Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College
Northampton, MA

JANE PINCUS

Interviewed by

KATELYN LUCY

November 29, 2008
Roxbury, Vermont

Narrator

Jane Pincus (b.1937) grew up just outside of New York City with her parents and two brothers. As a student at Pembroke College (a women's college and "sister" school to Brown University), she studied French and spent her junior year abroad in Paris. While in college, Pincus became active in anti-racism work with the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and in anti-war work against the war in Vietnam.

In the late 1960s, her activism took on a more feminist nature when she became involved in the Bread and Roses women's group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. At a Boston women's liberation conference sponsored by the group in 1969, she attended a workshop on "women and their bodies." Together with several other women from the conference, Pincus helped found the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, which published the first edition of the revolutionary women's health book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (originally called *Women and Their Bodies: A Course*) in 1970. The book quickly became one of the most trusted sources of information on women's health issues. Pincus wrote the chapter on pregnancy in 1969, and continued her work with women's health issues after moving to Vermont in the mid-1970s. She contributed to updated versions of the book through 2005.

Interviewer

Katelyn Lucy (b. 1987) is a student of Women's History and African Studies at Smith College.

Abstract

In this oral history, Jane Pincus describes her childhood and family life growing up in World War II, as well as her education and early encounters with activism, both anti-racist and anti-war activism. Pincus highlights the inter-connection between major rights movements during the 1960s and '70s (civil rights, women's rights, gay rights). The focus of the interview, however, is her contribution to the writing of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* from the first meetings of women's health groups, to the original version of the book and through all of its successive editions. She considers how the book was received by female readers and by opponents, and discusses her personal experiences with pregnancy and reproductive health issues at the time of her involvement in the women's health movement. Toward the end of the interview, she touches on the legacy of the book, and its effect on the generations since her own youth during such decades of "social ferment."

Restrictions

None

Format

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

Transcript

Transcribed and edited for clarity by Katelyn Lucy. Note: Transcript has been sent to Jane Pincus for reviewing and editing.

Bibliography

Bibliography: Pincus, Jane. Interview by Katelyn Lucy. Video recording, November 29, 2008. Sophia Smith Collection.

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Transcript of interview conducted on Novermber 29, 2009, with:

Jane Pincus
Roxbury, Vermont

by: Katelyn Lucy

LUCY: Okay, I'm Katelyn Lucy, I'm here with Jane Pincus in Roxbury, Vermont on the – what is today? The 27th?

PINCUS: The 28th, I think, isn't it?

LUCY: The 28th-

PINCUS: No, the 29th!

LUCY: The 29th of November doing an oral history. Alright, so, you said you grew up in New York City?

PINCUS: I grew up outside of New York City, about 25 miles outside in well, Elmsford, New York. It's near Tarrytown.

LUCY: Can you tell me a little bit about growing up in the '40s and '50s?

PINCUS: (laughs) Well, I was – I lived in a big house on a – I have a picture of it in there. Growing up in the '40s and '50s. It was – I was a child who, I think, was very lonely. I read a lot.

I have two brothers. We lived in, what was then the country, and what is now nothing but superhighways and motels, and so we really were pretty isolated. So to get to school, I would – we'd walk down our road, catch the bus, go to school.

I went to a wonderful private school, up until 8th grade. It was a building that was meant to be a school so it was this, like, this huge building and each grade we studied one culture, so we studied Indians in third [grade] and Egyptians in fourth, and Greeks and Romans in fourth and fifth. It was a wonderful place to use your imagination. We had "academic," so called, subjects in the morning and then in the afternoons we put on plays and we had gym and so it was a really very – varied school. And then I went to public school, which was another experience altogether. I went through five years of high school, because we moved- (sound of bird flying into glass window) That was a bird, actually!

LUCY: (gasps) It hit the window?!

PINCUS: Yeah, they do. If the reflection is a certain way they think that – they think it's the sky. They haven't done that in a long time. So, that's why I have the owl up there. (points to false owl on top of barn outside)

LUCY: To scare them away.

PINCUS: So, I majored in French. I guess I always thought I'd be a French teacher – and I did become a French teacher. I went to college at Pembroke College in Brown University. It was the women's school then, the two were separate. They weren't merged. So there were only women in the dorms. So there were – and my daughter Sammy went to Brown too. When we went back to visit, I was absolutely astonished to see guys in the dorms.

(Lucy laughs)

PINCUS: Never would that have happened when I went to school. Yeah. If you ask me specific questions, I can focus-

LUCY: Yeah, can you – going back to your childhood a little bit, were there any women in your family or in your community who influence you later in your life?

PINCUS: That's really hard to answer. I'm not really sure how aware I was, in my – at least – my background is that both my – my family – I'm Jewish. I would say that if there were women who influenced me it would be my mother, who is still alive at 95, and, having a hard time becoming so old.

And my aunt Edna, who eventually became a photographer, after she finished working for her father for 30 years in his little Brooklyn real estate business. So those would be the – we had lots of aunts and uncles around and lots of cousins.

Then, I had another aunt, Aunt Jean, so I basically – who really gave me a sense of culture. They – she and her husband – spoke French, and he was German, so I got a sense of culture from my Aunt Jean, who was not a very happy individual.

And my aunt Edna was full of life – she was my mother's sister. And my mother struggled with an unhappy marriage so I think she, she really didn't go – and she didn't have the kind of life she would have wanted to lead – although now she says she loves her life and she's had a lot of time to look back on it and reflect and really love the life she lead. But I think she was – I know she was unhappy for a lot of the time that I was growing up. And I felt her to be absent, although I didn't realize it at the time, and she knows she was absent because she was struggling with what to do about her marriage.

But those were – my grandma! She was a spiritualist, my mother's mother. So she believed in life after death. She was part of the group of mothers – not a group, but a whole cohort of mothers whose sons – well, her firstborn child died

in the influenza epidemic of 1917, and a lot of mothers were losing sons in the First World War. So a lot of mothers whose children were taken away from them became spiritualists. Spiritualism became very powerful because – you – death didn't exist basically. So my grandmother was another one who was extremely spiritual. Although we used to run away from her, when she'd put her hands – you know, I had tonsillitis and she'd put her hands here (on her throat). She was a healer and other people recognized her as a healer. But – and I found out most about her after she died, when I was in college and I wrote a paper about spiritualism. And I got a huge box of her materials, which I still have. That's when I learned about what she had been into.

So I would say those are the four – and then there was another very – now I'm thinking of all these people – another very dynamic woman, my best friend's mother, her name was Hazel Fink, and she also was an extremely dynamic woman.

But none of us – my mother was political in the sense that she was part of the United World Federalists, she believed in peace. My parents were for Franklin D. Roosevelt, but we weren't political – politically active as a family at all.

LUCY: So it sounds like you had kind of a spiritual, healing influence and a political influence – do you think those affected you later?

PINCUS: Could be. I've never really put all those women together, so it's was really fun to do that. Those are probably the five women who pop out right now, who I think were important. And I imagine each – each one gave me something important.

LUCY: Yeah.

PINCUS: But back then I wasn't self reflective, and I never really put them all together like I'm doing now.

LUCY: You said you had two brothers. Can you tell me what it was like to grow up with them? Are they older? Younger?

PINCUS: Peter was two years younger than I am, and Jim is eight years younger. There was a gap between them because, when I was about four, my father went into the Army – and went to work in Detroit, in the Army. (jokingly) My mother said there would have been four of us, had he been home! She didn't go with him and during the Second World War my Aunt and Uncle, her sister, lived with us so we were one of those families who kind of lived together during the wartime. Because my Aunt lived on the coast of Long Island and there were thoughts, fears, you know that the Germans would come over and bomb. And, I mean, the Second World War, for me, was a war that I was a child during: there were blackouts, we had a victory garden, things like that. So – I forgot your question.

