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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
MARY ANNE NEVILL  
EDITOR OF CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE  
OCTOBER 13, 1976

Transcribed by:  
R. Herman  
April 10, 1978

Interview with: Mary Anne Nevill

October 13, 1976

Interviewed by: Rebecca Button

B = Rebecca Button

N = Mary Anne Nevill

B: This is an interview with Mary Anne Nevill on October 13, 1976.

We're going to be talking about the women's movement and the women's studies at the University of Delaware and Mary Anne's work as editor of the book Caught in the Crossfire. Mary Anne what about some of your own history and your interest in the women's movement?

N: My interest in the women's movement first came as part of my religion. There was an uprising in the history and how women were treated in the Catholic Church and this I was first aware of in the early sixties as an outgrowth of the Vatican Council that we had at that time and I was unaware of Betty Friedan or any other of those...you know sort of movement type writing at that time. I was interested in the degradation of women that comes from the Catholic Church and so I became interested and I became very active in working in church groups to change literature pertaining to women and trying to raise consciousness of the male priests and then it got to the point where it was to no avail. The fight was just not worth it since I had five children and they were all extremely young at the time and so I just completely dropped out of the religious aspect and concentrated my attention on going to school, starting my college education and I completed eight years of college...I mean four years of college I mean in eight years while raising my children and becoming increasingly aware of each

course I took of the narrowness of vision of even a college education. They will not....professors by and large are not open at that time from '68 to '76...were not opening their eyes to the fact that there is a woman's point of view other than in the writing courses that I took and that was the only place where I thought I had complete freedom of expression. But in other courses, English courses by and large, towards the end it wasn't quite so bad, but by and large they were not interested in that women may have another angle, another perspective who may have had different life experiences and they were not willing to accept that and many times grades reflected their unwillingness to accept other direction, point of view. So, I've found also now through my college education that it's not...you know it's just people... it's not just any one institution. I think it's just people. People need room to grow and accept other points of view. I'm not... I don't really call myself a feminist. I write and I do not write from the feminist perspective. I feel that everyone has a way of looking at things and men have been oppressed just as much as women maybe more so and I feel that, not to take a conservative stance because I don't put myself that way but I can't raise banners and fly flags for feminism when I feel that it's all of us together. But I was very fortunate to come into my job in women's studies. It's just one of those fortuitous circumstances and I've continued working in women's studies since January but as we discussed it's seriously underfunded.

B: Could you tell a little about the history of getting the office? Do you know how that happened? How long did it take to get a women studies office?

N: No. I suspect Janet N            may be able to tell you a little bit more about that since I came...the program's already in existence... was in its second year when I came but as you know the first woman broke under the pressure of...

B: I didn't know about that. Perhaps you could tell a little of the history of women's studies here at the University of Delaware.

N: I don't know if I really should get into that because I was not here. I mean I was here but I was not connected with the women's studies program. I just know that the university has a mass commitment to many programs but they do not back them up with money and this is the problem. The first woman just simply could not do the amount of work, be a teacher and also do her research, the same problem the present administrator's faced with and the university whoever controls the funds or the budget prefer to say oh yes, we have this women's studies program but when you're having connection with the program you find out that you know, just operate on a shoestring and it's terrible because it's difficult to make people understand. You know the problems.

B: And it's difficult to have a good profile at the university.

N: Yes, yes, they expect a lot more than it's possible to do. We're very fortunate to get the grants of the humanities in the spring-time for the Caught in the Crossfire series. But that also was seriously underfunded as far as administrative pay.

B: Would you tell about the women Caught in the Crossfire series?

N: Yes

B: That sounds interesting.

N: It required enormous amount of work to get these, I believe it was thirteen women here to speak starting in February with Florence

Howe who is thought of in women's studies circles as the mother or grandmother of women's studies. There was stipulations to the women that we could get to come. They had to be in the humanities or if they were not the panel had to be balanced with a humanities person as moderator so it effectively cut off many women who are connected with the women's movement but who are not professional sort of women. But I think even so we got a good selection. We had Patricia Schroder the Democratic representative from Colorado, Elenor Perry a screen writer. We had Dorothy McKnight who was the director of athletics at the University of Maryland. So we had a rather large cross section of women who came and who spoke and we had very good turnouts in most of the evenings lectures and very good feedback on the whole. Some people were disappointed but then they didn't understand the constraints under which we were working. So some of their complaints were understandable.

