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Northampton, MA

DELIGHT W. DODYK

Interviewed by

EMMA BEDFORD

November 21st 2008
Monterey, Massachusetts

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Narrator

Delight Dodyk (b. 1937) graduated from Smith College with a B.A. in English in 1959, after which she moved to the Appalachian South to work as a recreation social worker for one year. Mrs. Dodyk then moved back to New Jersey, married, soon had two daughters and worked as a stay-at-home mother. Delight considered the feminist movement unrelated to her life until her two daughters began school and there she witnessed the sexism which was standard in the public school system. At that point Delight worked to remove the sexism which infiltrated the entirety of the children's school life.

Unfortunately Delight and other parents of the students had to threaten a lawsuit before their claims were acknowledged; however they eventually were able to convince the school system to make distinct efforts to remove sexism from the classroom and after which they were consulted by several other school systems to help make the same changes. Delight went back to school at Sarah Lawrence and received her M.A. in the first ever Women's History program in 1979. At Sarah Lawrence, Delight studied under Gerda Lerner, arguably the founder of the study of Women's History. Delight then taught Women's History at Drew University for 22 years. During this time, Delight continued her feminist work through the Women's Project of New Jersey, Inc. serving as a board member from 1984 to 2007. During this time Delight again returned to school and received her Doctorate from Rutgers University in American History, with a focus in the Women's Suffrage movement.

Interviewer

Emma Bedford (b. 1987) will graduate from Smith College in May 2009 with a B.A. in the Study of Women and Gender.

Abstract

In this oral history Delight Dodyk describes her childhood as a member of an upper-middle class, traditional, American family and then her adult work as an active feminist in a variety of disciplines. The interview focuses on her work with the New Jersey junior high and high school systems in the late 1960's to early 1970's, as she worked to make the schools more egalitarian to both sexes, in terms of school curriculum and classroom materials. Delight discusses her participation in the second wave feminist movement and her involvement with the New Jersey chapter of NOW at the time. Delight continues the interview by discussing her choice to return to school and work under Gerda Lerner at Sarah Lawrence as Delight goes into detail of what that experience was like before she graduated in 1979. The interview progresses chronologically as Delight then discusses her work at Drew University and the ever-developing subject of Women's History as it relates to modern feminism. Delight reflects personally on the development of feminism and how her work in academia fit into that progress.

Restrictions

None

Format

Recorded on miniDV using Sony Digital Camcorder DSR-PDX10. Two 60-minute tapes.

Transcript

Transcribed by Emma Bedford. Edited by Emma Bedford. Transcript has been reviewed and approved by Delight W. Dodyk.

BEDFORD: This is Emma Bedford, I'm here with Delight Dodyk, and we are, uh, in her home in the Berkshires; in Monterey, and it is November 21st 2008. We'll begin the interview. I'll start off, really from the beginning. Do you want to tell me what your childhood was really like? Where you grew up and what your family was like growing up.

DODYK: Ok. Well I was born in New Jersey.

BEDFORD: mhm

DODYK: February 28th, 1937. Sort of the end of The Depression; I lived for the first 5 years of my life, through kindergarten, in Chatham, New Jersey. My father was an Electrical Engineer, who was in research, electronics. My mother was a full time homemaker. My dad was working at the time on vacuum tubes and their applications. He was working on radar and, he'd been working on radar, and then on television. So when the war came he wasn't called up into service. His brother was, he served in the Navy, but he not. He was never unemployed during the Depression either. He graduated from Yale in 1930, and then in 1932 from MIT. And so, and that was the hot research stuff at that point. And so I went to kindergarten in Chatham; and then we moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania for about 10 months. And this was in 1942-43, my father was working with a firm there and we lived right in downtown Lancaster.

BEDFORD mhm

DODYK: And my brother and I went to a little private school nearby. That was a very vivid experience for me because as a child, I guess, you remember things by placing them in your home or in your setting, and that setting was very interesting because it was right in the middle of town and we were in a old house that had been the house of the artist Charles Demuth. His mother died and it was rented, and we rented the house, and it was a wonderful old, brick, row house. And you looked out the windows and could see Amish folks walking downtown to go to the market and all. And then we moved to Nutley, New Jersey. My father went with ITT. ITT at the time was purely electronics firm, now it's a multi, everything, firm. And that's where I finished school; went to elementary school and junior high, and high school. Graduated from Nutley High School. I don't know how much of that kind of detail you want me to go into.

BEDFORD: No, that's fantastic, that's great. So how would you consider your family's socioeconomic status while you were growing up?

DODYK: We were very comfortable, but we were not wealthy. My dad had a good income, my mother didn't work, she was a full-time homemaker. And she'd been a Smith graduate; graduated in '32. Her ideology was quite

similar to the ideology of when I went to Smith and that is: Smith women were educated community volunteers and activists and corporate wives, and mothers, educated mothers. I can't imagine what my father made, I don't know. But we were not wealthy, but were we solidly middle-class. An indicator of that was that my brother was able to go to a private high school. And I went to Nutley public high school, mainly because I wanted to. And my parents said, "well, you can stay in the high school if you keep your grades up, because you're going onto college." And that, you know that was just sort of accepted, that I would go to college. Having two parents who were college graduates. And that, amongst my friends, that was not totally common. I mean now I think in most upper-middle-class neighborhoods and families you would expect the parents to be college educated. We lived comfortably in a very old house; it was about a hundred and fifty years old at the time, and my mother was, my parents were, into antiques and had a number of family things. It was a lot of family pride. My father's family, the Wings, were descended from a widow and four sons who immigrated to Massachusetts in 1634. She was the widow of a dissenter minister. So there was a lot of that kind of family pride. Long roots, and deep roots. And my mother's family too, who were Adams and Alcotts, going back into New England. So there was a sense of-- I suspect a sense of status, that wasn't fully borne out by the income. But you know I had the privileges of going to camp in the summers and traveling a bit with my family, we always took car trips to visit the grandparents in Florida, or vacation in Nova Scotia. Traveling around, car vacations of course were very popular then. So I guess you would call us upper-middle-class in a certain sense, but probably not economically. I was not expected to go to Smith on a scholarship, my folks paid the way. And I remember when the tuition, room and board and tuition went up from something like 2200 and 2400 a year, that's a big jump but, you know, we'll take care of that. My paternal grandfather died in 1945 and his widow, my grandmother, moved from their nice big house in Brooklyn to live in a little apartment down the street from us in Nutley. So she became-- the family was sort her caretaker in a way. She never learned to drive, that was grandma Wing. And my other grandparents were much more comfortable than she was, so we would visit them and come up here to the Berkshires, as I said before, with the kids to summer and all. And my father took me traveling, I think they were compensating in some way for my brother going to a private school. And so my father took me with him on business trips to California and to France, and uh, visited cousins in Wenatchee in Washington State. There was an effort to sort of expose me to the outer world.

BEDFORD: Certainly, I can see that— so it appears your father really valued your education culturally as well as in school; would you consider your mother a feminist? Someone that valued the same things? Or—

DODYK: Umm, no. No, but I mean, I grew up in the '40s and '50s and the feminists at the time were usually people who were left-wing, or involved in the union movement or something, you know, activist movements like that. My mother was not an activist, she had been raised a Congregationalist, we belonged to the Episcopal Church, but she was more the force in the family than my father. She was the decider, let's put it that way. And, was the social hub, the social energizer of the family and I think the ideas of me traveling and going to camp and all were arranged by her. And she saved for those trips, from the family budget. She was a person who like to take control. She was a very sweet, but not a retiring person. Do you get the idea?

BEDFORD: Yes, certainly—

DODYK: She was a Smith woman of the time, you know the social activ--, community activist, she was very active in the church and she was very active in the AAUW and she sat on the library board and this kind of thing. She would never have run for public office or anything, she was not a politician she was a public servant in the Smith mode.