LUCY: Did your dad have any influence in your – if he was gone- ?

PINCUS: My father was a very powerful personality. A very talented and gifted man musically. He had grown up very poor, and the Depression marked him, deeply. And, what happened – and apparently what happened – his family ran a textile business, a dry-goods business which he grew with his brothers. It became a business called "French Fabrics" and they had people working for them and they dealt in satins and silks until the Second World War – after that, in nylons, because the Second World War introduced nylons, among other things, and he went into the Army but apparently he was – something happened which he wanted to do – something about an unequal pay wage in the Army and, while he was away, those in power went through his desk and I think he was discharged kind of dishonorably-

LUCY: Unequal pay wages between-?

PINCUS: I'm not exactly sure, between – some issue to do with pay. He was discharged, and my mother said that marked him, very much changed his personality and made him incredibly paranoid. And, so, he continued to work in the business, French Fabrics, and stopped and he developed some small housing complexes nearby and then he – also a branch of the family had moved to Dayton, Ohio in the early 1900s, so that – and he had a housing complex in Dayton, Ohio. And that branch of the family had six sons and they all became professionals in Dayton, Ohio.

And, my father loved to sing he probably would have been really happy as a cantor in a temple. He was a very complicated person and that was how I experienced him, as incredibly destructive, because he was always – often, tearing us down. And, so. But toward the end of his life I think he became kind of a radiant being. And, just before he died, we sang together. So that meant a lot. And I felt, for the first time, a tender gesture – he put his hand on my cheek, and afterward I asked my brothers, "Did I imagine that? Or did he really put his hand on my cheek?" And they said, "You didn't imagine that," and that meant all the world to me.

LUCY: You said you were kind of a lonely kid in high school? In college?

PINCUS: No, not in college. As a kid in the country. The road was pretty deserted – now if you could see it it's full of traffic. But, I was lonely and I was shy. And I'm much less shy now. It took years and years to get over the loneliness.

Once in college, I couldn't believe the number of people there were, and I actually loved being around so many people. It was a great adventure being in college – although I wasn't the world's greatest student. And I went to France my junior year – went abroad. That was really important to me.

LUCY: How do you think that changed the way you look at the world?

PINCUS: Going to France? If you grew up in the '50s in a kind of sterile atmosphere, in a way, and then you went to France – there were different smells and the place

smelled old and hallways smelled old and kind of musty, and the food was different and – it was just more beautiful than anything I'd ever seen! When I went to Paris, my junior year abroad – I can't explain it as well as I'd like – but I was almost like a sponge, because I didn't have a sense of who I was, a sense of self, I kind of just absorbed things – I absorbed the light, and I absorbed things in a way that never happened again. And it's hard to explain, it was almost like I did and didn't exist. And I would walk through the streets – and Paris is incredibly beautiful. And we studied first in Aix-en-Provence, first, and the light in Provence, in the south of France is incredibly clear, and the cypresses are dark against the sky and, and the houses are golden. So, you know – I know it probably just gave me a sense of beauty that I hadn't been as aware of before. And it made me, in a sense, more internationally-minded, because when I came back to college, I spent some time with some international group of international students and graduate students that I hadn't before. So.

LUCY: Going back to your childhood, or maybe not quite so far, what's your earliest activist memory?

PINCUS: I was not an activist as a child, or really did not get into activism that would be called "activism" today until I was in college. And the only – the most active group there was the NAACP, so – and I don't believe that we really did very much. When I went to college, there were quotas for Jews and Blacks and they roomed Protestants with Protestants, Catholics with Catholics, Jewish – Jews with Jews, and blacks by themselves. Now this is Pembroke College – Brown University in the 1950s.

So, my first awareness of racism was very powerful. I went to this [primary] school I told you about, and in our taxi group, our car group was the Parks family. Gordon Parks was a famous photographer who just died recently, and his son Gordon was in our class and I – we had horses. And we were friends. And then in fifth grade I wrote him a note, and the note said, "Dear Gordon, I like you better than Johnny." And from then on he didn't speak to me. And I – and he didn't speak to me all the rest of the time he was there which wasn't that much longer. And I was crushed. I found out afterwards it was because, even though his family – his father, had moved into a white community in Greenburgh, Gordon had heard that if a black man addressed words, et cetera – showed a liking for a white woman – he could be lynched. He was a boy, but that was really strong in him.

LUCY: How old were you then?

PINCUS: Well it was fifth grade. But I didn't understand anything – he didn't – he wouldn't talk to me, and our mutual friends, he would maybe talk to me through them. So that was my first experience of the power of racism, in a funny kind of way. But I was not an activist in college, really-

LUCY: Can you-?

PINCUS: I was too busy being amazed by the world! And by people.

LUCY: Can you tell me what you did do with the NAACP?

PINCUS: I can tell you, the only thing that I really remember was, I remember, giving piano lessons to a little African-American girl. I didn't do much in college, really. No. And I only became – that was – I graduated in '59 and it was only into the early '60s that a kind of political awareness began to penetrate. I did work with the Congress or Racial Equality, CORE. So, what we did was – my husband and I would go to an apartment that was for rent and talk to the landlord and a black couple would come either before us or after us and try to rent the same place so we could see if he was prejudiced or not. So that was one thing we did in the early '60s and then as the Vietnam war – civil rights, that was part of the civil rights work that I did. My brother Jim, my younger brother, went down to Mississippi during the Freedom Summer, which was the summer of '64? I think. Or '65 – he might have gone down both summers in a row. So that was the political activism in our family. As the Vietnam War started to burgeon and take more, you know, more young men and just got bigger and bigger, we went on anti-war marches then. We fought. And it was – in the '60s you had this developing political awareness – Students for a Democratic Society was – became very active.

LUCY: Were you involved with that?

PINCUS: I wasn't involved with SDS, no, but our friends were, the PL people, the Progressive Labor – there were a whole bunch of left wing groups that were active then. I was not – I was studying to be a teacher and I practice-taught and I taught. I do remember, I think it was the second year I taught – was a year that we sat-in, so that must have been '65, we sat-in at the Federal Building in Boston, basically and had – to protest segregation of a particular thing that was happening that day – I forget what it was then – and they – the cops came and dragged us all out and dumped us in a heap and I went to school to teach a few days later and one of my students said, "Oh, Mrs. Pincus, I saw you on television last – the other night! You looked so funny being dragged out!" So, that was the kind of protest I was involved in. Also, as the Vietnam War was continuing, I – we began to do some draft counseling, because a lot of young men did not want to go to war.

LUCY: What is that, exactly?

PINCUS: Draft counseling – what you did was you talked to young men who did not want to got to Vietnam and you – after learning about ways that they could escape the draft, basically – I had a friend who – this was a little later on, he – a doctor gave him some medicine which – there were doctors, and priests and ministers who – Clergy Concerned for Peace, I think, who would help young men to stay out of war basically because we felt – we all felt – that it was an unjust war, it was an unnecessary war, kind of like the wars today, and the protests today. So there

were a lot of protests. There were, young men who ripped up their draft cards, threw blood on file – filing cabinets in the recruitment offices, who did things like that in order to protest a war they felt not to be just. So those are some of the things I did, at least, in the ’60s. (joking) I didn’t throw blood! But, that’s what I did.