B: You're really into this since you're editing...

N: Yes, well, I was the administrative assistant for this year since Frank and good with contacting speakers and...

B: Well, what are the ideas that you came out of it with...the sort of you're just feeling the result now in your work.

N: Yes, yes, the money that was promised to us and we didn't get it in the spring, was given to us later and this is why we were able to get these proceedings together and hopefully may the book an interesting one even though it has limitations because they're mainly lectures. We're trying to offer a grand perspective, historical-occupational and the last chapter we're calling tentatively transitional. These essays were not included in the lecture series. They are women in China, Cuba and Sweden to give some sort of broader perspective to women here in the United States. The

occupational section, we have the women who are working in the world and the ones who spoke, these are all in this section, all the speakers Trudy Lombard and Patricia Schroder whom I mentioned and Barbara Sizemore, oh, she's an absolutely fantastic person who was a member of the Board of Education in Washington, D.C. and who was not present.

B: Is she a black woman?

N: Yes, she's a black woman, absolutely vital, fantastic, charming. She was a favorite of mine. A woman who was forced out of her job and she talks about it in this occupational section.

B: Was it a power struggle with the men?

N: Yes, yes, yes, she's a very outspoken person and she knows the things that need to be done and tried to bring them about but it wasn't all men. I believe there was one woman connected with this also. So, this goes to show that you can't draw hard and fast lines. Hers will be a very interesting essay and it was very well received. People seemed to enjoy it very much. This will be a very interesting essay. I think it was good you have the academics which they also will be included in the first part of the book. I think it's good to get this broad perspective from the historical telling a little even about women's history in Europe and you know transposed here in the United States, historical and the literature also in that section. To contrast this with women who are you know fighting the battles out in the new world, we're hoping this adds a lot of attention to the book and hopefully interest too.

B: What about the...sort of the temperature of the women's movement out here. Is it cooling the way the civil rights movement tended to? Do you constantly have to keep making it happen or does it

happen because it's got such a good start?

N: Well, I like to think it's happening because it has such a good start but I think it's the way with a lot of movements. The women who are first involved and who really, really understand how this tremendous energy and you know outpouring of their feelings and all into change but then you come along with say a second generation who don't really have to go through the same things that the first group of women...I'm generalizing from my own strengths I'll say.

B: Well, that's important.

N: And you, you know, they don't understand what has...they don't really understand what has gone before and it tends to take on a more conservative stance and I feel this is the period that we're in now and I think one of the writers, Ann Douglas who's in the English department at Columbia University, she speaks of women writers in her essay and she brings this up that she thinks we should not lose our anger. We need to keep our anger. We don't need to cool it. That's our...

B: Sometimes it's difficult to keep being angry. That's very hard.

N: Well, it's hard...

B: Like James Baldwin in his books when he first wrote what was his momentous book? I can't remember, Next Time the Fire or something.

N: Yeah

B: He was very, very angry and then he began writing from Paris and changed and a lot of people criticized that his later books didn't have the same thing.

N: Yeah, that's intention. I think it is difficult to keep that anger and I think this is an important point and perhaps of contention between the women now. I think there is a lot of women who are

going into a more lesbian type of stance rather active or...

B: Do you know why this is? I'm glad you brought it up because it seems to me that it makes a negative public stance and yet if it's real it has to be talked about but why is it evolving now?

N: Well, I think it could be the sense of inability to change institutions of people at media frustration of saying I can't you know even at private personal relationships. Once your head has gotten to a certain place and there are so many people that it's difficult to deal with them because you are in one place and the energy... you just don't want to expend the energy trying to make other people see where you are or see this whole vast problem.

B: But lesbianism...homosexuality has certainly been much more openly discussed even though you know that phrase called closet homosexual is so well understood by people. For people hearing this tape years from now we hope, I'm interested in wondering if the dislocations...I'm talking about the dislocations from what was a more orderly society in terms of sex roles, not that it was right, just more orderly. Whether it's because we know that we have to reduce the or achieve a zero population growth and we know that we no longer can have a large new crop of babies every year that makes these diversionary things happen more or do you simply think that they're now being talked about?

