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Boswell: Sharon Boswell
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[Begin Track One.]

Boswell: This is an interview with Susan Lane, recorded on March 9, 2009. Thank you so much, first of all, for doing this. I really appreciate it. I wanted to just get started by asking you a little bit about your early life and a little bit about your own family experiences, and maybe how they might have shaped your ideals and goals and awareness of women's issues. So tell me about your family first.

Lane: Well, actually I'm from Seattle. I'm a Seattle native. Technically, I was born in Bremerton because I had to be born in the naval hospital. My father was in the Navy. I was born there September 4, 1939, which was a momentous day in the world because that was the day that Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, I believe. Anyway, it was the very beginning of the Second World War.

My father was promptly called back to his ship and the base was sealed off. So my mother and I were there for two weeks, and no family members could get in or out. That was how my life started, with a big impact to which I was completely oblivious.

I was a Navy brat, so during the war years, we traveled, my mother and I. It was very interesting, because the men were gone so much that I really grew in the company of women. It would be my mother and then my Aunt Clara Hallgrimson, and we went back and forth across the country from Seattle. We went to Jacksonville, Florida. We were in Rhode Island and Newport News, and then to San Diego. My dad was with the Pacific fleet, which was where he spent some time, but he was also with the Atlantic fleet. So my earliest life was a lot of travel, of moving, of new homes. Going here, going there, and my mother being the constant presence in all of this chaos and confusion, which I thought was just normal life. It was normalcy to me.

It was always a big celebration when the men would come home because we lived on a Navy base—all wives and children. Then when the men would come home, there would be big celebrations and parties, and people would get together. Then they'd go off again. So that was kind of how I recall it.

And then at the end of the war, we settled out in Seattle. My father left the service—left the navy—and so we came back to Seattle. I enrolled in school. I think I was in the first grade, somewhere close to that time, when we came back to Seattle. I had a Southern accent, because I'd lived so long in the South. [laughter] I remember being teased about that.

My awareness, though, of how men and women were valued differently actually also begins, of course, in the home and in schools, where there were different rules for boys and for girls. As I was raised, my mother, of course, had been running things at home, my dad being gone. I had a grandmother who had been widowed young. She was an immigrant from Iceland, and Icelandic women are very strong people. Icelandic culture has a very strong egalitarian aspect, particularly when it comes to the equality

between the sexes. It's one of the few places I've traveled in the world where I felt this immediately. The distinctions that we are used to that are very subtle simply don't exist there. It's really quite extraordinary.

So maybe it's from my Icelandic grandmother and my mother, but I rankled, even at a very young age, about why boys didn't have the same restrictions that girls had. It made no sense to me. I argued with everybody about it, [laughter] and everybody kind of just nodded and said, "Well, you know, that's just the way it is, Susie. You just have to get used to it." Well, I never got used to it. It always rankled me.

So I think it simply fueled a rebellion in me, and I decided I just wasn't going to pay any attention to it. I was a tomboy, I guess you'd say. My favorite clothes were jeans and a flannel shirt, and I loved to fish and run and read. I read a lot.

That's how I grew along, but feeling always a little out of step because it was hard for me to find anyone who understood what I felt. My girlfriends all thought it weird, and certainly the boys I talked it over with thought it weird. They would just shake their heads and say, "That's a funny idea, that men and women should be equal." But that's the way the world was.

Boswell: Did your mother reinforce that idea? Or was she an example by her actions?

Lane: She was an example by her actions. But she was also—she chose a very subservient role. She was both. She didn't drive, which I thought was just goofy. Not until much, much later in her life did she begin to drive. So my father had great power over her—both economic power, because she raised five children, and societal power. I looked at her, and I knew how strong and capable she was, and yet I saw her in a subservient role. That rankled me, too. [laughter] I wanted her to get up and say, "Just a minute here," which she did later in life. I mean, she did carve out her own life later, but not when I was younger. I wanted her to do that, but she didn't. That was not her time.

Boswell: It wasn't part of that.

Lane: So I remember going to college and meeting the same kind of attitudes. It wasn't until I met—actually, this is so strange—a very strange fellow. I met him at the Blue Moon Tavern, and he was a former member of the Communist Party who'd been an organizer in Montana. Somehow as one does in college, I was sitting there talking about philosophical issues. I told Stanley about my feelings, and he agreed with me absolutely. [laughter]

He talked about male supremacy. He said, "Yes, that's foolish. That's absolutely foolish." So here I found the first person I'd ever met on the planet who understood what I was talking about, and he was a former Communist Party organizer from Montana. [laughter] Anyway, so of course he became my buddy because he did understand what I was thinking about.

Life goes on. I remember getting the first real "ah-ha" moment for me was Betty Freidan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*. It absolutely was electrifying. I thought, "Oh my God, there's somebody else who sees it this way!" And somehow it's all bound up with the earthquake.