BEDFORD: Very cool. So, your mother went to Smith, I assume that was the decider on you going to Smith. Or was it your own decision, or--?

DODYK: Well, it was, I was programmed to go to college and I think the assumption was I would go to a private women's college. And when it came time to do that it was a completely different scene than now, I mean you go up and you had interviews with some lovely lady at the college and get shown around and you take your SATs and off you go, it was no sweat. I applied to Smith and Holyoke, and Connecticut College. And I was accepted at all 3, and when I made some noises about Mt. Holyoke, my mother said, "O well, if you're between Holyoke and Smith, there's no choice" kind of thing. She would not have forbidden me, but it was very clear I was meant to go there.

BEDFORD: Now you were there during the time, around the time, that Gloria Steinem was there. What was the political and social atmosphere on campus?

DODYK: Now lets see, I was there from 1955 to 1959, which are the Eisenhower years. Which were not activist years. And I'd say there was very little activism there. Gloria Steinem graduated, I mean, Betty Freidan graduated before I did. Steinem, now when did she graduate?

BEDFORD: I think she was at Smith in the '50s, according to my notes. But I think she--

(two voices)

DODYK: But before, before I was there I think.

BEDFORD: Yep

DODYK: I don't think either of those women were really, I mean, so far as I know, there was no activism. Now, that's because I was very apolitical. My family was Republican, made fun of Eleanor Roosevelt, and very, quite apolitical. No sort of conversations around the dinner table. So I went there--- it was a total intellectual awakening for me to go there, to go to Smith from a public high school. And unlike the gals from some of the private schools around Boston, um everything was new. When the Boston Symphony came I was transported. I mean they played Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, I'll never forget it, and to me that was sort of a celestial ecstasy hear that. And the kids from Boston of course had heard it a thousand times I suspect. But I don't remember there being much [activism] at all. I mean I don't remember Brown v. Board of Education, the whole segregation thing which was beginning to go on was totally beyond me. I really don't remember any of the politics of the time. I was just absorbed in my studies, and very focused on my studies. So this was very much a sort of intellectual experience for me. Focused on my studies, and on Amherst. (Bedford laughs)

DODYK: I sang in the freshman choir and the college choir and then the glee club. I was interested in music. I didn't go away my junior year, I had initially had thought I would go to France. My mother had gone to France in her junior year, and I thought, well, I'd do the same thing. My mother was my model I guess. Work I took in the summer, one was a summer camp job and then one was working for the New York Public Library. And then the third summer I went to the University of Edinburgh for a summer program in philosophy, none of which I understood. And I spent most of the time hitchhiking around Scotland. So I was just very young and inexperienced for my age, I guess. Not plugged into anything in particular going on. I mean if you were to mention some things that were going on in college at the time I would probably remember them, but I wouldn't call them up myself.

BEDFORD: OK. That's very interesting. So, but after Smith you went to work in the Appalachian South, correct?

DODYK: That was a spur of the moment decision. My husband and I had been dating, and as it got closer to graduation, he received his Rhodes Scholarship, so we broke up. And I had this plan that I was going to go to library school and second year of his Rhodes I would go over and get a job and we would be together. Well then we broke up. So all of that crashed

to the ground, and learned about what they called the Southern Mountain Workshop was open. Nobody had taken it that year, and so I applied it. It was run by Gertrude Smith who was a faculty member in the music department. I can't remember what the student agency was that sponsored it, it may have been the Student Community Service, or something like that. \$2000 a year, is what I was paid to go down and work in and out of an office in Berea, Kentucky. Now the Council of the Southern Mountains, which was the agency I worked with. I don't know if it even exists anymore, but its papers from the Smith women who went are in the Sophia Smith Archives, or in the college archives. Several years ago one of the women initiated, got in contact with everybody who'd held this Workshop to give whatever papers they had to the college. So there they are somewhere, whatever I kept. So I went and lived in Berea for a year in faculty housing with another young woman who worked for the same agency. And we were recreation workers. Which meant basically we relived my summer camp experience. I mean that's what we did. We went around to schools, the county one-room schools, and played games and did arts and crafts with the students as an enrichment thing and sometimes gave workshops for the teachers, sort of giving them some new games that they could play. I mean the arrogance of it staggers me now, that I at the age of nineteen would go down and tell these teachers anything. The whole culture was so different and was very depressed and that was one of the issues that John Kennedy raised in the 1960 election. He went to the southern Appalachians and to the mining communities, and the southern Appalachians are basically the mountain counties of states from Georgia to West Virginia, including western Virginia and Kentucky and Tennessee. Mostly, a lot of those were mining areas, and that's where we worked. We worked in these depressed counties. We sort of farmed ourselves out to schools, private schools, church groups; it was a total revelation to me. The way these people lived, what they ate, the looks of those mining communities, where they were strip mining. And then visiting and working at some of the settlement schools that had started as a movement in the 1920s, sort of modeled on the urban settlement house, but this was rural. And there were a number of boarding schools for kids to come from up the "hollers" to go to school. The Frontier Nursing Service in eastern Kentucky was where there was a midwife service to improve maternal health, which was one of the problems, infant mortality and maternal health in the area. We would go and work there and play games. Susanne Camp was the other young woman who was working there. It was a wonderful experience. Gertrude Smith's interest in it was from the music in the area, at that point the Appalachian language had even some Elizabethan usages in it. It was a goldmine for folk music, early folk music.

BEDFORD: So this was the first time you had lived on your own correct?

DODYK AND BEDFORD: Yes

BEDFORD: So—

DODYK: Well except for the summers in Scotland and in England, but yes I was supporting myself I guess you could say

BEDFORD: OK (laughs) so I think we'll talk about, more sort of progressing chronologically, obviously you got back together with your now husband and you moved back to New Jersey, where you had two daughters, and can you talk about your involvement with the New Jersey system and how that got started

DODYK: Well let me just say that we, to fill in a little bit. Paul and I were married right after the end of Rhodes scholarship, he came back and we picked up and married and he started law school. Our oldest daughter was born in Cambridge; Phebe was born in Cambridge, at the end of his first year of law school, which was not quite what we planned, but anyway. I was working at Houghton-Mifflin at the time in the education art department. And then, after law school we lived for a year in Washington DC because he clerked for Justice Potter Stewart. That's where our second daughter was born, and then we spent a summer in Ann Arbor and then returned to the New York area and in order for him to join the New York Bar we had to have residency in New York, so we lived in Rye, New York, for about 18 months. He was teaching at Columbia Law School at the time and that's when we moved to New Jersey in 1967. That was just when Phebe was starting school. Now around, lets see, she started school in 1967, and in the early 1970's, we had left the Episcopal Church and become Unitarians and I had gotten very involved in the League of Women Voters and at that point, that's when the feminist consciousness raising was beginning to infiltrate the suburbs (laughs). I had a friend in Scarsdale whose feminist group had done research in the school curriculum and the school teaching materials, to uproot, to investigate, the sexism in the textbooks. And that's when I got involved really with the schools, when Phebe was a couple years away from going into Junior High which at that point was 7th through 9th grade. And looking at her basal readers, they used the Ginn and Co. basal readers in the school, they don't use basal readers in the schools anymore, but it was Dick and Jane and Muff and Spot and that. So this group which had begun to form as a chapter of NOW, I mean NOW was started in 1966 and um, basically began to get off the ground in 1967. So there was a group in Ridgewood of teachers and moms who were interested in feminist issues. And in 1970, maybe it was even earlier than that, they had this big demonstration in Atlantic City against the Miss America Contest, that's the famous one where they didn't burn bras, they just threw away fake eyelashes into the trashcans. So that made reverberations around New Jersey and Rutgers at the time, women at

Rutgers were pretty activist in the feminist movement. It began to sift into the suburbs. So our little education subcommittee of NOW which was some moms and teachers would get together and start talking about sexism in the curriculum. And sexism was a new term; it came into the language at the time. I think I told you over the phone, the educators, the school superintendent and assistant superintendent-- nobody had a clue what that was all about. What is sexism? They didn't know. Well what we did was we started looking at the elementary school readers and what have you to actually do a qualitative, a quantitative analysis of women. How many times adult women are shown in the books and what are they doing and how are they characterized; and the same for the little girls, what are the little girls doing. And of course you came up with just an appalling thing. I mean, the basal readers in the 1930's were more egalitarian than they were at that time. Mom was there, there might be a nurse, there might a teacher, mom was so helpless that she couldn't even help get the goat off the car, these kinds of situations. And everybody stands around and of course the little boy goes and gets the goat off the car and mom's sort of catatonic in the background. So we did this whole analysis of the basal readers and came up with some conclusions and we took them to the superintendent of schools -- is this the kind of thing you want to know about?