N: No, I have never thought about it in those circum...that way and I don't know as I really agree with that. I think it's a frustration in personal relationships perhaps mainly and it's also a way of regenerating anger. I'm thinking about that. I just read a review of Audrian Ritch's new book by a person whom I admire, Francine D. Gray. She's just come out with a new book and Audrian Ritch is

a bisexual person whom will soon come out as they say.

B: Excuse me, I read the review of the new book in the Times a couple of weeks ago wasn't it?

N: Maybe it was just last week or the week before.

B: Yes, and I'm wondering when you look at a book like that what you do think about it in terms of its impact.

N: Well, I...

B: Do you think it really helps the women's movement?

N: No, I don't. I really don't. I still feel I'm not that given up on man. I still feel there's some way you know there's some meeting ground somewhere and I think this really, this negativity, this is the kind of anger though that I think is...negative anger maybe, that as the reviewer commented that she becomes so polemical she's falling into the same trap as men. I mean the things that they used to do, women are falling into the same trap and I think we really need to make ourselves aware that it is so easy to do, to use these same tactics and...

B: And reclaim yourselves as women not just unisex people.

N: Although I can see people who share complete frustration do...perhaps not practice this...or practicing lesbians but I mean just you know divorce themselves from men, just set themselves apart from men. I think lesbian conjures up all these connotations of you know...bad.

B: The butch picture. We don't like that.

N: No, I don't. I don't like that at all. I think it tends to...it tends to turn people off.

B: What you're saying, it seems like a natural kind of thing to happen now, to say we're still here sort of.

N: Yeah, I think this is probably what Audrian Ritch is doing. But I don't know. I can't speak for her.

B: What is her name?

N: Audrian Ritch. She happens to teach at Rutgers campus and she's a friend of \_\_\_\_\_ who is our visiting women's studies distinguished professor this year and I just happen to know a little bit about her. It concerns me.

B: And is she writing a new book did you say?

N: Audrian Ritch has...it's just come out. It's the one that was being reviewed.

B: Oh, I was talking about the Gray book.

N: Oh, the Gray book, oh!

B: It is having a... that's it. I couldn't remember it very well.

N: Oh, it got a positive review. It...

B: Yes.

N; I'm very anxious to read that book. She has written...I'm very interested in her because I followed her career because she's written about Catholic radicals in the sixties and I was very involved in the anti-war movement through the Catholic Church in the 1960's.

B: Do you find yourself now a stronger Catholic?

N: Oh, no, no. I'm not connected at all with any religion. No, I completely just divorced myself from any sort of institutional type religion at all. No, I found that it made me a strong person to go through this experience and to see...

B: You mean to really doubt your basic structure of your life?

N: My value system was questioned and I had to restructure my whole life with a new value system and it did not include anything

Catholic because there's nothing there anymore. I thought at one time things looked like perhaps they would change and I can see now why women like I have divorced myself from that...I can see how people are divorcing themselves from situations that they can no longer tolerate.

B: Because they need freedom and it's been like opening a wall. It's like opening out.

N: Well, I've done that in my own private life and...

B: Are you now divorced?

N: No, I'm separated. I live by myself without my children. Mainly because I found...

B: Will you be divorcing or do you just want to separate?

N: Well, it doesn't matter to me. I don't consider divorce just a legal...if I want to remarry I'll need to be divorced but I'm not concerned about getting a divorce.

B: But your separation is final. Have you got a separation agreement?

N: Well, you don't need a separation agreement. I found that out.

B: Oh

N: All you do is separate and that's a legal separation as long as both of you are not living in a house together. I did not know that at the time. I've since found that out because there are tremendous repercussions on women who leave their children for whatever reason. In the law and this is another thing...

B: And what would those repercussions be?

N: Well...

B: You mean in terms of any settlement that you might get.

N: Yeah. There's no settlement. There's no chance that I could ever gain custody of my children again. I mean it's like ninety nine and