You know, there was a big earthquake in 1965 in Seattle. I was reading this book, and then the earth started shaking. [laughs]

Boswell: Oh, no!

Lane: My little son and I tumbled down the stairs together. It's all of a piece to me because it was so—because reading that book and this earthquake were both kind of in the same experience. At that moment I thought, “Okay, there are people who think this way. I'm not absolutely out of my mind. I need to find out how one now acts upon this. If there are other women who feel this way, then I need to find them, okay?” [laughter]

Boswell: So you didn't find them in college?

Lane: No, I didn't. No, there weren't any that I knew of. I graduated the university in 1961. Now, what I did find was the civil rights movement. My first political statement was working here in Seattle to send freedom riders to the South. And I also picketed; I was on the picket line at Woolworth's during the sit-ins in the South. I worked full time when I went to school, and I took classes. I had one afternoon a week that I didn't have already programmed with work. That day I would go down to Woolworth's, and I would join a picket line.

That was my first political action. I thought. “Well, this is it. This movement, this civil rights movement, is also my movement.” But the longer I was there, I grew to understand that, no, it really wasn't my movement because the status of women within the civil rights movement was no different than it was in the larger society. I mean, I'm happy for that work; it was all good work. I value every minute. But it wasn't my revolution. [laughs] I was happy to help in it, but I also recognized it wasn't mine.

I also worked in the peace movement, and there were strong women leading the peace movement. Anne Stadler, locally, was a strong figure in the peace movement. So that was another avenue that I explored.

Meanwhile, I'm thinking, trying to figure out where I go, who I find. I joined the League of Women Voters. That was a wonderful group. There I found a group of bright, intelligent women who were really interested in political ideas and, ultimately, in change. But the League was not ready to approach, at that moment, the issues for women.

So as it worked out, my husband at that time, Ted Lane, was working back in Washington, DC. He was a consultant and had a contract take him to Washington, so I went along. It was going to be my vacation. There I met Meta Heller, who was a friend at that time. She worked for, I think it was Congressman Dicks, at that time.

Boswell: Norm Dicks?

Lane: Yes. She took me on a tour of the Capitol building. We looked all around the Capitol, and there are all these statues of great people. There were almost no women. I think there was one, maybe a nurse. But you know, if you'd been an anthropologist or a historian coming back, you'd say, “Well, this is an interesting species. It's of a single type and a single gender.”

Boswell: Yes, really. [laughs]

Lane: Now isn't that interesting? So down in the basement, we found this little statue, a little carved piece about as big as this table. It had Alma Belmont—let's see if I can remember. It might have had Alice Paul on it. Anyway, there were three women, and they were in the basement. [laughter] So Meta and I just looked at that and thought, "Boy, doesn't that tell you a story? In the architecture, in the design of the building, there's a whole history.

And she said, "Well, let me take you up to the National Woman's Party."

I said, "Great! Tell me about that." So we walked up to—I don't know if you've been to that house—the National Woman's Party.

Boswell: I haven't, actually. I've seen their website, but I haven't been.

Lane: Well, it's near the old Senate building. It's just a block away. So it's very close to the Capitol, and it's a very old building. It was standing in the War of 1812. I think some of the last holdouts, the last people to leave Washington when the British invaded, were holed up in that house.

So we went up, and it was ramshackle and falling down. It really was. I mean, the screen door was kind of slanting, and everything needed paint, and the stairs creaked. It was in very poor repair, but we went. So she said, "Well, let's meet Alice Paul." So she told me about Alice Paul. We went in to meet Alice, and Alice was there and happy to receive us.

She asked me what I was doing, and I said that I was just on holiday. She said, "Well, my dear, I need you to be involved with the Equal Rights Amendment."

And I said, "Well, how can I help, Miss Paul?"

She said, "Well, you must get Senator Magnuson to co-sponsor the legislation. We need to have him as a sponsor, and we need Senator Jackson's vote."

So we sat down, and she told me about the Equal Rights Amendment. I said, "Well, tell me some more about it." I recognized this was an important moment. So she told me how the National Woman's Party and the suffragists had gotten the vote. They thought when they had gotten the vote that lives of women would change, and that this would be the moment.

Then, some women from New York—some subway ticket takers—came down to talk to her and said, "You know, Miss Paul, our real problems are that there are all these laws that limit the working hours or women. They're all protective legislation. We are not allowed to work sufficient shifts, nor are we paid appropriately, and the vote doesn't solve that for us. We need to have some way to have our equality guaranteed to us outside of state laws that limit us."