BEDFORD: Yes, absolutely.

DODYK: The superintendent of schools was a fellow just our age, he'd been to Williams, nice fellow, who's wife I knew well, I mean we were social friends. And the same way for the assistant superintendent of schools. So we went to talk to Sam and Ernie. And we're nicely greeted as friends, but basically dismissed. And at that point what we were trying to do was to begin to get them to look at the curriculum, but also, more specifically, to deal with the Junior High elective curriculum, and the sports curriculum, mostly the electives. I mean the shop and printing versus sewing and home ec. Kids went into 7th grade and the boys did shop and the girls did cooking. That's the way it had always been. So when we went to them, I mean at this point, there had been legislation passed, and I'm trying to think whether it was New Jersey or federal, about equal treatment of women and men and girls and boys in the school system. So we went and we were listened to but nothing happened, sort of dismissed. This was in the spring, we were talking about the next fall. Basically we were told that there wasn't anything we could do. So we wrote them a letter and said thank you for meeting with us and it was very interesting and taking the time and all that, but the school basically wasn't in compliance with the law and we would be very reluctant to bring a lawsuit, but we would if we had to. Well the next fall, boys and girls were admitted to both, you had a choice and sort of overnight they changed it. There was the federal Title IX which largely addressed sports and

employment in the schools but New Jersey had its own version of Title IX which came out in 1972. We took our textbook results and got permission to look at some high school textbooks as well, and to interview some of the teachers who were teaching some of these gendered courses in the high school. We were given permission to do this, which is very unusual I mean they usually don't want parents messing around in the schools. So we did, we went and interviewed and wrote up a report. It was quite a great report and by that time the superintendent had moved onto another job and the assistant superintendent was the superintendent. And he was a charming, bright man, and he was thrilled with our report that we had printed up, I don't know, 150 copies; and this is how naïve we were, he asked for the copies so he could distribute them, and we gave him the copies of the report and they just sort of disappeared into a black hole. By that point we'd already made our point and the school systems were beginning to realize what this was all about. These were new concepts, the idea of sexism sort of as a gendered version of racism; you know people didn't think in those terms. So what we found was that we were then asked to other school districts, to come and sit down with superintendent or some curriculum specialist to discuss these things and that's at the point that I realized that I could look at textbooks and tell them if they were sexist or not, but in terms of curriculum and how to deal with that, I didn't have any background in that. So it's at that point when I realized that we almost had a consulting business going on here, that I should go back to school. And I found out from a friend at the Ridgewood Unitarian Society about this program at Sarah Lawrence and applied and started in that program in 1976. But what happened, the curriculum thing really turned out to be a major interest of mine and that's sort of what followed. But the changes in the schools became quite dramatic and people really did begin to look at the textbooks. And the basal readers were one thing, it was easy to see what the problems were with them, but then you get into curriculum content and it's harder. Because you have all these different fields. It gets down to such things as what kind of literature are the kids reading and you can be captured by a kind of a book banning kind of thing. Which we were not in support of. We had some very good schoolteachers working with us and they knew where to draw the line. But I remember looking at the history texts in the junior high and high school level and just looking at certain events you could get an understanding of how--- I mean there wasn't such a thing as women's history. Women surfaced every so often in these textbooks, sometimes as a sidebar with pictures, like the Grimké sisters, in the abolition movement, they'd always have a picture of the Grimké sisters with a little caption. When they talk about the 19th amendment there was no discussion of the 19th amendment. You might have a short paragraph that said something about, nothing quite as bad as the fair sex but women just received the vote. No discussion at all about the 19th amendment and the whole suffrage campaign, it was just not there. But then there were other things, there was no attempt to integrate

women's experience, the textbooks were all, and still are largely political and economic and military history; so that the areas in which women were powerful just didn't come up in those basic texts. And that has changed somewhat because of the whole introduction of black history but also social history. The 60's was when social history was beginning to be the *thing*, we were studying the labor movement and studying the reform movements. And so the whole new scholarship in history fed into, or women's history fed into that. The theories of these movements, somewhat leftist theories of class, race and gender, that whole construct, emerged in the 70's. The analogues between racism and sexism and classism and sexism.

BEDFORD: Wow, wow, so you were really involved in all aspects of the school system, in reforming –

(two voices)

DODYK: Well as a parent, I mean—

BEDFORD: Yea

DODYK: I mean we began to think about those things and part of it was just bringing this thinking to the school system. We never went to the point of trying to run people for the school board who were sympathetic or anything like that. It was more using inside connections with teachers and administrators to alert them to what was going on.

BEDFORD: Now during all of this work your daughters were still in, in the schools that you were working with. How do you believe that your work with the school board and really changing what's going on in the classrooms, affected their education, and really changed their work in the classroom?

DODYK: Well one thing it did was that by the time they got to junior high school the whole electives system was different

BEDFORD: Right, right

DODYK: Also there were many more opportunities for sports. Phebe was never really involved too much in sports; Michaela was a gymnast and the gymnastics program had developed more. Because basically what they had to do was to look at the expenses for women's sports versus men's sports; and I think that the electives changed so, I mean if you're going to have boys in a cooking class you learn how to cook different things and you don't wear a frilly aprons, you have a sort of chef's apron, and the sewing class was sewing backpacks or something. Those things changed. And at home the conversation changed. And the hold over into the 70's

from the 60's was very much there. There was still a lot of activism by the students in the 1970's. And our older daughter, Phebe, was very involved in that. 'Caela not so much. Caela went with me, in 1978, to the big rally they had in Washington (D.C.) to extend the period of time for the ERA, because you know you had Roe v. Wade in 1971 and ERA in 1972. They were very much exposed to the external world through me, I guess. In school, it's hard to know. The drug scene in Ridgewood wasn't bad at the time, so they didn't get sucked into that kind of thing, and I think both of them grew up with a pretty strong sense of themselves as women. Phebe graduated from high school in '80 and Michaela in '84. So how much of it was the school and how much of it was the times, I don't know, but the '70's was a very vocal time for that, and of course that's when the gay rights movement begins. And there's the discussion in NOW over taking up Lesbian issues and a lot of resistance by Betty Freidan who thought that would be the end of the movement. So all of this sort of trickled down to them I think. And interestingly enough, both women have gone into quite, what you would consider, traditional women's fields. But in our family they're the first generation who had careers. I taught for years, but I came to that lately, and they started right out, thinking in terms of what they would train for. And Phebe became a Nurse Practitioner and Michaela an elementary school teacher. I mean those are traditional things for women, but they came to them with a different mindset of what they were doing.