And kind of out of this incredible movement, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, came the women’s movement. And that’s really when I got involved, believing that as time went on and I – women began talking to start talking together – that “the personal is political,” that what happens to you doesn’t only happen to you – it happens to everybody else – or most of us. That the structures that make up our society are not friendly, perhaps to women. That all of our experiences – many of our experiences – could be explained by how they were structurally determined and how the society viewed women, and so forth. Women began talking together toward the end of the ’60s.

LUCY: And how did you transition from-

PINCUS: Because I happened to know some – one woman Miriam, her name was Nancy then, who was one of the founders of the Health Book Collective. We were mothers – young mothers together-

LUCY: What’s Nancy’s last name?

PINCUS: Hawley.

LUCY: Nancy Hawley. Okay.

PINCUS: Yeah. And we – I’d just had my daughter Sammy and we started to – that was when playgroups began also, which was a thing unheard of. We were basically middle-class women, most of us, the women I knew who were my friends, who were trying to – it wasn’t so much that we were trying to, it just so happened that we were able to start forming a community. So for me, there would be political meetings. I remember one at Nancy’s house. But also because we were young parents we got together about – starting to get together about issues that had to do with our bodies and what was happening to our bodies, what was happening in regards to healthcare. So it was kind of all mixed up. There was a group of women who had been political activists who then began to meet together as women. Just as women. And to see that, oh yes, they were the ones who were doing all the mimeographing. They were the ones who were carrying the coffee cups to the men. And so, there was a political group that started in Cambridge and from that political group came a whole bunch of what we call today “personal groups” which then we called “consciousness-raising groups.” So they were – it started out with a few of my friends. I was in a personal group, which had – it was interesting, because, people would kind of meet and then a group would gel, and that would become the group that would meet for a year or for a few years.

LUCY: How many of these groups were there?

PINCUS: There was an organization called Bread and Roses in Cambridge and they kept a notebook of the groups that existed in Cambridge, and although I was in one of the first ones, I looked in the notebook and saw that it was number 21 or something like that, 'cause women just started to meet toward the end of the '60s, the beginning of the '70s.

LUCY: And this group at Nancy's house was one of those original groups?

PINCUS: Well, no it wasn't one of the original groups so much as we'd had our children and started to talk together and because there were other groups beginning to meet and to gel, there began to be these huge women's meetings at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. And it was at that time that we decided that we wanted to learn about ourselves and our bodies, and we wanted to make a doctors list, a list of good doctors. And we even had a questionnaire, which I could show you later, which asked questions, very simple questions – and this had never been done before. And then we realized we really didn't know what questions to ask because we didn't know what we knew, and we didn't know what we should address ourselves. We just knew that there were things that weren't quite right and could be set right. And, so, during the summer, a few of us – well, actually, I wasn't even there – some of us decided to meet in the fall and research areas that were of interest to us, or what had happened to us. So in the fall of '69, we started to meet. That was the group that was very free-flowing, people came in and out (another bird hits the window) My God! Anther bird! How weird! People came in and out that first year of the group, but that was eventually the group that gave a course at MIT in early 1970, and then went on to rework whatever we had learned and that became the first "Women and Their Bodies," which became the first edition of "Our Bodies, Ourselves."

LUCY: What did you find when you interviewed the doctors? What makes a good doctor?

PINCUS: Oh, we didn't interview the doctors! We never got that far. We basically talked amongst ourselves. And we had to see doctors because we were either pregnant, or trying not to get pregnant, and so dealing with birth control methods which then included: the pill, the diaphragm and the IUD [intra-uterine device], so there were three methods, basic methods – or, I guess, abstinence, rhythm birth control, whatever that was called. But we didn't interview doctors so much as we were living through experiences with doctors, and talking about those experiences, and gaining knowledge about both ourselves and what was happening to us, and then developing a critique of what was happening. Although, I don't even think we knew we were doing that at the time. The idea is that you would get knowledge. Knowledge is power. And you share the power and – and you let the doctors know what you want, and they'll see what you want, and the world will be changed – they'll change it according to what you want. And it was really optimistic, really naïve, really exciting. And that's how we began.

LUCY: You can tell you were so excited! I read it on the *Our Bodies, Ourselves* website, they have a – it's such an excited tone-

PINCUS: Oh, what did you read?

LUCY: The first one. The very first book.

PINCUS: Oh it was an amazing – I remember a few years after I went back to that first one and it's extremely angry, and it's extremely militant, and it's extremely passionate.

LUCY: Did you know what you were all doing was revolutionary?

PINCUS: No. We really had no idea. We knew that there was an amazing feeling in the air of possibility at the end of 1970. "Women and Our Bodies" – "Women and Their Bodies" (inaudible) Our group at that point provided for the publication about $300, and eventually that book started to sell, kind of, unbeknownst to us – we had no idea that this was really happening, and the Free Press – colleges started to order the books in bulk – because the Free Press did not believe in making a profit, so the book originally cost 75 cents, it went down to 40 cents, then 30 – I think 35 was the lowest – so, we – apparently we didn't know that colleges were buying the book up in bundles they-

LUCY: Did they distribute them for free?

PINCUS: They distributed them free. They put them in every incoming student's post office box and – again we didn't know this at the time and we can't – and then we thought we'd want to go with a bigger publisher and (laughs) were criticized by that. The Free Press would – the Free Press had to constantly reprint – make new printings of "Our Bodies, Ourselves." They would send their pamphlets out as sort of writers on top of the bundles of books. Our books became a vehicle for the Free Press pamphlets and we hired someone [else] to send the books out because that's what we had to do. And then eventually we thought we'd like to go with a bigger press, and the bigger presses were courting us because they knew (laughs) that they could make money, that this was a real money-maker. And so – that's another story, so then we decided to go with Simon and Schuster. That's a whole story too if you want to hear-

LUCY: Yeah, what's the ethics of that? How did you choose them?

PINCUS: First, there was a guy who wanted to break away from the Free Press and start his own press and he wanted to- (sound of bird clock) use our book to start it with. It's a bird clock. It's a nature clock?

LUCY: Oh, I've seen that before.

PINCUS: And, when it's really light out, it's very loud, and then at nighttime, when it's dark out, it's very soft. And also the birds are completely off (laughs) because you know you change it forward, change it back – I have no idea what bird that was.

LUCY: Lot of confused birds around here – the ones flying into the window and-

PINCUS: I know, it's quite confusing to be a bird around here! So, let's see. So Charlie – his name was Charlie – wanted to start a press, and we didn't have that much confidence in him and we didn't want him to practice on us.

My husband's freshman roommate at Brown was Johnny Dolger who was at Simon and Schuster. And I remember Johnny came up to our group and spoke, you know, kind of hesitantly – we were apparently the feminists and that was scary. And then someone at Random House wanted to publish the book so it came down to – someone at Pantheon too – but it came down to Simon and Schuster and Random House and, because at that point Random House was owned by RCA Victor and Simon and Schuster was a private company, an independent company. And also because Simon and Schuster would give us a 75% clinic discount on books that were being sent to either educational institutions or health institutions like Planned Parenthood. That's a huge discount, and they were willing to do it – they're still doing it in perpetuity. We went with Simon and Schuster but it was the only time in our Collective history that we took a vote. And it was, six to four for Simon and Schuster and so we went with Simon and Schuster and then basically – women had started writing to us with their experiences and we rewrote what we had written and then that became the first large published – largely published "Our Bodies, Ourselves."

LUCY: And what year was that?

PINCUS: That was ’73. And because Simon and Schuster was flush at that time, they sent us around in twos throughout the country to do publicity and put us up in hotels and I remember I stayed with Norma [Swenson] and we stayed in a hotel I'd never seen the like of before because it had two double beds and two bathrooms and (laughs) I'm and – provided drivers to drive us around from newspaper interviews to TV interviews and so forth.