So Alice listened to this, and then understood more. "So in 1923," she said, "I wrote the Equal Rights Amendment, and we've had it introduced in every legislative session since then." And she said, "We're getting closer now." She said, "I think we're getting closer, but we need to have Senator Magnuson's sponsorship. Now," she said, "he's sponsored it before. He's always been willing to sponsor, but he hasn't been asked. We need someone to ask him. We need someone from your state to ask him."

And I said, "Okay, I'll do whatever I can." So, yes.

Boswell: Now before you go on, just tell me a little bit about her.

Lane: About her? Okay.

Boswell: Your impressions.

Lane: She was very old at that time. She had very, very poor vision. She had thick glasses, and I could see that she was nearly blind. To see something, she had to hold it up about maybe an inch or two from her face. She probably didn't see that the place was falling down, and it was as ramshackle inside as it was outside. I don't think she cared a minute for anything like that. She really was a person driven by a mission.

So she lived in this big house, and there was somebody else there. I think she had a lady that stayed and kind of helped out. She had us to tea in the garden. There was a nice little garden in back. I think it was this time. I saw her on two or three different occasions.

Boswell: Yes, sure.

Lane: But I'll just go on and talk about her. So one of these occasions, we sat in the garden and drank tea. I asked her to tell me about the suffrage struggle. There was this wonderful suffrage poster of Inez Milholland Boissevain, which I'm showing right now. I've since had framed.

Boswell: It's beautiful.

Lane: There's also a huge poster in the headquarters today.

Boswell: Oh, okay.

Lane: So this was a huge placard. The one I have is a small one. It was on a nail in a big room that was just chock-a-block with cabinets and files and boxes of books, and just stuff. Banners. It looked like a garage. There was everything from the history of the National Woman's Party. While Carrie Chapman Catt was going state by state, from the West, Paul was convinced that we had to have the vote with a national amendment to the Constitution. Of course, she had been in England with the Pankhursts and had been truly radicalized in that experience. The British government was vicious in their attacks on the suffragists.

She brought back with her to this country the notion of passive resistance, and it was used for the first time by women in our country, and later by the civil rights movement. I think it's interesting that it was women that used it first, and it was Alice who brought it from her experience in England.

So she talked about the women meeting there at the Woman's Party headquarters because it is so close to the Capitol. She said the door would just be swinging, bang, all day, the screen door, the screen door, with women coming in and out, in and out, in and out, as contingents would go down to be at the gates of the White House or onto the steps

of the Capitol, wherever they needed to be. She and others had a great sense of the dramatic—of theater—which you can see in this picture of Inez Milholland Boissevain all in white. They chose white and gold colors when—I think it was at Wilson’s inauguration parade—they staged a parallel parade one street over at the same time.

Boswell: Oh, at the same time. [laughter]

Lane: That was the kind of thing that they did. They were very creative. They were certainly radical in their use of passive resistance, and Inez Milholland Boissevain is considered a martyr to suffrage because she worked so hard and so unstintingly that she literally died of exhaustion in traveling and speaking. She really did ride that white horse. They really did that. They just staged—

Boswell: Did the Joan of Arc.

Lane: Exactly. They staged these dramatic demonstrations for the vote in the streets. I think Paul was very proud of that work. Then she recognized that it wasn’t enough, and that the work wasn’t done. So then she began the struggle for the Equal Rights Amendment, and she devoted the rest of her life to that issue, to the Equal Rights Amendment.

She made me chair of the National Woman’s Party in the State of Washington while I was there. She said, “Okay, you’re now the chair of the National Woman’s Party, State of Washington.”

I said, “Okay. How many members do we have?”

She said, “Six.” [laughter] So, so, so anyway, just to tell you about her, she was small. She was very old. Her hair was all white and kind of tied back. She took little pains with her appearance, no more than she did with the house. She was obviously a woman of the mind and of the spirit. She was here on this planet to do some important work. When I met her, her work was—even though she was well over eighty then, I’m sure she was—her work was still the Equal Rights Amendment.

She was a tough woman. She was a strong woman. I was used to those kinds of women. She said, “You must go get Senator Magnuson to sponsor this.”

And I said right away, “Yes, Miss Paul. I’ll do that.”

So off I went, and I went to Magnuson’s office. And they said, “Yes, Senator Magnuson will be happy to co-sponsor the Equal Rights Amendment.”

So I went back to Miss Paul and I said, “Okay, Magnuson is on.”

“Oh, wonderful!” She said, “He’s been with us all along. It’s wonderful that we just needed to ask him, and you were the right person to ask him.”

So this is interesting. Then I went to Jackson’s office, and I met with Dick Page. He had lived in Madrona, and he was working, he was on staff for Jackson. He argued with me about the Equal Rights Amendment. He said, “Well, why do we need that Equal Rights Amendment?” And so he and I, we kind of went round about this thing. I grew to understand, not only was Jackson not going to sponsor the Equal Rights Amendment, but he wasn’t even going to vote for it. I was so shocked; I could hardly believe that Jackson wouldn’t have supported it.