BEDFORD: Definitely, that's very interesting. So, you talked about, just now, about going to the rally in D.C. for the ERA, so you were definitely involved with other forms of feminist activism, while you were doing these things with the school board. Can you talk about that a little bit, what type of activism you were involved with---

DODYK: Well that was through NOW, through NOW. I mean we were very much involved in the whole ERA ratification process. In New Jersey, it came very quickly. NOW was involved in that, the local chapters of NOW, but it was not a struggle, I mean it was almost instantaneous. And it was for a lot of states, sort of instantaneous and NOW sort of expected that that would be the case. There was no understanding of the suffrage movement struggle. That was not a model, I mean women in NOW didn't have any historical memory of feminism or women's history at the time, none. I remember, this is really interesting, there was a woman at the Ridgewood public library, and this must have been in maybe 1974-5 who got a documentary on women in history. I can't remember the name of it but it was one of the very first to be made. And she invited members of various women's groups, largely the League of Women Voters and NOW, and I was very active in the League on issues of housing, fair housing and that sort of thing; to come and see this film. She held the showing in the basement of the little neighborhood library. And her attitude really struck

me; I mean she really had the feeling that she was doing something subversive to show this film. And it was, I suppose looking at it now, we would see it was entirely dated, but it depicted strong women in history basically. And it included women like Sojourner Truth and some sports people and it very empowering. It was not a documentary, it was propaganda basically, I mean you would look at it this way. But it was sort of for the first time, women seeing other women doing things, it dealt with the Seneca Falls for instance; nobody knew about Seneca Falls. And the whole women's rights movement of the 19th century and the abolition movement and the Suffrage movement. It showed pictures of the parades and whatever and the jailings of Alice Paul and all this kind of thing, with wonderful music in it. And at the end, it was just flashes of women, famous women doing famous things, with this wonderful music and everybody in the room just sort of, all these women, it was all women, sort of blown out of their seats by this revelation, of this wonderful stuff. And we all sort of slunk out of this basement room (laughs) where we'd been watching it. It was almost as if we were watching pornography or something. (Bedford laughs) and it was fabulous. Totally awakening, I remember, that was, it must have been 1974 maybe, very interesting. The League of Women Voters was also quite feminist at the time. I mean their whole history of course grows out of the suffrage movement. The whole idea of activism, particularly local activism.

BEDFORD: Definitely

DODYK: So, we went to Washington in '78. NOW hired buses and all sorts of groups got together and we had this fleet of buses that went down and it was! I don't know if you've read anything about that demonstration, but the idea, they were like 3 or 4 states short of ratification and everything had sort of ground to a halt. And the states that hadn't passed it were having big battles on it. And by that time Phyllis Schlafly had started to surface on and introduce a whole anti-feminist--. Feminist women who wouldn't necessarily have identified themselves that way, just assumed that once you introduce the ERA, the value of it, the rightness of it, the justice of it would be sort of automatic and everybody would say, "o yes of course." I mean, there was no organization, early on, to get the states to ratify. There was sort of, it was almost spur of the moment. Nobody had any idea how long it had taken to do suffrage and how organized they were in the 1910s to get that passed. So anyway, we descended on Washington to get the legislature to extend the ratification, which it did, until 1982. Nothing much happened in that time. But I took Michaela with me and it was in August, it was very hot. We went down and we're all in white and we had purple gold and white sashes on, I mean it was wonderful. Caela was all in white, it was so hot and we walked up and it was just thronged with people, with women and men, but mostly women. And just the experience was real, I hadn't been to a rally in Washington

before. I'd never been to any of the anti-war rallies, and it was incredible. Kayla, Caela was about thirteen at the time, it was a real turn on for her. I remember walking down Constitution Ave, (unintelligible) anyway towards the Capital, we walked down there and by the national museum, where there's a ground level fountain; where the fountain came sort of up out of the ground and you could just walk right into it. And the whole parade sort of verged through the fountain and out other side. I didn't do it but Caela went through and got all her clothes wet. Then of course they were dry in ten minutes. That was very very exciting, she still remembers that. That was very exciting just to be there, I mean, we went down and back in a day. The next time I went was the big demonstration in 1992, when the Supreme Court was deciding some cases about Roe v. Wade, that would have modified Roe v. Wade. There was a pro-choice campaign going strongly and that was the biggest, I think that was the biggest demonstration we went to.

BEDFORD: So did you, I mean those are incredible stories, that's amazing. Did you get involved with the League of Women voters and the, and NOW, because of your work with the school board or the other way around? Were you involved with NOW and the League of Women Voters before your work with the school board?

DODYK: Oh Before.

BEDFORD: Yea?

DODYK: Yea. When we first moved to Ridgewood, the wife of a colleague of Paul's at Columbia Law School invited me to join the League of Women Voters.

BEDFORD: OK

DODYK: And, at the same time I had another wife of a colleague invite me to join the Junior League. (laughs) I made a very definite choice about that. And so I joined the League of Women Voters, and that was, it was very interesting. A very involved local League and they were in the process of embarking on a campaign to change the form of government in Ridgewood, which you can do and there's an enabling statute of all the different kinds of government you can have at the local level. And they were going away from a commission form of government, to a Mayor/Council form. They were very active, they were very active in fair housing, they were very active in studying the housing stock in Bergen County to look at moderate income housing. And there was a little overlap between NOW and The League. Same people in both organizations but NOW's organizational focus was towards women's issues, so that appealed to me a little bit more.

BEDFORD: So, what was the feeling, ([I'll] start getting more personal now), from Paul, your husband and your friends and family who weren't quite as involved with the feminist movement. What was their opinion towards what you were doing? And the changes you were trying to make?

DODYK: Well, it was not antagonistic. My mother had been the one to give me a copy of *The Feminine Mystique*, shortly after it came out in 1963. And I think I told you that, you know the kids were little, I was just a young mom dealing with kids, I didn't even know what it was talking about at that point [Bedford laughs]. Later on I did [laughs], I figured it out myself. I think my mother was intrigued by *The Feminine Mystique*, but she never changed her life to go along with it. I mean, she was well on at that time. Paul, in the early 1970's, went from teaching law at Columbia Law School into a private firm, and was a corporate litigator. And he was immediately sort of, well very soon after he joined the firm, invited to be a partner and sucked into the defense of the federal antitrust suit against IBM. Which went on for years in the '70's. And so our life changed quite dramatically at that point from being a fairly manageable commute into Columbia Law School and teach kind of thing, though he was there and active during the time that they were having the student riots at Columbia which were very strong. In 1968 I guess was when Columbia erupted and the law school was somewhat involved with that. But when he went into law practice, he just disappeared into the world of law. One of the reasons that I never went into consciousness raising-- I was never involved in a consciousness raising group. I'd done some of the exercises in other contexts, but I'd never gotten involved in this weekly process. And part of it was, that I felt that it was-- it was too challenging, to the way you lived. I mean it was very-- you discussed very intimate things in those consciousness raising groups, and I wasn't comfortable with that to begin with, I was just too conservative, I guess, for that. But also, part of it, I never, we never really thoroughly discussed the whole feminist critique of marriage, and of women's traditional role in marriage. And he [Paul] had, this friend I mentioned to you in Scarsdale who'd studied [with him]... that couple split up. She decided that she didn't believe in marriage anymore and she didn't want to be a corporate wife. Not that lawyers are-- I mean she didn't want to be the wife who sort of had a whole piece of the family to herself and her husband was gone all the time. And other people were doing that and they were really analyzing their marriages or discussing these things in depth with husbands and coming to blows on it. And breaking up, deciding that this wasn't what they wanted to do. I didn't have the courage to do that, frankly. I mean I didn't have the inclination but I fully realized how patriarchal, basically, our family was. In terms of Paul being totally absorbed in a career and leaving all the rest of the family life, to me. I mean, he was a good parent, but he was a very traditional parent in that sense. It was a kind of the same kind of work and

marital relationship that my parents had, where my mother was the homemaker, and the husband did the career and raised the money and did whatever he had to do. And Paul did a lot of traveling, I mean he'd go, he'd be away on a case for a couple of months in Arizona or California, or something, and I would be at home. And I became myself, very discontented with that, but it was never something that we really ever grappled with as a couple. And I basically didn't want to, didn't want to upset the—I mean there were parts of me that realized that my marriage vows were all framed for this kind of life and I had entered into that relationship. He'd always wanted to be a lawyer, he loved his work. I didn't have that same kind of draw to a career of my own. I had no desire to go out and work, I was getting very frustrated with volunteer work, because it's very sort of fragmenting. You know, because I was very involved with our Unitarian Society and the League of Women Voters, and NOW and I mean I was sort of being pulled in a lot of different directions. I wanted to get out of that, in some way, but I didn't ever see myself going back to work. I mean, I could not have gone, I could not have worked, given the way our life was framed. And so I just didn't ever really challenge it.