- forty four hundredths percent certain that I could not.
- B: So you want to leave it so that you share custody.
- N: Yes
- B: In a way, your separation is sharing custody.
- N: Yes, we're working this out. We're keeping very...as much as can be possible an amicable relationship because legally I feel it would be a disservice to the children. It's a very uncomfortable business to have to deal...especially when you're dealing with so many children.
- B: Well, do you feel that you and your children...can you show them in any way? Are they too young to understand your needs?
- N: No, they run from ages...there's five and they run from ages ten to fifteen and they've seen my frustration over the years. Being part of a system in which I did not fit emotionally or intellectually anymore.
- B: And you needed your intellectual stimulation. Isn't that what brought you out? Going to school?
- N: Yes, yes going to school and it gave me the confidence because I had had a background of knowing where I had come from so it gave me confidence in voicing my opinions even though they weren't by and large not accepted. I had the confidence to voice what I wanted to voice.
- B: Did you begin to hate the war early in March of '65 when the bombing began for example? Were you an early war protestor?
- N: Well, not terribly active, no because I had my fourth child in '65 and ten months later, '66, I had my fifth one so I was pretty much...I was aware that this was wrong but I was aware of it through my Catholic background. We had a diocese in ,

a very, very strong man who was very liberal, very you know, the kind of person I like, who was bringing this to people's attention and of course was since fired very soon afterwards. So, I was aware of this but it's a step when you are in a suburban location, a very suburban atmosphere, it's a large step to come out openly because my children were beat up, through the years they were physically beat up...

B: Because of your anti-war stance?

N: Because of my anti-war stance when I finally made it public and participated in demonstrations and you know, was interviewed and things like that. We had eggs constantly thrown at our house. We had tomatoes, we had cars...

B: Were you the leader of the group because it sounds like it?

N: No, I was a...I belonged to Mothers United for Peace and I was a member of the committee group. We decided what we should do and things like that. But we were really pretty conservative sort of group compared to say Youth Against War and Fascism.

B: And Women's Strike for Peace, that was stronger too I think.

N: That was strong. That was not here. We were members of Women's Strike for Peace but they were really based in Philadelphia and there was no a local group but we you know used a lot of their syntactics and things like that. But...

B: In the church that I belong to which was an Episcopal Church, the rector formed The Clergy Concerned Against the War and we had a total division of the church and the senior warden said to his rector, "If I didn't believe in my government, I would have nothing to believe in." He just didn't understand that this church was important to him.

- N: T Powell who was a friend of mine and whom I defended was also a family member of that group way back in, I guess that was about '65 maybe.
- B: Well, it was in late '65 I believe that we had the first meetings in Albany, New York. It was a very interesting for people and there were tensions that were very high. We had a peace center in Albany staffed by women volunteers although it wasn't...
- N: Oh, you mean Albany. I was thinking of here.
- B: It wasn't to be a women's movement. Yes, I'm just bringing out my experience too for the record because the peace movement was an agonizing one for people who were serious about their christianity and there's no doubt about that. It was a very critical kind of thing and feelings ran high and it's interesting to see how quickly we've forgotten and Vietnam has been forgotten, very successfully.
- N: Well, I'm of the opinion that we really haven't dealt with it yet. I think by and large here in the United States we want to forget it.
- B: Oh yes.
- N: There's a new book and I'm...I just can't wait to see it by Ron Kumbeck, a person who was raised very you know like maybe a lot of people were raised to believe in your country and has seen you know...he's writing and it's as I understand very good writing and I think the United States, all of us are going to, no matter what our participation are going to have to come to terms with this some day and I think it's analagous to almost a Hitler type of thing in Germany. Maybe not quite the same but...
- B: Well, what about yourself in your writings now. Are you trying to write independently? I mean are you trying to write very

Mary Anne Nevills works?

N: Yes, I wrote while I was a student at the university and I'm in a transition period now though as far as my writing goes maybe on a more mature stance I guess I should say. But I find it's very difficult because I've been through so much in the past year that takes time to be able to deal with the material that you have to deal with in a very objective manner.

B: Well, for one thing you have the job of editing this seminar.

N: Yes, it's very time consuming. Yes it is, but I do intend to pursue my writing. It's ver difficult to get it published also the feminist publications will not take it because it doesn't say what they want it to say and other publications say no, because they want it to something else and I guess this is everyone's you know who writes or tries to write you know goes through the same thing. Do you say what they want you to say or...

B: Do you have to keep trying that's all..

N: Keep trying, yes.

B: Find a good subject that you can research well enough if you're not going into fiction...

N: Well, that's what I write. I'm a fiction writer.

B: Oh, I was just thinking in terms of getting published. There are so many books that look at modern, contemporary worlds and find out about them and then write about them, rather simple writing. I mean you know in terms of hitting a publisher.