LUCY: Did you expect to become a spokeswoman for the book so quickly?

PINCUS: We had – we decided to have practice sessions for the kind of questions people would ask and so we did – we did that, you know, enacting possible situations that would be thorny, or possible questions that would be thorny. But also the thing to understand about this time, which is the early ’70s is that the whole country was full of – there were women's groups throughout the whole country. Women were meeting, talking together, developing all the kinds of women's institutions and institutions such as rape crisis centers and shelters for battered women – all of these things – these organizations that exist like that were started in the early ’70s, like that. So it wasn't just us in Boston – women wanted to learn about themselves

and, again, that feeling that you could, and that you could know and you could share the knowledge. And it was very powerful. It was happening all throughout the country.

LUCY: Were you speaking mostly to women's organizations, or just at universities – or, who was your audience?

PINCUS: Well, we didn't – we did start to speak – basically, it was the book that got around. And then when people asked us to speak we would speak in high schools – I've spoken in a few schools – and to – and libraries – to anybody who wanted to listen to us. Women's organizations, some medical organizations, depending. We were invited as the book became better known to lots of different places including medical schools.

It was also a time when women basically, individually, were trying to educate doctors by basically using their bodies as learning instruments, where a woman would go into a room and lie on one of those couches in a gynecologist's office and medical – allow medical students to practice on her body. A woman, I mean, someone who did that – so that she could give them an idea of how she was feeling and how to be gentle and considerate. That didn't happen much but it did happen some. I remember in Cambridge there was a large – I don't remember the occasion – but a very large auditorium where one woman, whose first name was Jennifer, laid down on a table and everybody sort of filed by and looked at her cervix with a flashlight. It was an extraordinary time when things like that were done and probably considered outrageous. But, again, that was part of this sense of what was possible. And that all of this knowledge made us strong.

I also – what I did 1970 to ’71, I kind of dropped out of this first group (telephone rings) and made a film about abortion with three other women (telephone rings). So that was a very engrossing thing to do, because none of us had ever made a film before and, so we didn't quite know what we were doing but we put together a 26-minute film which has all the feel and excitement of that time. That – the film was in three parts. What happened that was so exciting is that whoever out there heard a film about abortion – abortions were illegal then – sent us audiotapes that were made about experiences that women had about going to Cuba for abortions, uh, their own experiences of abortions. So for the soundtrack of this film we put together all of these women's experiences for the first part of the film – using our friends as characters in the film and one woman who was incredibly politically active at the time was the first main character in the film who basically found out she was pregnant, had to call up the doctor who did abortions in secret and went for an abortion. And that part ended with a scream. And the second part was – we had the soundtrack of a working-class woman from east Boston who didn't want to be filmed, so we had a friend who'd just had twins talking about her experiences. And then the third part was a whole series of political analyses having to do with "We don't get good birth control," people are too poor, Third World women are being operated on – that was when they sterilized, I think, a third of the women in Puerto Rico. So the third section of that film – our abortion film – was a kind of political analysis. And at the end –

someone had sent a tape of this remarkably powerful song, a spoken song: "Our bodies are ours to control. Our minds define the rage inside me." "Every woman is my sister and my leader when she says she will stand and fight beside me." That kind of – but really said in a strong way with a strumming guitar – but really said in a strong way. It was quite exciting. (sound of another bird hitting the window) My God! This is – it must be – it's really not they don't do this this often! It must be because of the light!

LUCY: The light must be just right.

PINCUS: Because it hasn't happened in a while. (laughs)

LUCY: Were you involved in abortion activism – just specifically abortion – or just-

PINCUS: No. Well, I wasn't involved – I do remember, and it must have been in the early ’70s – there were – I did, we did got to the statehouse in Massachusetts when they were, debating some aspect of abortion and I don't remember exactly what aspect. But I do remember listening to women's stories on the radio so they must have been broadcasting some of the proceedings. And these women would tell these incredible stories of having to go to Mexico, and things getting all bungled and – so I think we did. There were women's marches and I even wrote the words to the song "Bella Ciao," which is a militant song. It's Italian and it's been translated into Spanish. I was really excited and I wrote: (sings)

“We are the women!
And we are marching
Bella Ciao, Bella Ciao, Bella Ciao, Ciao, Ciao!
We are marching for liberation,
We want the revolution now!”

And I have the words to that – just because. And it was – actually my husband, Ed – complete pleasure when we read the words somewhere and the source was "anonymous"! (laughs) So, there was a lot of that kind of activism. Basically witnessing.

Abortions became legal in New York State in 1971. And (pause) I had an abortion in 1971. And for me it was an amazing experience. It was in New York State and it was about six miles away from where my mom lived at that point. And I went down with a friend of mine, whose daughter was in my son’s playgroup, who was also pregnant – she was Israeli, and we went and had our abortions at the same time, in the same place. And for me it was an incredibly moving experience because – they first advised you. We were in a little group of women who were talking about why they were there. It was in a suburban house that it took place. Um, so it looked a little shady! But it really wasn't. It was run by lesbians, I think, from New York [City], this abortion clinic. It was also true that lesbians at that time were very influential in running a lot of the women's clinics that existed. And I found it moving to be amongst – I remember holding the hand – then we were put on a sun-porch – and I remember holding the hand of a young girl who was 17 who had never had a gynecological exam and she was

there to have an abortion and she was really scared. And the experience itself: the doctor was kind, the nurse held my hand – they'd heard about the book, (laughs) "Our Bodies, Ourselves." So it was, in a way –I had made film about abortion and here I was actually going through it. So that was quite something for me.

LUCY: How did those women find the – how did they find that place?

PINCUS: It's because when abortion became legal in New York State, women, I think through some organization in New York, then, at that point, I mean – when abortions were not legal women would find out doctors, like a doctor in Montreal who would do abortions. There was one in Pennsylvania. Because, women will always need abortions and will always seek them. So I do believe it was a reputable place, for sure. Actually in Vermont, it was at the Vermont Women's Center, physicians assistants first helped do abortions and did abortions.

LUCY: Who did yours?

PINCUS: I think it was a doctor from Algeria, or something. He was a very nice guy. I just remember he was kind, with a nurse in the room. It had been somebody's house and – it was like my Aunt Jean's house (laughs) with a sun-porch, and a dining room. So.

LUCY: And all the women went through that together?

PINCUS: Well, no, you went in separately but then you recover in the sun-porch together. It was – it was a real woman's experience for me, in addition to childbirth. And part of the reason that I became so involved with the Health – well, what became the Health Book Collective was because of the way my daughter was born, because so many things had happened during my labor that I didn't really understand. And then when I was pregnant with my son and read my medical records when the doctor when out of the room, I saw described about my daughter's birth things that I hadn't even known were happening.

LUCY: Like what?

PINCUS: So –when the doctor returned to the room I said, "This isn't my child – this is somebody else's!" And he said, "No. It's yours." I had been given injections, I think, even of Platosin. I remember them being injections. And Platosin-

LUCY: Was that your choice?

PINCUS: I made a mistake at the very beginning: I went to see the doctor, he said, "You could have your baby this afternoon or wait till your labor begins naturally." Out of ignorance, I said, "I'll come and have my baby in the afternoon." So the labor was induced before it should have been, basically, I think. Out of my own ignorance. So my whole process of learning about pregnancy and birth was, again

– my personal experience was so powerful – and women's childbirth experiences often mark them for life depending on what they're like. At that time, because of the questioning that everyone was doing, that's where my questioning went, and that's where my anger at what had happened. I was induced – I had what are called tetanic contractions which are too strong, non-functional contractions. But I thought I was, in my ignorance, being induced all that time and then I found out from my records a few years later that they had given me Demerol – first they induced labor, then they gave me the Demerol to-

LUCY: What is Demerol?

