committee recommended a full time staff member and faculty director to assist with programming and community outreach since the program was unique in academe with its clear link between scholarship and action. Women at the retreat were from a variety of disciplines; discussion about who would head the program; after grappling about whether she would accept, she did.

16:26 Discussion about Women's Studies minor created in 1978 and difficulty getting a major at the time. Creating Women's Studies major at that time would have been a tough sell since the discipline viewed with some hostility and as a fad; decision to work with existing resources creating courses and cross-listing existing courses; Would not have been a willingness to allow the creation of a major at that time.

17:47 Discussion about the resistance to major among both the administration and faculty. Also Women's Studies as a discipline was in developmental state and the scholarship was sparse, and was possible to read everything that was published which is impossible today; journals on Women's Studies had only recently begun to appear; Signs appeared in 1975, but in 1978 the discipline was probably not intellectually ready for a full-fledged major.

18:42 Discussion about Women's Studies and incorporating issues related to sexuality and race. Tensions within women's movement with regard to a perception that white women did not adequately embrace the concerns of women of color; As a race scholar, keenly aware of equality issues & parallels in different disciplines.

19:53 Was Director of Women's Studies from 1981 to 1985 Discussion about curricular challenges. Process of cross-listing courses was very complicated; challenge of getting department chairs to support cross-listing of their courses; funding scarce for new courses in the program; most of time spent soliciting support.

21:33 Discussion about resistance to Women's Studies. Perception that Women's Studies was not a legitimate academic pursuit, that it was primarily political in nature rather than based on solid scholarly footing; lack of publishing within the field, that it was just a fad.

22:10 What was greatest personal accomplishment? Getting the Women's Studies program institutionalized (shares the credit with her colleagues), but also the creation of the Office for Women's Affairs which dealt with myriad issues relating to women faculty, staff and students.

23:17 Where U.D. ranked among peer institutions in terms of strength of the Women's Studies program? The program was among the best.

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23:37 Discussion between Women's Studies and Sociology in her work. Considers the disciplines largely the same; have mutual empathy. Generation before laid groundwork for inserting women's issues into discourse of Sociology; Discussion about gender issues within field of sociology. Struggles within society played out within sociology discipline. Women in the generation before hers attending conferences could not even enter the bar without a male escort, nor could women attain faculty positions at that time.

26:24 Discussion about students understanding of previous generation and acknowledges they have no clue, but she's glad that they will not have to face similar difficulties

27:01 What most proud of regarding her work at the University? Does not consider self a role model as such but hopes that her example shows women that they can do it as well, rising from a faculty position to a higher administrative position without losing her feminist perspective – her generation is the first to see this as a logical goal.

27:46 What would she like a future feminist scholar to learn from her example? She would like to talk with her about the challenges she faces in balancing elements of her life and share her own story of accomplishing such a task.

29:06 How did she maintain her feminist perspective while meeting the demands of an administrative position? Relationships with other people, keeping abreast of the news; talking with people she admires, keeping herself intellectually active.

29:35 Discussion about how to handle differences in making policy decisions. Need to consider the background of the individual involved – what cultural perspective they bring to the table and what influences may be shaping their opinion in order to gain a broader understanding of the disagreement.

30:32 Conclusion

30:51 END