N: I hadn't thought about that really. I'd like to talk about myself a little and my situation now after having left my children and my husband. What it's like for a woman alone who's made a major life change with practically no support. At the time my close

friend was away. It's a very frightening experience. It's difficult to deal with being rejected by your friends and these are...I'm not speaking of mutual friends of my husband and myself. These were my close friends who I didn't want to go into great detail about the background but who could not accept me and I thought very much about that because I was extremely hurt more than I could admit at the time. And I think probably there are many women in my situation who for a variety of reasons would like to do perhaps what I have done but who are afraid of society's condemnation who and perhaps lack the courage, there are many reasons and circumstances, many, many reasons. But for me right now the hardest thing particularly living in a university environment is adjusting to a different generation really. One that... going to school with students, younger students is not quite the same as being with them almost as equal. In the apartment building that I live in there are a lot of younger men and women whom I'm around and whom I see and they are sort of...they don't know quite how to treat me because I'm older and I've done this thing and I perhaps look a little younger but then they see the children and they just can't put it all together. And it's difficult for me because I'm not dealing with people my own age and it's difficult for me. I have to fit myself to some extent into a different... well, I dress a little differently, not in the daytime, but in the evening, than I used to. Not to feel one of the group but mainly because I don't want to stand out as being too peculiar. I want to be friends. It's important right now for me to have friends or to know other people because I'm virtually alone in the world and the whole thing of dealing with men is something that

I was not aware of. I see men who are much younger than myself and I like this because they're the accepting men. The older men don't quite know what to do and how to deal with me and I've run into older men or say men my age who would like to do the same thing I've done who also lack the courage but yet they perhaps would like a relationship with me but I tend to not get involved in those because I think they would be destructive to my own self. Before in my life I was always concerned with my children, my husband, how other people felt. I never was concerned with how I felt. I would constantly always do the feminine thing of putting other people first and it's very, very difficult, extremely difficult to learn what your needs are and to try to work on fulfilling your own needs. It's very difficult because I still find myself being drawn into the trap of thinking say as men are concerned, worrying about how they are feeling, what they want rather than what I want and it's a whole new scene as they say.

B: And also maybe even still in relation to your family. Is there still sort of a hangup there do you think?

N: Oh yes, yes, I to a certain extent I worry very, very much about how the children are but being away from it, I'm able to see things more clearly than I was when I was caught up in it. I tend to worry too much and now I force myself now to worry when there's one child in particular who tends to be very weepy and want me back home but I know that I have to deal with this. I cannot...I have to be strong. I can't get very weepy with her. I have to let the children know that I have made a decision and I am strong in my position and we all have to accept the fact that there is no turning back. This is a whole new thing. Now I, a person who

would not have done this without lots of background reading but there was nothing to read. There really is nothing to read that I have been able to find so I'm making my own rules and...

B: I think this is why you need to write a book.

N: Hopefully I will.

B: Maybe the book has already been read by countless people at the time this tape is heard.

N: Well, hopefully.

B: This is an extraordinarily strong thing you've done. It is extraordinary.

N: Well, I look on it....

B: Because the hope that the child has when the child is weeping you see is very difficult for you to turn away.

N: Oh yes.

B: You've got to stay there and then on the other hand, my question would be I'm wondering if it isn't much better if you don't see them too often.

N: Well, I see...

B: So they can get used to the finality.

N: Oh yes, I don't see...I have no car also so it's nearly impossible to get to Claymont. It takes three hours by the time you transfer busses and all so I tried that once and that can be...that cannot be.

B: Well, you can't go to that home.

N: No

B: Because that would confuse them.

N: That confuses them. I occasionally, my husband will bring me up for a while but what we do is there's a little place; I have a one

room apartment but there's a little place in a little alcove where they can sleep and on Friday nights one child comes down, Saturday night another child will trade places and come down so there's not one child coming every week and usually there's not but one child coming every other week. By the time that they all trade around...

B: So they have a nice time to be by themselves with...

N: With me, yes, just one, usually just one unless there is some other reason for two to come.

B: That's good because that gives that child, one person attention.

N: So he has total attention whereas when you're home with five children, especially so close in age, emotionally it's very trying because you're putting emotional energy so spread out plus the husband and there's no way. There's never any way for me to get the emotional satisfaction back because I was giving it out all the time and this way I'm somewhat fulfilling my needs and I'm able to give to each child and I don't mean this to sound cut and dry but it's there for me to give and it's not a nervous or anything. It's me and I can give my whole self.