PINCUS: It slows the labor down, basically. And so my – the best doctors in town then had to pull my daughter out with forceps. I mean, it was a kind of labor that should not have been, basically. Everything was okay. But as I learned more about Platosin, for one thing – as more information began to come out – because when we started all this, there was no information. Maybe in a medical library, or even if you went to an obstetrical textbook, you would find out that women were passive and should stay in their place. The obstetrical textbooks were quite appalling if you read them: “They [women] shouldn't make a fuss, they shouldn't argue.” They [the books] were very male chauvinistic and biased against women. That's something we discovered.

So anyway, from my experience then, came my passion. Both to find out what had happened, to see what should or could have happened, and then to share the knowledge with other women so that they would not go through that. It was a very optimistic way of thinking.

LUCY: So you had no idea about a lot of the procedures that were happening until you?

PINCUS: No, I didn't really. Well, you know, I remember counting them up – going to the hospital in itself is basically something that determines what they labor's going to be like. I had – in those days they gave you enemas and shaved your pubic hair. I had an amniotomy – amniotomy, I think that's what it's called where they break the bag of waters, then Platosin, then Demerol, then forceps, I mean, there were – you lie on your back to have the baby. They don't let you eat. So there are all of these things that I know now, of course, just should not be, that I went through. And I went through most of them again with my second labor.

Labor itself was not terribly hard. It was, in a way, exciting. Because, I said, “My God. I mean, women go through this and I'm one of them! And I'm going through it." I actually had had Lamaze training and in those days they taught you just breathing. But I had a monatrice, I had –they would send – you'd call a woman who was kind of like a midwife or a doula now, called a monatrice because it was based on the French Lamaze system. And she'd tell me when to breathe, and how to get through each contraction and-

LUCY: With your daughter or with your son?

PINCUS: Both. I had a different monatrice with each one, and you get – become so bonded with these women, they hold your hand and they help you through it and then so you think you'll never, never forget them – and I really have forgotten who both of them were. But they were incredibly helpful to getting through labor. That was a good thing about labor. So, I don't know what else you want to know.

LUCY: Were there a lot of women – were homebirths common? What made you choose to go to the hospital?

PINCUS: I didn't know that I had a choice. Homebirths were not common. Norma [Swenson], basically, was a part of a group called Boston Area Childbirth Education and the women who were in touch with that group did know that homebirths were possible and a number of women had homebirths. There was, I think, one – I don't know how many, I think one doctor –Norma would never – in Boston who would attend a homebirth but there were not – there was one doctor from South Africa who would do so early on. I didn't know there was a choice. I know homebirths were very rare in those days. And midwifery, basically, came into being in the early 19 – came back into being in the early 1970s, because women just, you know, were learning more and wanted to have their babies at home, needing a companion, so that's how people like Ina May Gaskin became a midwife. She was part of The Farm at Summertown, Pennsylvania – Summertown, Tennessee? She's a very – a famous midwife, and it was a community that travelled from California to Tennessee to settle down and women were having babies and she'd attend the births and little by little learn more and then train more midwives. She wrote "Spiritual Midwifery." (pause)

LUCY: Oh I've heard of that.

PINCUS: And then she's written a few more books and – so that's how midwives learned in those days. And there was also nurse-midwifery where women who wanted to be midwives would go through nursing school. But that was a different category of midwifery, separate from independent midwifery. So.

LUCY: Okay. I'm going to run out of tape on this one in about two minutes.

End of tape 1

[While putting in a new tape, Lucy makes conversation about the video diaries Pincus' husband made several years earlier about their life together. Pincus responds.]

PINCUS: …but we used MIT film stock, laboratory processing and equipment in the editing rooms to make our films. And it wasn't – our film – it wasn't until the end of the process that I said, "My God! We've done all this – we haven't paid a cent, basically!" We just used MIT facilities. But it probably cost them about $1,000 at the most, it's not a long film, but. Then my – I was sort of conscience-stricken for a bout half a minute, (laughs) then I thought, what better use could they put their money?

LUCY: Just for myself when I watch this, this is tape two, an interview with Jane Pincus. Let's see. How much of your – how did you choose to write the childbirth chapter of the book? Or were you chosen?

PINCUS: That first summer, when people decided to write about our experiences I – let's see. I had just had my son, he had just been born so I'd just – I'd had two children, so either I decided or someone else decided I would write about pregnancy. Let's see. Nancy Hawley wrote about birth and she wrote a really (laughs) enthusiastic chapter about birth. Um, the woman who – Esther [Rome] had had postpartum depression, I think, or her mother had had it. And Paula [Doress-Worters] had had postpartum depression so they wrote about that. Another woman who had had an illegal abortion wrote about – wrote the abortion chapter. So it was like that, basically. That what had happened to us was what we wrote about. And I can't remember who chose what to write about.

When I reread the chapter on pregnancy that I wrote, it was very ambivalent about motherhood. I mean, I was confused myself because it was a time when – we were bringing up our children in a time of enormous social ferment and some of the cries to be heard were, "Out of the kitchens and into the streets!" and, "Down with the nuclear family!" Even making the film, the abortion film, was complicated because I would go to work on it, to Ed's studio. Then there was the question of, who goes home and takes care of the children? So there were all of those tugs between the work you do and your family life, and how much time you give to your family and when I see how women – many women – are bringing up their families today it just amazes me because I – in a way, I think, they pay a lot more attention to their children than we did. But it was that time. But, for me to make a film about abortion, and you know, to have my children around was already a complex thing, to happen. But, we would – that's how we decided to write about what was happening. Was that your original question?

LUCY: Yeah. How much of your experience, how much of both of your pregnancies did you write into the book?

PINCUS: Oh, little snippets here – I went through my journals – I've been keeping journals since 1958, and – my God, 50 years! And I went through the book – I even think I have it upstairs – and I copied out everything I wrote about pregnancy and I put it into that first pregnancy chapter. I remember writing my husband a letter, because he was in Mississippi shooting a film called "Black Natchez," and I wrote, "I felt the first fluttering of my baby inside of me," and I put that in. And little snippets of things other people said too. And the book basically grew and was – after it started out, that's how it grew. Women would write in their experiences, the would say, "This happened to me," and as we rewrote the book each time it got more and more full of other women's experiences, in addition to our own. So that's-

LUCY: When you first started writing it, did you all know each other and collectively put your experiences into it? Or was the childbirth chapter just yours, and-

PINCUS: I'm trying to remember because, you talked to the people you knew. And they'd tell you things, in the beginning. Or you'd talk to each other. Then what would be – the way I saw the experiences in the book, they would deepen the text. As the editions grew bigger and bigger, I saw them deepening the text, and adding to it, not only illustrating the text. So basically you – if I could see whose experience I'd plundered to put it in. So it was a very – it was a spontaneous kind of experience, writing, and I don't know that we put that much thought into how we were doing it. It almost seemed to happen, in a way. But I may be wrong, maybe someone else (inaudible) my experience – and we worked hard, and we worked hard on rewriting and getting in all the information we knew or could get our hands and minds on at the time.

LUCY: Once women started writing to you, did you start using their experiences too?