BEDFORD: Right, OK. I'm going to pause the tape here, and we can move into your educational career afterwards.

DODYK: OK

[End of Tape 1]

[Beginning of Tape 2]

BEDFORD: OK. So you entered the first graduate program in Women's History at Sarah Lawrence, studying under Gerda Lerner.

DODYK: mhm

BEDFORD: What brought you originally to that program? And to study specifically under her?

DODYK: Well, I was doing this curriculum evaluation work on a sort of freelance, interested-parent basis with our school system, and I got increasingly interested in the subject. And, I mean, the history of women, but then a friend of mine who was an historian said that he'd heard that there was some very interesting program that had just started at Sarah Lawrence, And he mentioned Gerda Lerner and I had heard her name somehow, I'm not quite sure how. And so I, and I had another friend who was doing an early music degree at Sarah Lawrence; she said, "it's not a bad commute

at all, you can get over there and across the Tappan Zee in forty minutes, and it's a great place." They had a number of continuing programs. They had, well the one that Anita Lustenberger is in which is a genetic counseling degree; and so I applied and was accepted. And the year I entered, Gerda wasn't there, she was on leave doing something else. Her husband had fairly recently died and I think she was doing some other things for a while. So I didn't really meet her until the second year, but it was a two-year degree that I took in three years, so I had two years with her. And, I really, I didn't have much history background, I'd taken World History at Smith but nothing much more than that. So the summer before I entered I did some reading and read my kid's high school textbook [laughs]. And sort of boned up so I'd know when the Civil War was and things like that. And got into the program. My thought was that I would study women's history and then I would be able to consult with educators on history programs and integrating gender and what have you, but I went in with no background-- no analytical background for history or for gender studies. And they weren't even called gender studies at the time, I mean it was: women's history. So I started in the fall of 1976, when my oldest daughter Phebe, started her freshman year at Oberlin. And no wait, excuse me, she was in high school. It was the teaching I started when she was at Oberlin. More about that later, that was funny. She was in high school and my other daughter was eleven at the time, so she was in 6th grade at the time.

BEDFORD: OK. What was the relationship with Gerda? Studying under her, what was that like?

DODYK: Well, Gerda Lerner was, is, a very dynamic, somewhat intimidating woman. She had gone back to school herself, to get a PhD at Columbia and really bullied them into allowing her to do a biography of the Grimké sisters—I mean she was just determined to do something in women's history. And at the time, which was, oh, late 1950's, early '60's, that idea was a very very novel idea. What she wanted to do, what she ended up doing was a biography of the Grimké sisters. And looked at the whole period of time from the point of view of these women. She what she wanted to do and that stick-to-itiveness and somewhat aggressive characteristic carried through to her teaching. She was a very dynamic, very inspiring teacher. She'd done a lot of theoretical thinking about this [women's history], which was the first time I'd confronted that. And most of the women in that program, there were women right out of college, most of them were older, in some way; about four of us who were suburban ladies who Gerda pretty much dismissed. I mean she was much more interested in the younger recently undergraduate women. She saw us as sort of playful I guess, I don't know. But the whole program had started under her tutelage as a summer institute for teachers, for high

school teachers and then had morphed into this, into a whole graduate program.

BEDFORD: OK, What the relationship like between you and the other suburban grad students and then the younger ones?

DODYK: Well there was a real solidarity in that program. I mean there were probably 15 in our class, maybe at the very most, um 12. And very diverse group of women: one minority woman who had been, who was sort of a labor organizer in New York City, and Gerda was particularly interested in working with her because she had written a history of black women in the United States. I don't know if you've seen that, it was probably the earliest documentary collection on black women's history. I thought that I was just like everybody else, I don't know what they thought of the women who were married and in their thirties. It was very congenial, very fun, lots of intellectual discussion. It was just an intellectual banquet for us there, to get into this material on our own. And there were other good faculty there, Judy Papachristu was there, and Alice Wolf, Virginia Yans who was doing labor history, who's now at Rutgers. Some of those women [students] may have lived on campus or in Yonkers, most everyone was commuting from somewhere else. So there wasn't the sort of sorority feeling you get when everybody's living close by. I mean I would go and do my classes and do what I needed to do at the library and then come home. I wouldn't sit around and socialize because I wanted to be home when the kids came home from school. So it wasn't an undergraduate experience like that. For the women who were returning to school, it was a total high. I mean going back to that kind of intellectual environment after you've been out doing whatever you're doing, was just tremendously exciting. One woman that I've kept up with since was also about my age and with children at home, who'd been a high school teacher, a history teacher. So she came in with a very different kind of background. Another woman who was somewhat older, had come in as being somewhat of a community volunteer. And one of the women was, I believe, a librarian from Connecticut. So those four I think of as the returning people. And I think that Carol Artigiani, her name was Nichols at the time, and I came from kind of a feminist leaning, I don't think the other women did particularly. They'd not been involved in NOW but they'd been involved in community work in some way.

BEDFORD: Very cool. What was the impact that studying women's history, under this program and at Sarah Lawrence, on your, personal, worldview? How did it shape your worldview, if it did?

DODDYK: Totally transformative I think. I mean what it did was to put a language and an intellectual structure on the feminism that I had experienced in NOW; gave me ways to think about it and also gave me a chronology. I

mean now I see my life and I see history as sort of a laid out, three-dimensional, timeline of sorts. And what it did for me personally was to see my own family and the women in my family in terms of a historical context. My mother --I began to be much more -- to see her in a context of -- and my mother in law too -- of what had been going on in the world, in general and then in women's experience, while they were growing up. And because I knew so much about my own family, I was able to put them into context. And put myself into the context of what were the issues, the pressures, what were the expectations for me growing up. I began to see my life as participating in a series of historical events. And of course I looked back and reread Betty Freidan, and saw exactly what she was talking about. But there was a lot of, particularly in Gerda's course's, a lot of theory. I mean, that program was devising theory, because there were very few people in the field who were senior academics. And so that-- I mean Gerda, was always articulating patterns and movements, and and theory. And doing that, I mean she sort of bounced off of her class. She got um-- well when you teach, you're the major student. And so by teaching us she was clarifying what she knew, and how it fit in. And she was also at that point, very receptive, I mean having been recently widowed, she was sort of raw and very involved with her students. In a way you know you tend to get more distance or more scales over the wounds over time. But she was very interested in her students. Very funny, and obviously took a lot pleasure in empowering people. But I now see the experience of my friends, I saw the experience of natural childbirth and having my own children, in a context of World War II and the aftermath. I mean it just allowed me to see my life as being so-- being-- not exceptional, but better as a representative in a lot of ways of things that were going on. And my mother, and my mother-in-law. And I have conversations with them about things like birth control, you know you usually don't talk to your mother-in-law about birth control and that was very very interesting. I gave a number of talks at the time to groups about what we as women had experienced historically. I mean, being a historian is a very interesting experience that way, you do see yourself in a much larger context.

BEDFORD: What are these, the talks that you just mentioned. Was this while you were studying to get the masters or--

DODYK: I gave a talk at our church once to women about women's history. And I also, well I was doing a fair amount of speaking after that degree on my Thesis material which was a study of the Paterson, New Jersey silk industry; women's work in the silk industry. Which had never been done. No one had ever looked at where women fit into this, and of course as in any textiles operation, women are the less skilled workers. So I would do that and, this was quite a bit after that period but, when my mother went back for her 60th reunion at Smith, maybe it was; either 50th, I think it was

the 60th, -- they asked me to speak. And I was able to put that life span, of those women, into context, of American women's history. We talked about the development of the acceptance of birth control amongst a certain class, so we talked about those kinds of things, and work. And those women had never seen themselves in that context. But that's the beauty of a Smith class, is that you have a cohort of people, and you're all going through the same things, at the same time, in different ways. But that had a very dramatic-- it really, changed me; I mean it never occurred to me that I would come out of that and go into college teaching. I mean I was going to go back to being a housewife and harass my local school system.