B: When did you make your final decision? How long has this been true for you?

N: Oh, well, I actually left at the end of June. So it's been over three months now.

B: It's still very new.

N: Yes, it's still very new, yes. Although, I felt within the past couple of weeks a real transition. The first three months were hideous and I will never, you know, say they were any different because I was totally alone, actually totally alone.

B: And you were also probably very unhappy from the standpoint...you

didn't have an exhilarated feeling having made the break. You were having a very torn...

N: At first I was exhilarated for the first little bit, little while I was exhilarated. But then I worked a liminal summer so I had no contact with people at work or at this apartment building where I lived and the exhilaration when it was there quickly wore away. I mean it was gone in no time. So, someone else...

B: Because you have to have people. You learned that.

N: You cannot be totally alone. You see, I made such an abrupt transition from a life that was constantly filled with very little time for myself to a life of complete opposite, to complete aloneness and that's not good.

B: And you also wonder why suddenly I'm not really needed. You have to keep thinking to yourself, if you don't watch, a woman does need to be needed.

N: Oh yes, yes.

B: And if you suddenly don't have any marketing, no table to fix, no kid to clean up, it certainly would be a huge difference.

N: Oh yes, because my husband was very certain to make it clear and not in a nasty way or anything, that I had left and it was all up to him now and the children could not call me for every little problem or whatnot, that it was his show to run and there for a while that was very difficult for me because I still wanted to feel like, you know, they could call me and you know. But then it didn't take too long. I mean just a week or so's time for me to figure that they had to have one parent to whom to go and that was my husband because he was there and they could not feel that well, they could go to me or get different opinions or so. So, this

is another very good, really very good outcome because my husband was more inclined before to leave everything to me but yet he can still share his problems with me now. It's a different, it's a different relationship.

B: So, you think that he will be getting remarried. Will he be wanting the divorce before you would?

N: I really don't know. I...as far as I know he doesn't see anyone else. He's staying so busy and his evenings are so busy that he doesn't have the freedom that I have. I have the freedom and I see other men. We don't talk about it but I would have no objection if he wanted to remarry. I think there is something that we will have to face as far as the children because I think this would...I think that in one way we're very fortunate. Neither of us had other men or other women. So many separations occur because the woman or the man has someone else but this was not the case. This was a clear cut case of my wanting freedom so the children did not have to deal with that at the time or one parent saying no, yes, the usual things that happen and you hear about them all the time. So, in a way we're very fortunate but in a way maybe we're only postponing perhaps...you know...I have no thoughts to remarry. I do not at this time ever want to get into a position where I don't have my freedom and as I look on marriage right now I'm still looking on it as a constraint rather than as a freedom for individuals so...but my husband does not look on it that way and so he might...

B: He will get tired of doing it all by himself.

N: He says that he won't but it's hard. It's very difficult and he may want to but it's something that you know has not...

B: Well, do you know anyone else that you've seen...have you seen anyone else go through this? Did you have any model?

N: No, I did not. I had no models whatsoever. The woman I work with is separated and her divorce became final while we were working. That was somewhat of a model but also I knew that my circumstances... she had one child who was younger than any of my children...my circumstances seemed to me peculiar, peculiarly my own. I could not really use that as a model, only as a model in so far as someone was able to do it and still exist and not fall apart and that sort of thing. I did worry about that but no, I looked around for things and as I say the one or two things I found, they were professional type women who had good jobs and didn't have the insurmountable of insecurity that I faced.

B: What about your family, your mother and father or brothers and sisters, do you have any?

N: Yes, I have two brothers and a sister and a mother. My father's dead. My sister has come to see me once. They don't know quite what to do. They don't know how to...one brother I've seen, they don't know how to treat me. You see, I had what would ordinarily be thought of as an ideal marriage. I made it appear that way so no one was really aware of the fact and my friends and my family more or less looked up to me as someone who was able to juggle a home, school, outside activities and they were not aware of the inner turmoil that I was experiencing and I've tried to talk about it...

B: Do you know what caused it except that your need for...what I hear from you, the real need for intellectual stimulation that you were missing. Not so much other constraints because you were free to

take part for example in the anti-war movement.

N: Well, my husband did not...no, this was part of the break that was made, I mean the beginning of the break which came about ten years ago.

B: He did not want you to do this.