PINCUS: Mm-hmm, absolutely! For instance, if you take the pregnancy chapter, personally, I'd been pregnant twice, but I'd also been infertile and I'd had an abortion – no I hadn't – yeah, I'd had an abortion – or maybe I hadn't had an abortion [yet]. I'd had a miscarriage, and – so in the appendix, I put a little bit about infertility, and a little bit about miscarriages, and then I remember women writing and one woman wrote and said, "I'm not fertile, so I don't want to read about infertility in the pregnancy chapter." So – and another woman said, "I just had a miscarriage and I don't want to read about miscarriages at the end of a pregnancy chapter." So we'd say, "Okay, tell us what happened to you." And then another woman, she wrote in about her ectopic pregnancy. Her name was Mary Elizabeth, she lived in Iowa, and we started a ten-year correspondence but she was an amazing woman. She's had an ectopic pregnancy, which is when the baby grows outside of the fallopian tube, and then she'd asked to be sterilized, which you just didn't do in those days. And I think she'd had a son, and then she gave her son up to her mother and she went off and she lived – she worked in a factory, you know, operating a forklift – she was an amazing woman!

So you'd get these letters from out there and then what happened was as women's knowledge, cumulative knowledge began to grow, the women who'd

experienced infertility in the Boston area formed a group called RESOLVE, so that in successive editions of the book, we who were still working on the book would go to RESOLVE and say, "Could you please, either give us the information you have or write this chapter, or write a box for this chapter?" So that's how the book began to grow. So, in a way, it went from a passionate, angry tract in all of its successive editions to this compendium of women's knowledge gathered, maybe, focused and put together by ourselves, but given to us as a gift by all the women who wrote to us. And there's a whole collection of letters that women wrote to us that we were able to save. And our archives are at the Schlesinger Library. So.

LUCY: You mentioned your husband and negotiating your work with women's health with him. How did you work that out?

PINCUS: Oh, that's what his film "Diaries" is about! (laughs) The word back then was, "We want our space! I need my space!" And, we worked it out, I think like most – he did – started to do some playgroups. He said, "Well, as long as I'm going to have to wash dishes we're gonna get a dishwasher!" – which we did. We worked it out so that we each had time to do what we wanted to do. The playgroups were very interesting because you'd have a few kids – I mean, these were one-year-olds we had – I can't believe it! Four one-year-olds in a playgroup – blows my mind to think about that. And the mothers would go off and do whatever they had – wanted to do, or had to do, I don't know, for the morning and maybe on into the afternoon. And the fathers did take the playgroups too. It was also at a time when families were beginning to break up.

And as women were developing their own powers, they were discovering that perhaps they didn't want to be married to the person they were married to, they wanted to leave the relationship. Or, friends of mine joined communes so that everybody, supposedly, would, you know, work together helping to bring up children. But because a lot of us didn't have skills, either parenting skills or communal living skills, or weren't grown up enough to – communes had a lot of problems too. But there was a lot of – a lot of movement, a lot of shifting around of relationships, a lot of trying out of new relationships, a lot of open – well, not a lot – but open marriages, a fair amount of experimentation with social structures at that time.

LUCY: It seems like that's something that mothers are still trying to work out. How has that changed since you and your friends were-

PINCUS: (laughs) I don't think it's changed! I don't think it's changed. I think in, I don't know – from what you've seen, women still struggle with – my daughter-in-law still struggles with being a good mother and giving all of her – as much of her attention and love as she can to Caleb [Pincus' grandson] and yet desperately wanting to do her own work. There's a tension.

I remember I had up on the wall once a quote it was from a sculptor – Barbara Hepworth? She was British and she talked about, "Oh! She just did her

sculpture and the kids just played in the clay dust on the floor," and that always impressed me a lot! I am an artist too and I was making batiks at the time. I started to do them when my son Ben was born, at the same time that the – our group began – both of the groups I was in began. So – and into the '70s, I discovered that I would become incredibly mean to everyone if I tried to work. As soon as I stopped working and just let it all happen, and the kids rolling all over the place, I was a nice person again. But I think the tension is always there I think it's hard to work now. And I think you're right, I think women go through the same thing these days.

LUCY: Did your work affect your art? Did they mutually affect each other?

PINCUS: Oh, absolutely! I mean, with women? Yeah – I've done a lot of – yeah, absolutely. I'll give you a pack of cards that I did, yeah, a pack of cards that I made of the batiks that I've done in the past, if you like. It's stationary and you'll see what I did. There's also some work up in the house. Yeah, there's lots of women and I have a lot of men, and now I do acrylic collage paintings and I have a lot of magic women in my paintings, so. I also did a midwife batik which is quite beautiful, which was raffled off at a midwives convention and also found its way to the internet, I discovered. It's almost life-size of a woman standing up, sort of squatting and the baby's head coming out and the midwife holding her hands up to receive it. (Ed Pincus, Jane's husband, wanders into the living room) Ed, come meet Kate! I was telling her about "Diaries." This is Ed. This is Katelyn

ED PINCUS: Hi, Katelyn! How you doing?

LUCY: Hi! Nice to meet you.

ED PINCUS: Good to meet you. Where are you from?

LUCY: I'm from Bennington.

ED PINCUS: Oh! Did you come up today?

LUCY: Yeah, my Dad and I drove up-

PINCUS: (joking) We don't know where her dad is!

LUCY: He's exploring, he's fine.

PINCUS: Alright. (laughs)

LUCY: You have a beautiful house – and a great view too!

PINCUS: Except the birds are really bumping into the windows.

ED PINCUS: It's probably because of the sun.

PINCUS: It's the light, yeah. We keep hearing these thuds. They fly away, they don't get stunned.

ED PINCUS: Well, okay, I'll let you get back to what you're doing.

(Pincus laughs)

LUCY: It was good to meet you.

ED PINCUS: Yeah, you too. (returns upstairs)

PINCUS: So, what else?

LUCY: You started out working with anti-racism groups. Is any of that written into the book? Are there any – do race and class show up in the way the book was written?

PINCUS: Oh, boy. That's a whole story in itself. There's – as we went into the 1980s with the book, we, as an organization, as a grass-roots organization, we were basically all white women. At a certain point we realized we needed – at a certain point towards the end of the ’80s we realized we needed to have a board. Into the ’90s we had a staff of some Hispanic and African-American women, who felt that they didn't have power within the organization, that the organization was really run by the ones of us who were still working there because (dog in yard begins barking and continues for next few minutes) most of the original group stopped working together as a collective, and as gatherers of information, and as writers of the book. I persisted until 2005, through all of the editions. Most of us didn't. We went off in other directions.

So we got started an information center in 1980, and Pamela [Morgan] and Sandra worked there and the information center has been going since 1980. Into the ’90s when we were basically hiring other people, and they felt the power imbalance, they all – there were people – women working who felt that they were being treated in racist ways. They instituted a [law]suit actually against the collective, actually, with the Massachusetts Committee Against Discrimination, MCAD. The suit was eventually dropped. But that was pretty awful.

And the staff, at a certain point in the 1990s also unionized which immediately – with the SEIU, I forget exactly what that stands for – which turns us immediately into managers. So that was another blow to – so there was a – there's a book by Kathy Davis?

LUCY: Yeah.

PINCUS: Have you read that?

LUCY: Yeah.

PINCUS: So you know all about it – I don't need to tell you about it! She writes about that stuff! And that was hard for all of us, for the women who worked for us and for the founders.