Indeed, when the vote came to the U.S. Senate for the Equal Rights Amendment, he was a traded “no” vote. He was absent from the Senate that day. You know, they trade off so they don’t have to go on record. So he’s not on record, but he was a traded vote off the floor because he would have been—he was a no. It just blows me away [laughs] because he has such following in this state, and still does.

Boswell: Sure. Still does. Yes.

Lane: And all kinds of women are involved in the Jackson Foundation, but he was not in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Boswell: Could you ever get a chance to talk to him? I mean, you really have to go through their staff.

Lane: You have to go through their staff. Dick Page was telling me why Jackson, you know, just wasn’t going to do it. Anyway, so there’s the political awareness. That was my kind of wake-up moment.

Boswell: That was your introduction, then—

Lane: Absolutely.

Boswell: —into the political side of this particular movement.

Lane: For the women’s movement, absolutely. And it was at the behest of Alice Paul because when Alice Paul said you must do something, you just say, “Yes, Miss Paul,” because she was such a dynamic woman, she really was.

Boswell: You mentioned that she was firm. Was she, was it a quiet—

Lane: She was still fiery. No. She was still—

Boswell: I was curious what her personality was like.

Lane: Steely. She was steely. She was, you just sensed her—

Boswell: Even at that age. That’s incredible.

Lane: Even at her age. Yes. And I see her, she had gray hair, and she had thick glasses. She was kind of bent over. She was in a very advanced age, and as I said, had taken care of herself about the same as she’d taken care of the building—which is not (laughs). And these things, they were just a jumble. It was an absolute jumble of stuff about which she cared nothing. She just ripped this poster off the wall. I said, “Oh, look at that!”

She said, “Oh, would you like to have it?”

I said, “Oh, yes, I would.” So she just ripped it off—it was on with a nail—and just handed me this suffrage poster. To me, it’s priceless.

Boswell: Oh, absolutely.

Lane: It's absolutely priceless. So, later on, people got really worried about Alice Paul doing exactly that because she probably did, just like she did for me. She didn't care about it. So eventually her health grew worse. Her nephew came and she was relocated to Connecticut. After that, it was hard. I did speak with her on the phone. I visited with her twice, and I spoke with her on the phone many times. She would call me. She would call me on the phone and ask how things were going in Washington State. This was when we were getting our own state ERA amendment, and then when we were working on the state ratification of the federal ERA. She would call me. The phone would ring and it would be Alice Paul calling me.

Then she was in Connecticut. Her nephew had moved her either to his home or to maybe a nursing home. I know it pleased some people, because there were lots of people that were worried about the party's historical collection and the building. Elizabeth Chittick, then, became the director or the chair, I'm not sure, of the National Woman's Party. They raised money and renovated, or preserved, the house. All of the materials went, I think, to the Schlesinger Library. [laughter] You know, that was done?

Boswell: Yes. Forward.

Lane: She was the forward-looking person. She was concerned with what is to do now, not about that stuff. It didn't bother her, but it bothered a lot of other people.

So much, much later I went to DC, and I called on Elizabeth Chittick. I was at the national NOW convention in Washington, and Elizabeth Chittick invited me to come and stay at the National Woman's Party headquarters. Oh, that was fabulous! So I went there, and it was beautiful. The screen door was tightened and working perfectly. Everything was painted. It was perfect inside. The big banner or the big poster to Inez Milholland Boissevain was there. And there was Elizabeth Cady Stanton's desk and Susan B. Anthony's chair and all of these wonderful artifacts. I went upstairs. My room had a huge four-poster bed with stairs to climb up in it. I could hardly sleep because I kept imagining these women. While they were there during the suffrage battle, they would come there and grab maybe something to eat, or they might sleep for a couple of hours. But there were literally dozens of them moving continually through this house. This was where they would go to rest and to get some food and to figure out what they were doing. Alice was directing it all. You know, she was the general. So it was just a wonderful experience just to be there.

Boswell: Oh, I can imagine.

Lane: And to reflect about everything that had gone on. The Equal Rights Amendment, which, you know, did then get through Congress, and then started through the states. So then I was in, well, obviously in Washington.

In 1970, I found NOW. It was shortly after I'd come from DC because I thought, "Well, there are six members of this National Woman's Party. How am I going to build any groundswell for ratification there?" [laughs]

Boswell: So those six people, did they ever get involved?

Lane: They were all about Alice's age.

Boswell: Oh.