BEDFORD: So what brought you to Drew, where you taught for 22 years?

DODYK: Well, after I got my degree which is in 1979, because I'd done my thesis research on Paterson which is right near Ridgewood, I'd gotten familiar with the historical community in Paterson, in Passaic County. And I also had taken a part-time job at the New Jersey Historical Society, as an assistant editor in their publications program. And so I was beginning to get into the sort of New Jersey history community. In this new field which nobody knew anything about, you become sort of a fish in a very small pond. And people start calling on you for your perspective on things. And my friend Carol Nichols Artigiani had stayed on at Sarah Lawrence. Drew after we finished our degrees, to be the manager of the women's history program. The head of the department at Drew, head of the history department, called to find out whether there was anybody in the New Jersey area from their program because they had, they had a sociologist who was going to teach a course in women's history or women's studies or something, this is 1980. They were beginning to offer these things there, [but] her husband was made a bishop, an Episcopal bishop in California and so she'd dropped everything and gone to California and here they were at the beginning of August with nobody to teach this fall course. So I went over and interviewed with Tom Cristofferson and he hired me. And then I wondered what in the world I'd done because I had to devise a course. And what this woman had concocted was interesting but it wasn't a women's history course, it was her reading on all sorts of things. And so I started over from scratch and basically integrated into that course a number of things I'd read, done myself because there were no textbooks. I mean you had to cobble together a series of readings and topics and all. So I focused on the things that I knew the most and integrated in my particular interests, and it took off from there.

BEDFORD: Wow. So, you put together a course in a very short amount of time. What was your goal in creating that course for your students? What was the most important thing that you wanted them to take away from what you taught them?

DODYK: I think my most important goal was basically to survive the semester. And what I wanted them to do, was basically learn information about women's pasts. And at that point -- we may have talked about this over the phone-- the students that I had were the age of my oldest daughter. And I related, I mean I knew what was going on in their lives and many of those women were committed feminists, coming out of high school, having gone to junior high and high school, their political consciousness was from the late '70's. Where there was all this going on. There was Roe v. Wade, there was the ERA, there was the extension of the ERA, there was, I mean, they were mostly a little young for the Vietnam war, but they and their families were really products of what I was a product of, in the '70's. And so they were very engaged and it was very fun and basically they, I just had them read a lot of the things that I read and had to put together in my mind what I'd read, and there was an element of consciousness raising to it. I mean it was not apolitical at all, it was definitely a feminist perspective, which those kids shared. I mean, I didn't have anybody in my class who was going to disagree with the bias I had, basically. So the whole notion of studying women's history was as a consciousness raising exercise, of understanding yourself, of understanding the issues, and valuing the role that women have played historically. Which most of these kids didn't get in any of their schooling.

BEDFORD: Wow. We spoke earlier about the reactions of other academic scholars towards your subject of women's history. Could you elaborate for me on some of those specific reactions? What the general attitude towards your class was at Drew, those types of things?

DODYK: Oh, yeah. Well, Drew was a very comfortable place for me. I mean, they wanted me there. They wanted to be able to offer this material. There were very few people who had the credentials to teach this. It was a big help that I had a degree from Smith, forget that it was in English and Religion, and also from Sarah Lawrence. So they were very pleased to find me. And very tolerant of me because I was a new teacher and you know I didn't really know how to write an exam, [how] to create an exam, and that sort of thing. And they were helpful, it was a very genial group of men, all men. There were about five men; a couple of Americanists and Europeans, there was nobody teaching Asia or Africa at that point, it was all American or European. It was very congenial. They were not antagonistic to me. I was more outspoken than I should have been at faculty meetings I think, because I wanted them to begin to integrate their courses to include-- a women's history course partly is a kind of marginalization. I mean, the whole point is to get that material integrated and most of these men were not social historians. They were educated-- I mean they were basically my age, but they had gone right from their college into academic life. So they were well ensconced in what they were teaching. The new social histories and the new minority histories

that were arising were new to them, and they were interested, but they weren't going to change their own teaching. And of course one of the things that you wanted, was to come up with a history that was a synthesis of the traditional political, military industrial complex history and social history and minority history and what have you. So you know, I was well received, I was well received by the women I got to know, because within two or three years, we began to put together a women's studies course. And 'we' meaning, a friend Joan Weimer, who was teaching in the English department, and a woman named Barbra Stone who was teaching Psych, and then me as a historian. And we put together an introductory course to women's studies. And then there was another woman who joined the English faculty who had come out of the University of Indiana and was a very ardent feminist and very sort of in your face feminist; where the three of us were sort of a little older school in terms of getting along with the men and not being too pushy about it.

BEDFORD: [laughs] So since that very beginning to you see that subject, or the study of women's history evolving? Do you believe it has evolved a lot in the way it's studied or—

DODYK: Oh, dramatically

BEDFORD: Yea?

DODYK: Dramatically. And, I mean, initially, it was sort of considered a fad. And it was mainly the study of women, and religion was sort of anathema. Nobody integrated the religious perspective, the role of women in religion, except to critique it, basically. All the traditional religions are sexist and patriarchal and you don't go there. And a lot of those initial courses really had to do with movements, at least in American history, movements that women had been involved with. I mean the women who during the Revolution were beginning to read Mary Wollstonecraft, and then the abolitionist movement. With Gerda's work in the Grimké sisters, that was a big thing. The temperance movement and the political movements that were really outside partisan politics, but that women were involved in. And of course the suffrage movement. So it was seen as a history of women's rights I guess. You could say the development of women's rights over the centuries. And of course the denial of women's rights and the fights that this involved. Then the whole...everything you researched was new in a way. So this was this kind of excitement about that. But today the field is—I mean that's just the basic bones of it now. It's so much more complex, and [there's] so much more influence of European feminist thinking and social history thinking and, you know, the influences of people like Foucault. And it's much more global, you have the amalgam of our whole diverse population and the immigrant experience

and the cultural mix that goes on; this study is just almost entirely different.

BEDFORD: Wow. How do you see the acknowledgement of the study of women's history affecting specifically second wave feminism; or third wave, as we're in now.

[Dodyk coughs]

DODYK: By second wave feminism, you mean the generation after me?

[Two voices]

BEDFORD: The second wave more specifically the '60's and early '70's.

DODYK: Oh

BEDFORD: That women's rights movement that you were involved in. And by third wave I mean more your daughter's generation.

DODYK: Yea, yea. And the question was..?

BEDFORD: How do you see the acknowledgement of women's history affecting those movements, if at all? Did it change them?

DODYK: Well I think, in some cases it obviously doesn't affect-- I mean like somebody like Sarah Palin; it obviously hasn't affected her at all, except to give her some very shallow ideas about being empowered as a woman. I think that the activism of that second wave has made unthinkable many of the things that were basic issues for us. Just the freedom of choice. And a whole, now, at least two more generations growing up-- women who didn't know about abortion being illegal and [unintelligible]. I think that my generation, or the second wave, for instance with regard to birth control, has a very different perspective. I mean, it was 1965 when *Griswold v. Connecticut* was decided and which really ended the fight about birth control. I think... Gerda used to always say, "you can break women's history into two eras: before birth control and after birth control." And I mean women today growing up with a knowledge of their bodies and the permission to understand their bodies. The discourse is entirely different, in terms of what you can talk about, what you can talk about in mixed company. The decision, the notion that women have choices, not just decisions, if you know what I mean. I'm not just talking about body, or childbearing, I'm thinking in terms of women thinking through their lives and making choices about what they want to do, rather than to say, "well, you know," as I did, "I'm going to go to library school so I have something, as my mother would say, "to fall back on" meaning:

you know, if I didn't have a husband after a while. And I think that idea of women being economically self-sufficient is universal now, pretty much. The media is another thing. I mean media that women today experience and have access to, is dramatically different than the media we had. People can't imagine, I think, what a statement MS. Magazine made when it first came out. I mean it was a revelation that there would be hard news on women. That you could address in a respectable magazine, the issues that they addressed. So that, I guess there is a sort of freeing up of choices about sexual morality, about careers, about assumptions about marriage. And that goes for men as well as women now. I have younger women friends whose husbands really expect them to work. And feel very stressed when they don't have another at least part time salary to help with the family. And that kind of thing. Is that the kind of reaction you're wanting?