LUCY: So there was some internal conflict, but was there also – I mean, I was reading about, you had some opposition from Jerry Falwell, and-

PINCUS: Well that happened in the early 1980s. I lived in – I moved – we moved to Vermont in about ’75 to ’80. Then Ed got a position – he commuted to MIT, and then he stopped working at MIT and then he got a position as a visiting filmmaking professor at Harvard for three years, ’80 to ’83, so we moved down to Cambridge, back to Cambridge and lived there from ’80 to ’83, and I worked in the office, the information center. And it was then that Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority – he had about 60,000 members, I think – and Phyllis Schlafly of the Eagle Forum started to, basically try and get the book out of libraries and schools. So – and he wrote his letter, he wrote an eight-page letter, you know, "Burn this! Do not let children see this!"

LUCY: Who was it written to?

PINCUS: It was written to the Moral Majority. I have a copy of that if you'd like to see it. It was sort of mimeographed and (laughs) what he'd do is take a sentence from the book and he'd sort of block out, you know, block out the words, so, you know, like a word like "penis" or "masturbation." So you'd have the line, but the word blocked out. Basically we were secular humanists, and a – that was actually in 1980-81, because it was when I worked at the office that communities would call us and say, "They're trying to get our book – the book out of our library. Can you give us some advice?" And so eventually we were able to put together a packet of information and advice, so that if a community was having trouble with the banning of the book, we could send that information to the community and they could use it to see what they could do within their community.

LUCY: What kind of information was it?

PINCUS: Oh, it was basically news reports about what other communities had done. So you'd get the librarians to find out the people who are on the side of freedom of expression, and to hold meetings and to educate people and to fight the forces of repression and ignorance that had – but it was basically done through, you know, receiving information from one place and saying, "This is what they did here, why don't you try that?" And that happened – 1980 through 1981, I think was the most, the strongest, most powerful opposition to the book.

LUCY: So there was that, and I was reading that in South Africa, they banned the book-

PINCUS: They banned the book in South Africa-

LUCY: And I know there were individual women who have written to you in the past who have said that the book was inadequate – and a lot of women whose lives have been saved and changed, and-

PINCUS: Oh, yeah.

LUCY: -how have people reacted to you personally about the book?

PINCUS: That's an interesting question. In the ’70s, there were – because, again, the country was pretty flush with money the government would give districts, geographical districts, or medical districts, money to set up councils, health advisory councils. So when I moved to Vermont, I was a community activist, and we met at the hospitals – and the councils were composed of professionals and people from different little towns around and then the nursing home owner, that kind of thing, doctors, dentists. And I – one of the things I remember from the council was, they wanted to hire a secretary. Her name was Betty Bowen. And Betty Bowen came, and I don't know at which point she said she didn't know if she'd be able to stand sitting next to me because I was pro-choice. She thought she would get sick to her stomach. But we got to know each other a little, so she must have told me this afterwards, and she told me that she and her family every summer had a *Herald Tribune* Fresh Air Fund kid – child come to the house and they got to know the child's family very well and I learned a lot – I learned a lot from being on the council, and I learned a lot from that experience. So, you know, she did fine, sitting next to me, I mean, no problem. But she did have a problem. And we used to – and there used to be meetings where anti-choice groups would plant a person in the meeting, you know, to disrupt it. There were some things like that that happened. But that's really – the experience with Betty Bowen – was the only negative experience that I've had, like that.

LUCY: How did you end up in Vermont?

PINCUS: Oh. That's another story. (pause) The short version is that someone that we had known in the ’60s, named Dennis Sweeney, who'd done civil rights work and anti-war work in the ’60s, and was down in Natchez when Ed was making the film about Natchez, and also edited part of the Natchez footage. In the early ’70s, he was involved in some kind of violent maneuver out in California. He was institutionalized in Oregon, and he came east in the early ’70s because "there had been a transmitter implanted in his body that people were speaking through the transmitter. Could he find a doctor who could take the transmitter out of his body?" Basically he was going crazy. And then, [in the] mid ’70s we moved up here, but basically – and I didn't learn about this completely until afterwards – Ed moved up here because of Dennis, because at a certain point Dennis – he knew that Dennis had become dangerous, and he [Dennis] thought that me, Ed and our son, Ben, were part of an international Jewish conspiracy, et cetera, against him and he – and that Ed broadcast through the – plus Allard Lowenstein, who been Dennis' teacher in the ’60s, a kind of mentor, and Angela Davis were conspiring

against him. And Ed realized, at a certain point, when Dennis visited him at MIT that Dennis had become dangerous. And we told people at MIT not to give out our name – of course, now, if it were now anybody could find anybody's name on the internet – and not to let him know where we were. He – he telephoned Ed toward the end of the '70s.

Then in 1980 we took a trip to California with the kids and Ed's film partner lived there and we had visited him and we came home to where we were living and Dave had called up and said, "Dennis just shot Allard Lowenstein." So, what had happened was, Dennis hadn't seen Allard Lowenstein – Allard Lowenstein had been a congressman from a district in Long Island, and was fairly well-known as a teacher, you know, as a true democrat, as an inspiring person. But he hadn't seen Dennis for six years, so I guess Dennis made an appointment with him, Allard opened the door and Dennis shook his hand and – then just shot him and sat down to wait, I guess, for somebody to come get him. And, if he'd been able to find Ed, he would have probably shot Ed. It's sort of that simple. And that's the main reason, according to Ed, that we moved to the country was to, sort of, get away from Dennis.

And we were also looking for a house in the country and (sighs) and it was a huge change moving up here from my women's group and from the community that we'd had down there. So, that's how we got here.

LUCY: Wow.

(Both pause, sigh)

LUCY: Are you still active in the women's health movement here?

PINCUS: I'm not sure, at this point, there's a women's health movement. I talk in classes often, I'm kind of a historical relic now. I've spoken in classes at the University of Vermont, I've testified at anti-choice hearings-

LUCY: In the Vermont State House, or- ?

PINCUS: In the Vermont State House-

LUCY: Okay.

PINCUS: When the issue has come up, so (noticing movement outside the window) – is your father here?

LUCY: No, the dog.

PINCUS: Oh, is he going crazy? Hmm. But I –and what I do now in addition to my artwork, and grandchildren, and my horse – who is at another barn – and trying to figure out what to do about my mom, and her living situation, is I write reviews of childbirth books for a birth journal. I love the editor of the birth journal, and we

work well together. So that's how I keep, kind of, my knowledge up and my (inaudible) in, but I'm not doing any other writing.

LUCY: Did you – were you present at the birth of your daughter's baby? Did you-

PINCUS: Yeah, I actually – that was quite an experience! She was in Oregon and I was present for the last 12 hours of her labor. It was a long labor and she had three midwives. And it wasn't a particularly good experience. At a certain point for me it felt like a nightmare, because she – Sammy couldn't – they couldn't communicate to her how to feel the baby. I guess, Sam didn't have an urge to push or anything like that. But- (sound of bird hitting window) Gosh! I can't believe this! It's amazing! It just has not happened! Maybe I should open the door!

But something wonderful happened toward the end where basically they said, "Okay, you've got to get the baby out," and I felt – I felt – this incredible wave of birth energy – that's the only way I can describe it. The room was filled with it – it was glowing with it. Amazing! And she was standing up and the midwives were looking up – and Jordan was born. And that part of it was really amazing. And I couldn't – I know it happened, and I know it was there –and it's practically indescribable, but it was beautiful. And I was not at the birth of my second grandchild, although I was there during Heidi's labor at home, but she was transferred to the hospital and ended up with a cesarean. So.

LUCY: Can you see the effect that the book has had on her generation and on my generation?

PINCUS: I think – you should answer that – (laughs) being of your generation! What do you think?

(Both laughing)

LUCY: Maybe we'll save that for when you interview me!

PINCUS: Well, I mean, I know what I think, but I would really love to know what you think.