Lane: You see, they were all early suffragists. So I don't remember any of them, to tell you the truth. I don't remember their names, but I did find NOW. So I walked into a meeting, and it was at the Unitarian Church up on 35th Northeast. Helen Sommers was president at that time. I remember walking in, and then she asked me to—somehow I identified myself. I said, "I'm from the National Woman's Party and I'm interested in NOW."

Helen invited me to say a few words. I told them about having come from Washington, DC, and meeting with Alice, and we were working on getting the Equal Rights Amendment through Congress and then the ratification. So I kind of laid out the agenda, which, of course, was NOW's agenda also. So from that moment I was in NOW. It was the experience of walking into this brightly lit room, and there were, oh, maybe thirty or forty women, maybe, in this room. That was great because it was "Ooh, the lights are on, and there are people here, and it's bright, and look at this. This is something, something's happening here." I was no longer in isolation. Not only not in isolation, but I was at the beginning of what was a movement.

Boswell: Because that, in Seattle, at least, had just started.

Lane: Yes. Shortly before. Very shortly before.

Boswell: Right about that time, yes.

Lane: I've got a picture of Helen from about that time. She was a wonderful leader, Helen Sommers. There she is (holding the picture).

Boswell: Oh, that's a nice picture. That's great.

Lane: She was a wonderful leader. So Helen Sommers was there, and what we started working on—well, there were a lot of things we were working on in NOW. I remember the community property law being one. That's a funny story.

So I was teaching school at this time. I had, by this time, two children, Geoffrey and Joshua. I went to the bank, and I borrowed enough money to update my kitchen. This was in another house. I think I borrowed three thousand dollars which, you know, you could do a lot with three thousand dollars then. I just had made the loan, and then I went to the bank to pay on it. They said, "Well, we don't see a loan with your name on it."

And I said, "What do you mean? I took out a loan."

"Well, what is your husband's name?" So I told him, and he said, "Oh, here it is. It's under his name."

And I said, "But he didn't take out the loan. I took out the loan. I'm paying the loan."

"Well, I'm sorry. It's in your husband's name."

So I'm staring at this woman and I said, "I don't understand why you've done that."

And she said, "Well, that's our policy."

I said, "Well, let me speak to your manager."

So she takes me over and I meet the branch manager, who's a young man with a little white shirt and a tie. I told him the story, and he said, "Well, Mrs. Lane, that's the law."

I said, "What do you mean, that's the law?"

He said, "Well, the law says, the law is there to protect you."

And I said, "Protect me from what?"

He said, "From unscrupulous salespeople."

I said, "Who protects my husband?"

And he said, "He doesn't need protection." [laughs]

Boswell: Oh, my gosh.

Lane: So I'm looking at him, and I said, "And you're telling me that your policy is based upon a state law." And he said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, we'll see about that." [laughter]

Boswell: Good for you.

Lane: I was so furious. I walked out and, I mean, I was just seething. So some time goes by and we changed the community property laws in the state of Washington. That was a big deal. It was a big campaign. It was really, really important. We changed the community property laws.

One day I'm with my son Geoffrey, and we're going to the same bank. It's the Seafirst, on Thirteenth. B of A now. I see this guy in the window, and I say, "Oh, Geof! There he is!"

Geof says, "No, Mama, no."

I said, "Come on, Geof." So I walk in and I say to this fellow, "Do you remember me?"

And he said, "No. No."

I said, "Well, I'm the lady that took out the loan and you put it in my husband's name and didn't allow me credit in my own name. You told me that the law was there to protect me. I just want you to know that we changed this law, and you had a lot to do with it." [laughter] My son is so mortified. And I said, "You know, it's very seldom that you meet somebody and they really change your life, but you really changed my life." [laughs]

Boswell: What was his response?

Lane: Oh, he just kind of grew red all the way up. I shouldn't have done it, but it was just such a delicious thing.

Boswell: Oh, absolutely.

Lane: It was a moment that I just couldn't resist it. But that example of how I was treated, I mean, that's how all women were treated over community property laws, so that was one of the first things that we changed in Washington State.

But getting back to the Equal Rights Amendment, we worked very hard. Well, we had HJR61, the big campaign for the state's equal rights amendment. I think it was subsequent to that came the federal amendment, but we thought if we could get HJR61 through, then it would make the national very straightforward. Of course, there was still lots of opposition to us. We were in Olympia lobbying intensively around the Equal Rights Amendment, and on the day that the vote came, we packed the galleries with our people. I did take my son Geof out of school, and he had his Cub Scout uniform on, which I made him wear. He had to sit up in the front. [laughter] We all had to look like really nice ladies, because many people were so afraid of feminists. I don't know how, but they chose to see us in some very strange light. So we were all there and watched the vote being taken.