N: No, he did not want me to do these things. He did not back me up in these things. He let me do them but only under an enormous negative feedback and I can see his point. I know it was difficult, he was not where I was, he didn't have to...and now I can understand that. At the time I did not. He came from a different background completely. It wasn't Catholic. It wasn't authoritarian. It was much different from my own background and he understood what I had to go through in order to...the Catholic upbringing is a very heavy number to overcome and I do think a lot of people overdo it.

B: You may never do it.

N: No, no I...

B: You may go back.

N: Well, I don't...I don't...

B: I mean in a positive way you might return. Look at people like the Barrigans, you know.

N: Oh yes, well, they stayed and you know, they stay and fight.

B: If you think of a community of people and those people that acted out their feelings, it's really rather an exciting kind of community and very supportive.

N: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

B: Authoritative but on the other hand supportive too.

N: Well, they were not supportive. We ran into other problems in our Catholic Church. They were not supportive of, perhaps the anti-war

things did not bother them so much as the things pertaining to women of which I objected strenuously and was refused communion publicly and those sorts of things that broke my heart because I had obviously abided by the teachings and I felt they were forcing women to be oh in a hypocritical role and to, you know, I objected strenuously so I was not backed up that way at all, in fact, I received anything but support and this really broke my heart I was actually saying, put it that way.

B: Oh, I know. Well, what about...well, maybe you might find another community for example, in Washington or in other larger cities.

N: I suspect...

B: Or you could find much freer attitudes.

N: Yes, I think that Newark for all its you know, liberalness is not really that free. I discovered something about the younger generation, tend to be more conformist than I was aware of as far as everyone is in to the same sort of thing now and if you're not into it, they sort of look at you askance. But it's something that everyone has to work out for their ownselves and I don't find the kind of community here in Newark that I perhaps am looking for. But I'm sure it must be elsewhere.

B: Yeah, that will be a hard thing to do, move, make another move.

N: Oh yes, this...I'm...I know that I should look in a larger cities but this is something that right now I'm fearful. I'm very fearful.

B: There may be an opportunity at the university to have a teaching assistantship or something of that nature and go on and get your Ph.D. in English. What would be wrong with that?

N: Well, I don't know as I see English set up in this literature here the university, I'm not interested. It's too...I can't use the word

conservative, but it isn't forward looking and it's not...it doesn't fill a vital need for me, my English courses although the fiction writing I will always separate that out and a few teachers I was fond of.

B: Who, for the tape, who were your favorite people, in the English department?

N: My very favorite person was Barbara Gaites who was denied tenure by the male faculty last year.

B: Is she on a temporary contract?

N: No, she is an assistant professor and she will be voted upon again this fall but she's extremely capable, more capable than many of the men who were voting.

B: Do you feel that that was strictly male domination again in the English department which I heard about from Jan Dearmond?

N: Well, a lot of politics, the upper people, you know, sort of. I don't know since I wasn't privy to all the information.

B: But she was very disappointed was she?

N: Well, she was disappointed mainly because her record across the board, any other place you know, she would have been promoted. As I say, she has more publications, what have you, better teaching record all this sort of thing than many of the people who were voting on her. But she was my very favorite person and I'm very fond of Mr. Newman, the Shakespeare teacher although we had some differing opinions about interpretations of characters in Shakespeare, but he's a very fine, honorable man and Thomas , my writing teacher was always very supportive.

B: Well, anyway for right now you're rejecting a teaching assistantship. Perhaps another university would do that, would help you in that

way if you wanted to pursue your career in English and still write.

N: Well, yes, I would like to do something more with writing although I know it's very difficult to, you know, secure positions unless you have books and those things behind you. I would like to do it more in a creative aspect because I know I just had a friend here who wanted to go on for her Ph.D. and of course she's older than I but she was discouraged because of her age. Once you get... well, I don't know how my academic record is, I don't know that's... I'm more intellectually oriented than a typing job would keep me happy, you know...

B: Of course, that's it. I was thinking of a way you just might get some kind of job and still not have made your moves. You haven't checked out that possibility?

N: No, no, well in some ways I have. I have to find out how to get money first and that's the thing. It's difficult to, you know, narrow what you would like to do. I was thinking of going into counselling but I was discouraged from that because I was older and the program was not geared, it's only geared for you know, eighteen to twenty two set age.

B: Well, that doesn't make any sense from the standpoint of being a counselor.