BEDFORD: It's perfect.

[Tape pause, lighting change]

BEDFORD: Great, ok, so I'd like to move now into the work you did with the New Jersey Women's History Project. Um, you were with them from 1984 to 2007? Is that correct? Great. So how did you first become involved with that organization?

DODYK: Well the Women's Project started as a project in the public library in Mendham, New Jersey. And it started out as a looking at, in a more local sense, who were the women who'd done things and what'd they done and what were women's lives like. They were going to do a biographical work on this of some sort. Well the two women who ran with this project, Gail Samuels and Caroline Jacobus, put together, envisioned a project, where they would do a biographical dictionary basically, of women in New Jersey history. It was going to be a state history study. And they had seen a book that had come out of Virginia and it had been started I think by one of the historical societies in Virginia, which was a Virginia women's history. It had been a museum exhibit, pictures of clothing and all this kind of thing. And so that was an inspiration. Well what they did was to put together a board that then embarked on the project of rounding up a cadre of writers, researchers, writers who would be assigned a project, or two or three, to research a particular New Jersey woman. And this would be put together in a volume. Gail called, we had been, we had taught this initial course of the women's studies course at Drew, and there had been women from the community in that course who audited it or enrolled in it, not just undergraduates. Joan Weimer in the English department had been contacted by Gail; I think she had one year led a book group or something that Gail was involved with. And Gail called me at the behest of Joan that I might be somebody involved in this project. She will never let me forget

my initial reaction, it was basically: what background do you have to do a women's history project [laughs]. I think of that, oh, but she laughed it off. Anyway, I got involved in it and she put together a board and it included a couple of women out of Rutgers and Carolyn Gifford and myself out of Drew to basically do the initial research that was necessary to find the women that we wanted to write on. Gail and Caroline got a group of volunteers at the Mendham library to go through the basic historical resources, books and things, on New Jersey history, just to find the names of women. Which they did. So they went through some of basic things that you would read in New Jersey history, and just pick out women and describe who they were and all. We ended up after having done a lot of this surveying, about fifteen hundred, names of women, with some identification of who they were. We had spent a lot of time designing the scope of this project; that we wanted it to be from prehistory, including Native American women, down to--- the cut off point was going to be women who'd been born no later than 1923. Realizing that at that point, women, even if they were living, would be old enough you'd have some perspective on their lives and what significance there was. And 1923? because Alice Paul was from New Jersey and that's when she introduced the first ERA. So it was going to be at least three centuries and it was going to include very diverse women. It was going to be racially diverse, religiously diverse, geographically diverse, for the whole state, and economically, class diverse too. So we were going to look for poor women as well as wealthy women. Of course, the women who most surface early on are the women of wealth who have done something, or who's husbands had done something. And that was one of the things that we decided, that there would be no women in the book who were there simply because of their husbands, that they had to have historical stature in some way themselves. Except, they weren't necessarily going to be famous women so they didn't have to have stature as being the greatest at this or that, they just had to have -- somehow their life had to give insight into women's experience in New Jersey. So, out of these fifteen hundred file cards we narrowed it down to about four or five hundred women. And we ended up with close to three hundred. These two, Caroline and Gail, rounded up something like two hundred and fifty people who wanted to work on this. Women as well as men; a lot of them were organizational, you know, people like League of Women Voters or librarians or school teachers or writers or historians themselves; because we had a number of people involved who were teaching history at other places, high school teachers. It was a really interesting group of people. And they were given guidelines of what to do, and then they set out to do the research. We found that some of the people that we had the names of, you couldn't find out anything about them. That they just sort of disappeared, that their name had been saved for some reason, and they were mentioned in some history, but you couldn't get any biographical information on them. And you'll notice in looking at the book there's a whole format, birth and death

information and enough genealogical information about them to place them and be able to research what they did and what their significance was. And in many places people really tired hard to get at primary sources. Sometimes the sources were all secondary sources that had been hashed over many times, but that was all you could do. We canvassed women's organizations all over the state to get them to suggest people. And we went to local historical societies to get them to suggest people. And what we found was there was – you know every town has its first woman doctor and somewhere there's going to be the first woman mayor; and there are going to be the firsts of all sorts of things. It was tricky to make certain decisions because not knowing what we were going to find out we had to make decisions to govern that information, some of which didn't work out well. For instance, in the first addition, well in the whole book, there are not all the women who were congresswomen from New Jersey. We got to about three and we said, well we can't do all the women in certain categories. We can't do all the first women doctors in every town, we could have filled the book with that. So we just cut off, not realizing that there'd only been five [Congresswomen] in the whole history of New Jersey [laughs]. So there were certain mistakes. I mean, all five should have been in there for sure. Well of course we included-- well Christy Whitman, the first woman governor of New Jersey couldn't be included because she's younger than our age group. There were things like that that didn't get in. We then had training programs for folks [writers], we had a very interesting seminar at Drew that was put together by one of the Drew faculty that was working with us. We got grant money to have the biographers, several biographers of women to come in. Blanche Cook came and spoke about Eleanor Roosevelt and Gerda didn't come, we didn't get to her, she was out in Minnesota at the time. We had this seminar on women's biography and how to do it. All of this was done by the time the book came out in 1990. So it was a mammoth research project. And came out with a volume. It was broken into four time periods which was a problem too, how do periodize this? Do you go by the Revolutionary War, the Civil War; do you go by wars and presidencies or do you do other things? What we did was to periodize according to things that were important for women. And in large part, that followed the state constitution. Because the first state constitution allowed women to vote and then quickly that was overturned legislatively --- but we decided our own time periods. And organized the women alphabetically within each time period. And then we had essays introducing each time period. So the book came out [in 1990]. It was a fabulous project. It was an incredible amount of work. There were four of us who did the editing on it, myself and three others. And when the book came out it was – we had gotten funding from the state historical commission, not all the funding, we'd gotten some corporate help for it. We were able to publish the book in a little local press, we went to Rutgers University Press but they wouldn't be able to put it out for another three years and they weren't

quite sure they wanted to do it anyway, so we just gave up on them, and published it with this small press. And the paperback which came out in '97 I guess, was done by Syracuse University Press because our main editor [Joan Burstyn] was up there by that time. So that project, not only did we have the book, but we made a poster series, that was based on the book that went around, was sent around to libraries and schools. We put together a traveling exhibit which was free-standing panels that could go into libraries and museums and schools and that circulated around the state for about seven years, until it began to look ratty. And then we had teacher-training programs too; two seminars, largely for high school teachers, to learn about women's history. Because supposedly high schools in New Jersey are required to teach New Jersey history, but they don't, I mean they sort of mush it in with American history, so we were interested to get the information available. And people kept asking us, "when are we going to do the second volume?" Nobody was wanting to do a second volume, I mean this just was too much of a project. So that's when we started the website, the New Jersey Women's History Website. The server was set up at Rutgers so we did it through Rutgers and that was organized very differently. That was organized to include material that you couldn't do in a biographical sketch. We had all sorts of information you know, on people and trends and institutions and that kind of thing. Have you had a chance to look at that? Yea. That now is edited and maintained by the Alice Paul Institute in Mt. Laurel, New Jersey. So the website... then after the website we did more training programs and this all through grants that we got, to do programs with teachers to introduce them to the website and to suggest ways to use it and we integrated some teaching modules onto the website.