Then I left the corridor and I ran downstairs and got in the phone booth, and I called Alice—within moments. And I said, “Miss Paul, this is Susan Lane. I'm calling you from my capitol to tell you that Washington State has just ratified the Equal Rights Amendment.”

And she said, “Oh, thank you so much. Thank you to all the people in Washington, and thank you for your good work.” So the loop was completed. That was the moment for me. That was one of the happiest moments of my life, I think, being able to tell her that.

Of course, one of the great disappointments of my life was that the national amendment was never ratified. I think it was a terrible tragedy. I don't know if it's too late for it now. I mean, so many laws have changed just as society has changed.

I'm sure you've heard about the big Ellensburg convention where we really saw the organized opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, largely out of the Mormon Church. That meeting was packed with busloads of women, and each busload had at least one or two men that told the women what they were to do and how they were to vote, and to sit and stand. That was an amazing experience, an eye opener.

Boswell: I'd like to talk about that some more, maybe come back to it.

Lane: We can. Surely.

Boswell: But let me go back just to the role that NOW played in terms of both HJR61, but also some of these other laws that you mentioned, in terms of talking to the legislature and getting some of these laws passed, whether it was community property, affirmative action plans and that sort of thing.

Lane: Yes.

Boswell: Tell me a little bit about how NOW organized and approached these issues and then a little bit more about the reception that you had.

Lane: Well you know, the women who were attracted to NOW were really talented. I thought the Equal Rights Amendment and then employment were kind of the heart of it for me. One of the things we did was to work to amend the state law against discrimination in employment, to ban discrimination based on sex in the law. The first time that I spoke publicly, got my voice—the women’s movement gave me my voice—was at the state Human Rights Commission. Lee Kraft, an attorney, said, “Now, okay, this is what you do. You memorize your first line. Memorize your first line, and then just speak after that, but memorize your first line.”

So I did exactly what she said. I appeared at the state Human Rights Commission and gave testimony about the needs of women. It was a baptism of a sort because once I started, TV cameras came on. The lights went on; there was the click of cameras. Suddenly I was in a spotlight, and I was not as prepared...I wasn’t prepared for that. I mean, I knew I was going to be speaking, but I wasn’t prepared for this whoosh of energy and attention that happens. But we learned and we took every opportunity we could to provide testimony. We supplied articulate, strong speakers to issues.

We had an active speakers’ bureau. We spoke to Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs. I spoke to the IBEW and to the dental school. I remember speaking to the dental school at the U of W on the Equal Rights Amendment—a whole roomful of dentists at the university. They were all men. I talked about the Equal Rights Amendment and equal employment.

One of them said, “But you know, if women get into dental schools, then they’ll be setting up dental shops like they do hair salons, in their basements.” [laughs] So that was kind of the nature of the resistance.

We had women lobbying the legislature. We had people lobbying and appearing before commissions. We elected Helen Sommers and women candidates to the legislature and got busy and active in campaigns. For many of us, it was like a full-time job. I mean, it was truly my work. That was true for Dorothy Sale. It was true for, I think, Elaine LaTourelle, for Judy Lonquist, for Betty Kersh, Jackie Griswold, Dorothy Sale, many, many women.

Then there was the League of Women Voters. There was NOW, and then there was the League of Women Voters. There was crossover between the two organizations, but the League was “too conservative.” I was very involved at the League, and then I left the League to go to NOW because the League wasn’t moving fast enough or far enough for me. But bless them, because there were some strong, wonderful women in the League: Bev Corwin, May Gerstle, and many others. Dorothy Sale came out of the League. So did Jackie Griswold and Jean Marie Brough. It was a wonderful place.

They brought the League along. Once you get the League involved, then you’ve got the support of the mainstream (where NOW was viewed as more radical). If we got the League with us, then we’ve really got a much stronger movement.

Isn’t it an interesting parallel to the National Woman’s Party and Carrie Chapman Catt’s organization? Of course, Catt was the founder of the League, so here we have it again. NOW could be the troublemakers, okay? Then the League would come right

behind. They were the same perspective and point of view, but they didn't put up picket lines. We did. We picketed for abortion rights. We picketed for fair employment. We offered testimony at rate cases against the utilities.

Boswell: Right. I had read something about the telephone company, Pacific Northwest Bell, I guess.

Lane: Yes. I put together that testimony before the state Utility Commission. PNB said, "Well, we've improved the employment of women in management by 42 percent." I got their data and looked at it. Well, yes, all management had increased 42 percent, so the status of women was identical. [laughs] There was no change at all. We would just turn up and irritate them, probably. I don't think the rate was changed because of it, but we kept the issue in front of them.

Boswell: Right.

Lane: That's what we did. I was not able to be in Olympia as much as others were, but people like Jackie and Dorothy were often in Olympia and working one on one with legislators to get the support that we needed.