N: I know. I was very concerned about that. I felt that the university should offer services even to part-time women. I needed counselling once and I couldn't really be served because I only had ten credits instead of twelve. It seems a little pickyish to me since part-time people are paying their share and they're just not paying it all at once. They pay it over eight years say

instead of four. So, I didn't receive any positive feedback there. And also this is a new thing to me and I tend to since I've had these rejection experiences, I tend to be easily...

B: Put down.

N: Yeah. I don't pursue things like I should.

B: Besides getting discouraged. You get discouraged.

N: I'm very easily discouraged. Yes, at this point, mainly because I don't have anyway to have positive feedback and if I received some discouraging things...it's a very difficult thing to know how to deal with, very difficult because there's no where to go. You just have to do it on your own.

B: Have you been hungry yet? Have you had food stamps?

N: No, no, mainly because there's a person in the office who gets food stamps and that's a very degrading experience. It's extremely degrading and they come to her house and look over her house and she's white but I mean she has to every month reapply and this person lives on next to no income and I guess I just don't want to expose myself to that even though, you know, you're supposed to.

B: I guess you just don't want to take any money.

N: I would rather, yeah, I would rather. I eat very, very little. I've lost an enormous amount of weight but to me, I need my pride.

B: Right, you do.

N: I don't want anyone to take that from me.

B: You do, you need it. Well, so what is your way out? What about taking some money from your husband? You did do a good job for a very long time of taking care of children. A lot of feminists say that. You know, I did a lot of supportive work, you know.

N: Yeah, I'm not interested in taking any money from him at all. I

think we have an agreement that if worse comes to worse and I'm going on starving, you know, if I need money say, I had to write a check and I didn't have the money in the bank to cover it. I think I needed twenty dollars and you know, I told him I needed twenty dollars. It's sort of a dependent relationship but yet I know that my husband did not...he doesn't have the college education I have. He put through college and in some ways it's unfair of me to take anything from them since I always took care of the money in the family. I knew how little we had and how far it had to go and that was always an enormous strain. Now that I've made my decision not to rely on my husband economically, it's forcing me to make some important decisions in my own life and also as far as the whole women's movement is concerned, right now my main concern is to secure a well paying job and think of my own needs as primary. Can you turn it off again? I do need to find my own way and it's a very scary thing but yet I feel I have to do it. I'm very excited about the future. Much more excited about the future than I ever could be while I was married. I almost felt that there was no future which leads to depression. I'm excited about the opportunity to establish new relationships. I haven't been completely discouraged although I've had many experiences in the past three months that could have discouraged me. And I do feel support in some ways from other women's writings although I didn't find anything specifically. What I do find are just thoughts and ideas and images that come to me as I read about what other women have gone through and even though my situation perhaps isn't analogous, the feelings I think are very much the same and I think that's what is important to remember. That's

important for me to remember and I think this is why I have hope for the future mainly because I'm sure men have the same feelings about their lives. This is why I always have warm feelings toward men and I hope to see the women's movement not become... or the women in the movement become too angry and shut men completely out of their lives because I think they're doing a disservice to themselves because there is always that extra dimension. Although we spoke earlier of anger, I think it's still possible to have anger and use it constructively. I have anger now but maybe I'm not expressing it overtly but yet it does make me act on my decision. It keeps me not wanting to slide back into the easy way of saying, o.k., I'll go back home and you know, that's really an easy way. That would be the easy way out. I've had a taste and you know, it's very, very difficult. It's extremely difficult because it's easy to think well, you know, it's easy to feel like you want to backslide but I don't know. I think the support that I have found from both men and women and as I say a good many younger men and women gives me the hope to go on and also gives me a hope for the future because the younger people, the future is in their hands and I like to talk with them so they will have some idea perhaps what I've gone through and what life could have been like for them if they weren't the liberated generation. It's just, you know, took us a little bit longer and I think the sadness comes from my women friends who are locked into a life that is not fulfilling, is not satisfactory and I think this is where a lot of the backlash comes from because they're angry. Their anger is a negative anger. They can only hit out because the same options aren't open to them where they're there, they can't take advantage

of them and I hate to see this backlash. This is why you have to go so carefully because really, even though I was hurt at first by people whom I knew, now I can see that they've been hurt also. I try; I always try to be hopeful although there are so many circumstances that make you lose hope. I haven't got more to say.

B: Thank you.