LUCY: I think it's had a huge impact!

PINCUS: Uh-huh.

LUCY: But do you think that a lot of the changes that have happened, now, the book is responsible for them?

PINCUS: It's not the only – it's – the book is only a kind of collection of the general consciousness, and, I keep thinking of it as kind of this huge, you know, compendium of both knowledge and information – and wisdom, all three wrapped in one. And all of that – I think that has seeped down through the generations to

your generation. I think that, as far as your generation knowing about the book – my impression is that your generation doesn't know much about *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, that it's not been an important book to – because so many books are being published now and when we started there weren't any that – and also because of the internet – there's just an incredible amount of information on the internet, and a lot of wisdom, but how do you pick and choose amongst all of it? I – so I think, yes, it's had a huge effect. As a book it's had a huge effect on women of my generation, women and their daughters and then less, as a book, of an effect on young women in your generation, but you might disagree with me. Do you?

LUCY: No – would you say it's more of a legacy than the book itself?

PINCUS: I think all the – all the knowledge, I – I'm really impressed by the young women of your generation I've met. I mean, you seem really incredibly together, incredibly aware and – and able to both live in the present and yet look back at the past as being very important to you. And that I find incredibly moving. So, (pause) again, I think it depends on who you talk to [laughs] and whose awareness has been developed by what aspects of awareness that the book has generated in the past. It's been incredibly moving to have been a part of this. And one of – you know, one of the things we are talking about is our legacy. There are – two members of our group, now have died. And, um, when the filmmakers came to us and said, "We want to make a film about you – individually," a number of us have said, you know, "Individually – I'm – we're interesting women, you know, and we've really done a lot of interesting things," but, basically, what is the most exciting thing is how the book has added to, or, you know, added to knowledge, and how the book is traveling through the world. If you've read Kathy's book, which, I have some trouble with, I must say, although I – we have some trouble with – although we love Kathy, um, the travels of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* is an amazing story. And I was lucky enough to go to Utrecht to the meeting that Kathy talks about in her book, to hear women from so many different countries talk about how they generated their own adaptations of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in their country, so that, to me, is one of the most exciting things that's happened. That it's still traveling around the world the way it is, and making a difference in so many different kinds of communities. Like the – what's happening in Nigeria? Where they're training women to go into beauty salons, or, where women get haircuts, and there's health information there or that kind of thing. Or putting posters on the canoes that bring women from the more rural areas to the more populated areas. But I also believe that the forces against women's power – the forces arrayed against us are – continue to be incredibly strong.

LUCY: What do you think still needs to be changed the most in women's health – or just in general?

PINCUS: There has to be, you know, equality between women and men, resources devoted to education and housing – all of the resources that allow people to live a good life (bird clock sounds the hour), are not available to most people in the world and,

you know, we were really optimistic and a lot has been changed but there still are, basically, the same fights to be fought over again and again, I think.

LUCY: Do you think that the new administration [Barack Obama's newly-elected Presidential Administration] that we have now will-

(Pincus laughs)

LUCY: -are you hopeful?

PINCUS: It's funny because, so many – I read commentaries that say that the left is going to be really disappointed because Barack Obama's going to go more to the right than they ever expected, and then the left people say, you know, "We have to keep pulling him over to the left!" Or – I don't know. I don't – I heard Bernie Sanders [Senator from Vermont] on the radio the other day, and he said, "This is our chance to really make a difference!" So I don't dare to hope, really.

LUCY: You've answered this indirectly, I think, the entire time we've been talking but – (Pincus squints in the sun from the window) Do you need to move? Is the sun in your eyes?

PINCUS: (Moving back) I think if I move back it won't be. There. That's good.

LUCY: Okay. Or – indirectly – what was my question?

PINCUS: You said I've answered it indirectly –

LUCY: But-

PINCUS: But – I don't know 'cause you never asked it! (Both laugh)

LUCY: Oh! Why did you choose women in health, and not women in economics, or women in – why did you choose health as your way of-?

PINCUS: I think it chose me. I think the women I knew, all that we were going through. That's another, a really good question because, in a way, now I'm not as interested in women and health. Whereas before, years ago the issues would have gripped me more – a lot more. But I do think because of what I was going through in life, and I think, partly because I had to do something with my anger, I – again it goes back to the experience of birth and of being ignorant about what was happening.

LUCY: Would you say that giving birth was the most powerful experience that you had, or, just all of them together?

PINCUS: No, it wasn't the most powerful, it was one experience that seemed to have generated – and if all of the ferment hadn't been going on in the time, in the late

’60s and early ’70s – if I'd lived somewhere else, or been someone else, I'm not sure that's what I would have focused on. (pause) But that's what I – I focused on that, and on art too, because in between writing and rewriting – rewriting the different editions of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* I worked creatively on my art, so. I couldn't – back then, I couldn't do both at once, I couldn't write and – I made batiks – I couldn't do them both at once. And then I guess as time has gone on, I've been able to write and to paint.

LUCY: How do you think the other movements that were getting started at the time affected the women's health movement? The other movements for women's rights and anti-racism – how do you think they-?

PINCUS: Oh, I think there was a tremendous amount of dialogue between – when the African-American women separated – the National Women's Health Network began in 1975, ’76, and they're, in a way, doing a lot of the work our organization has been doing to. And there's – Judy Norsigian was on their board. She actually was the most – she and Sally Whelan are the two founders still involved in the organization of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. They're the heart and soul of the organization. The other organization that developed: the National Black Women's Health Project developed from the National Women's Health Network because the African-American women needed to talk amongst themselves, and develop their own critique and their own analysis and collect their own experiences because they were the same and yet different from the experiences that white women were having. I think there was a tremendous amount of dialogue amongst or between the organizations. I'd say, in a lot of cases, there was a lot of conflict here and there, and, I mean, I can't give you specific examples right now, but that was bound to happen too. (pause) So, then the Latina women got together and developed their own critique and analysis, and volumes of information. I've learned a tremendous amount from the criticisms of our group and the way we went about things – up to a certain point, and then I just don't buy some of them. So.

LUCY: And you've been involved in each revision of the book?

PINCUS: Up until the 2005th edition, which I had a very hard time with, because it was organized so differently from anything I've been accustomed to before.

(Knock on the door)

LUCY: Oh there's-

PINCUS: Is that your dad?

DAN LUCY: Hello?

PINCUS: (Turns toward door) Come in! (Turns back to Lucy) So.

LUCY: Is there anything else that you want to add that we didn't cover that you think-?

PINCUS: I can't – we probably didn't cover a lot of things, but I can't think of any right now. Can you?

LUCY: No, I think we covered a lot, but I think questions will come up, probably – is it okay if I email you?

PINCUS: Absolutely! If questions come up, or if I think of something that I think is important, that you should know-

LUCY: Yeah.

PINCUS: It's too bad you can't talk to each one of us.

LUCY: I know, I know.

PINCUS: Like I said, I'm really just an "I," we're really a "we." And the founders, you know, with our graying hair and our starting to have problems with eyes and hearts and things, it's – and knees – it's so exciting to me that we're still a group and that we basically think in the same way – and we've have to basically because of these women who want to come and film us, so. That's really exciting to me, that that can last for 40 years, you know. What a joy. And that we all can revel in it. (sighs)

LUCY: And you're still in contact with, most of them – all of them?

PINCUS: Everybody.

LUCY: Okay, I think we're going to run out of time anyway. So thank you so much for-

PINCUS: Thank you so much! That was quite amazing!

LUCY: Thank you!

PINCUS: You made me think! (laughs)

End of interview