Boswell: Did you have some kind of training? Had you done much public speaking before you began your testimony?

Lane: No, no, not at all. I think I'd taken a speech class in college. No. We helped women to do that because for most of us, this was an absolutely unique experience. We'd not, any of us, been on a podium or speaking, but we learned to do it because it was important to do it. That's what I did. We had a speakers' bureau, and we were getting calls all the time.

I would often begin a talk by talking about women's history. The big scary thing about the Equal Rights Amendment was about women serving in the military. Well, historically, if you look back, women have fought in every war that our country has been involved in on our soil. Every single war, there were women fighting. It simply is part of our history as much as it is of a man's history. A woman will do that if—

Boswell: To protect her family.

Lane: To protect her home and her family. That's the truth. The other issue was bathrooms. Well, on airplanes we have a gender-free bathroom, and it doesn't create huge disjunctures. I mean, those were the things people were really afraid of around the Equal Rights Amendment. It was bathrooms; it was toilets and the military. [laughs]

Boswell: It's kind of hard to believe now.

Lane: It's kind of hard to believe now, I know. And Title IX—not everything we did was a huge success. I remember when Title IX was coming. We were fearless. We thought we could do anything because we were having success. We thought, "Well, for Title IX we'll

have a women's sports day at the university. We'll have all these women athletes there, and it will just be great." [laughs] Well, we had this day, and there were no women athletes. I think we got one tennis player.

Boswell: Oh, no!

Lane: Hardly anybody turned up. We were ahead of our time. If we had a women's sports day at the university today, it would be jammed because of Title IX. We were there to talk about it. What was interesting is that there wasn't anybody there for women's sports day, but there would be today. That's the important thing.

Boswell: So that change has been—

Lane: That has been an enormous change, absolutely enormous change. I have two nieces who grew up with Title IX as part of their lives, and they were captains of their basketball teams. I watched their poise, their grace, their leadership that they learned. We learned those things in the women's movement. They have the opportunity to learn those things in their daily lives. Yes, it's been tremendous. It's an absolutely tremendous thing.

Boswell: In terms of the state equal rights measure, did people from NOW work with the legislators? Lois North, I think, introduced that legislation. Did NOW help with providing information? What was the relationship between those people in the legislature who did support the state ERA?

Lane: I'm trying to think. You know, I'm not remembering the specifics. I know that we did. I mean, we were there. We had the lists of the members of the legislature. We had a bit of a playbook. Because of the work of the suffragists, we had read our history. As League members, we would get active and work for good government issues. A lot of the people who came to NOW had had some background and experience in it. You know, we took it to Helen's campaign. All of us turned out to get Helen elected. We learned what we could from what had happened previously, and we learned on the job. We learned because we had to and because it was the most important thing for most of us who were involved in it.

Boswell: Was there a public component in terms of getting support on the street or through the media in sensitizing people to the issues and trying to build more of a groundswell of anyone who might be supportive?

Lane: Well, we did, we did have some posters. Probably the best one we ever had, which made a whole lot of money for NOW, was a picture of Golda Meir, who was prime minister. I think that's her title, not president; I think it was prime minister of Israel. We had this picture of her and then underneath it said, "But can she type?" Okay? [laughter] So we sold those in the *New Yorker* magazine. We took out a little tiny ad in the *New Yorker*. "But can she type?" with Golda Meir. We sold thousands of those, thousands of them. They did become visible. So there were all kinds of things like that that we did.

As I said, we had speakers' bureaus. We got our speakers in front of anybody who would listen. We would get people on talk shows; we'd get people on the podiums for various organizations. When I spoke to the IBEW, there were two or three hundred people in the room. So that was one of the things we did.

I don't know that we bought any media, but the press followed us. They followed us around because we were kind of interesting, and they didn't know quite what we'd do.

I brought this article to share with you. I'll give you this. There's Jean Withers and I; this is Jean and I when we were co-presidents at NOW. There's Dorothy Sale, myself and Jean and Sue Magee, who was with the Office for Women's Rights. Then I followed her. This woman, George [Georgiana] Schuder, later went to medical school and became an oncologist at the U of W.

So here's something. There was an Office for Women in the City of Seattle structure, which they were going to put together in a human services office with handicapped and senior services and other services, something like that. It had formerly been in a pretty singular role, and it was going to be folded in with other functions. We were meeting at the YWCA. A bunch of us said that we didn't want that to happen. We didn't want to lose the visibility for women's issues. So we left the YWCA and we walked en masse down to City Hall, which was only a couple of blocks away. We walked into the city council and said, "We'd like to be heard on this subject." Well, that created a huge uproar. You know, it just wasn't done! We just walked into their meeting. I mean, we were behaving ourselves, but it just really took them aback. They said, "Absolutely," and they scheduled a hearing.