BEDFORD: Awesome. It really is a fantastic website, you have all different types of document on it as well.

DODYK: Lots of stuff on it, yeah.

BEDFORD: Yeah, something that was interesting was this, I'm kind of looking for a more personal feeling on this, of why was it important to you to document the stories of these, what would seem to a lot of people as, ordinary women. You know, there are a lot of doctors, a lot of things like that. Why was that really important to you.

DODYK: Well, to me, professionally, it was important because there are a lot of women – a number of the lives in the book really represent the way a lot of women lived. I mean, we have some slave women in there, it was hard to get the unknown women. But we found enough that you get a sense of what people's lives were like. Working class women, minority women, and to me that's—I mean women's history is not just the rich and famous. And if you're going to give any kind of suggestions of how people lived,

how women lived, you've got to have those biographies in there somehow.

BEDFORD: You also worked on the book *The Diary of Tabitha Reid* correct?

DODYK: Yes.

BEDFORD: Now that was more of a personal project to you, it was just you working on that. Um, how did your involvement with feminism earlier and sort of feminist influence on your work, did that really get taken into this book when you were working on it? Do you feel influenced from that?

DODYK: Not directly, I don't think. I mean the fascination with that diary, was to me a continuation of that fascination of trying to find out what regular women's lives were like – and that was a great example of that. That diary is at the Monmouth County Historical Society and they had transcribed it in a rough form, and done an exhibit on it. Because they had, there were certain things, material things that they had in their collections that are mentioned generically in the book. So they were trying to bring to life this ordinary farmwoman's life. For me, my job was to finish, I mean to proofread and correct the transcription, to footnote it, and to interpret it. And that to me was fascinating, because you could look at this woman's life in a diary that of course she had never meant for anybody really to read. And to put her into context. You could see the impact on this late 1860's life of hers the impact of the railroad on her community, the accessibility to New York City. Her husband goes in to work as probably a bricklayer and they were obviously struggling on their farm and so she gets left with all the children and I mean it's sort of the commuting husband except he's gone for months at a time during the growing season because that's when he could do masonry. And so it was almost like a detective thing too. I mean, you, looking up the words, some of the words that are archaic or you don't know the farming terms. Who were all these people, figuring out the sort of social network that she had and looking into the life of her church because she belonged to the old Tenant Presbyterian Church in Freehold which is a very old Presbyterian church. And you know, what was going on in the life of the church at the time. And her children, what was happening to her children, I mean it was a chance to get into the life of a real woman. Then I did quite a bit of reading on diaries-- what are diaries? What do they do? And what type of diary this was. Why does somebody write a diary for three or four years? Usually it's because something's going on in their lives that they've got to struggle with or they want to record or beef about or whatever. I mean it was very clear in this woman that she was of a menopausal age, and her husband was away for months leaving her with the full running of a farm. And her own youngest child was only a few years older than her grandchildren. Where was she in her early fifties? What was going on for

her?. And I found it just fascinating. It wasn't that rich a diary as diaries go. I mean she didn't talk about any politics. She mentions events that happen now and then but she's not reflecting on the Civil War, or the impact of the Civil War on her farm. There's no larger—she wasn't a woman of any particular education. So in many ways it's not a national diary that gives you insight into major historical things at the time, but it was very very fun to do.

BEDFORD: Great, that's great. So moving into, today, are you still active politically? Are you in any particular feminist or political movements? Are you politically active?

DODYK: No, I'm not particularly. I have been quite active in our Unitarian Society over the years. What I did about five years ago, well longer that, was to get very involved in a historical museum near us in Ho-Ho-Kus, and that house, The Hermitage is a National Historic Landmark, which is much more than being on the historical register, there are not, compared around the country, that many national landmarks. The house itself is significant and the family is a social history. It's filled with its own social history, which fascinates me. And the last four years I've been president of the board which takes me out of the fun and games of the history of the house and to the fundraising, that aspect of it has been very very consuming and I've basically given my life to that for the last four years. And we've built this house in that time. Our grandchildren are, you know, we have three grandchildren so we are at that stage of life where you move into a different circle in your life story. We are active in the Democratic Party, I've been a member of EMILY's List for a long time now and get involved in that. But no, I mean, we were pretty active in this last campaign.

BEDFORD: Your two daughters now both have children, correct? Are, have they followed you into feminist activism? How, if they have and if not, why do you think maybe not?

DODYK: No they haven't followed into feminist activism. They're both feminists. I mean in the third wave sense I guess. I don't know if you'd call – they're not members of the third wave, but they certainly have chosen lives which reflect what I consider the benefits of feminism. They both have careers. They've been well educated, they've well educated themselves. They're conscientious and self-confident, conscientious parents in terms of the way they're raising their children. Particularly my daughter Phebe with two boys. I mean she's a very non-machismo mom. She's not a hockey mom. She is a "sensitive to your child's inner light" mom, I guess you'd call that. She has two marvelous boys who are very free to be themselves and they're learning a lot about the household and what you do in the household, and how you resolve conflicts without

punching somebody. And it's been very interesting watching these boys grow up though because I, in my early ignorant years, insisted that there was no difference between boys and girls, it was just nurture, you know. Well, it's nature too. And I've learned it with these grand boys, they're really great kids. Jack who's a very charming young man, when he was approached to play an instrument, decided yes, he would play the harp. So he's learning to play the harp at the age of 10. And he's a member of their school jazz band. Jazz ensemble, with the harp. I haven't heard them play yet but I would be very interested to see how that is [laughs]. And Michaela too, with Lily. She has a little three year old girl and Lily does all the things that my kids did and she's just a little girl, but she's got a mind of her own. And she's very sociable and self confident. And Caela, there again, they both watch their children to get clues of what these kids are, whereas when I was raising my kids it was, you know, you do this and you do that and you do the other thing. I had a very different approach to the kids and they have chosen careers in which they-- they're both suited well to their careers. And they're both very non-judgmental, non-biased and definitely feminist in their thinking. But they've had their children in their late thirties so that they've had their careers before they had their children, or got started. And they aren't joiners. Neither of them are active in NOW, but they're very much, they're feminists, in theory, and the way they organize their lives, and the way they interact with people.

BEDFORD: Certainly sounds like though they may have not joined the movement in the same way you have that certainly you had some influence on their---

DODYK: I mean when it comes to taking positions on things, they're definitely feminist.

BEDFORD: Great, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would really like to elaborate on or just discuss in further detail?

DODYK: Well I'll think of it after you've left [Bedford laughs]. I think we've--I guess one thing I might reflect is that, and maybe, this affects Phebe too, is that, the impact of the modern women's movement on women's health. I'm sure you're probably familiar with *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, well when that came out, that was the result of the work of a women's collective in Cambridge, and researching. The book has had a dramatic impact on women I think. Having access to information and both my kids sort of grew up with that book. One of the things that I noticed is the dramatic difference in attitudes and experience of childbearing, for women. And I see this in the children of my friends and their grandchildren. The empowerment of women to take control of their own health issues, I think is very dramatic. Both my kids were born natural childbirth, the Lamaze type childbirth. And when we had our kids, you had a hard time finding a hospital or a doctor what would allow you to do a natural childbirth. Now

with these kids, I mean my goodness, their experience with childbirth has been dramatically different. In terms of the care in the hospital, the freedom to be accompanied during childbirth, the mother's choice in terms of medically how it's going to be handled is dramatically different. I see that as a major contribution of the women's movement. It's that ability to not be at the control of a physician who's just going to organize things for you.

BEDFORD: Fantastic, perfect timing. Thank you very much

DODYK: Are we out of –

BEDFORD: We have forty seconds left, perfect timing. Thank you so much.

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