Well, Liem Tuai was a councilman at that moment, and he was really annoyed. He said there were all these braless women—that was a terrible thing to say about somebody, braless women—that didn't act well. We were braless; we were creating a disturbance, blah, blah, blah. So anyway, he blasted us in the press, just blasted us.

So we had a press conference. We learned some things from Alice. [laughter] So we had a press conference and this is a picture of Betty Kersh (looking at an article). This is Dr. Mildred Kersh.

Boswell: I've looked at her papers at UW, but I've never seen a picture of her.

Lane: This is me (looking at the article), but I don't remember who this is. We had a press conference and we said that as citizens, we had a legitimate right to appear before our city council. We simply requested a hearing on this subject. Then my statement was, "And as far as our appearance, and Mr. Tuai's assertion that we were braless, well, in the women's movement we need all the support we can get. And so we welcome the participation of many women, of anyone to come to—" Anyway, so that made the news.

Boswell: Look at all the press. That's great.

Lane: But we did it with a sense of humor.

Boswell: You look very earnest there.

Lane: But we did it with a sense of humor, and of course, that got played.

Boswell: Oh, sure.

Lane: There is a picture of Betty being interviewed by the press. I think we went out and celebrated later.

Boswell: Well, that's great.

Lane: So I think that was the sort of thing we did. We used a lot of—what kind of tactics would you call those? Guerilla? Organic? Because we didn't have money. We didn't have money to spend. Well, we did raise, though, probably ten or fifteen thousand dollars from that poster. We did raise money that way with the things that we sold. And T-shirts, T-shirts! We did a lot of T-shirts and things like that. But we didn't have any paid media. We simply turned up. We turned up, we turned out, and we worked. We did all the basic things.

Boswell: It was really grass—

Lane: It was grassroots.

Boswell: A strong grassroots organization.

Lane: Yes. Absolutely. That is what we did. That is just what we did.

Boswell: So generally speaking, the media, when you could get their attention, was relatively capable? I mean, I'm thinking of the Susan Paynter articles, which were really quite broad-based.

Lane: Yes.

Boswell: And not necessarily any one point of view at all.

Lane: Mm hmm.

Boswell: But certainly helped to detail the movement.

Lane: Absolutely. Susan Paynter, I think, was very helpful to us. And yes, we did go down and talk to newspaper people. We did all the basic things, the stuff you do on the ground. I'm trying to think if we did brochures. We probably did.

Boswell: I was going to ask you about the campaign for ratification of the ERA in the state. Wasn't it run by Michelle Pailthorp?

Lane: Yes, I think she was in a paid position.

Boswell: Yes, I believe she was the head of the campaign.

Lane: The campaign. Yes, yes. We had this little office at 603 Union, and I used to go down there and work, just doing what needed to be done, whatever it was. It was just the basics. I don't know, what do they say in sports? Blocking and tackling. They say something like that. [laughs] Women, we just say the basic word—a lot of mailings. A lot, a lot of mailings.

Boswell: Yes, I remember talking to Dorothy Sale about when the mimeograph machine came in and that it was rolling all the time. It sounded like it was rolling all the time in the NOW headquarters.

Lane: All the time. That's right. That's right. That's right. It really was. It was as if that was my work. There was no other work. I mean, I had my kids. I was working. I don't know how many hours a week, but it was like a full-time job. It was, because there was that much work to do. You could hear we were ambitious. There was probably no agenda item that we didn't touch. There was women's health, women's reproductive freedom, employment, women in marriage. We changed rape laws, the credit laws and women's sports. One of our members, Shirlie Kaplan, republished Elizabeth Cady Stanton's rewrite of the women's bible. Did you know she did that?

Boswell: No, I didn't know she did that.

Lane: Yes, Stanton rewrote the Bible. She was really an interesting person, so we published it. I wish I had a copy. I don't know where it is.

Boswell: Yes.

Lane: But we republished it.

Boswell: Oh, I'd love to see it. I'll have to look for it.

Lane: So the entire sphere of life was not too big for us. That's how ambitious we were. [laughs] We wanted to touch it all: education, women in advertising. Oh, we did all this work about the image of women in television and magazines. Then we'd go down and meet with the television people and tell them that they needed to change how they did that.

Boswell: Were people like that generally receptive or not?

Lane: They were skeptical because we were challenging. We were always challenging and confronting the larger society. Anyway, it's amazing how much we got done.

Boswell: It sounds like it.

Lane: We were touching many, many different areas of life, and yet we did get it done. We revised the laws in our state. I think we contributed significantly to the betterment of

everybody—of all people. I see it in this young generation of women coming along in their twenties and thirties. I can just look at them and see that their lives are so different, and so much better, than my life was at that age, or that certainly my mother's or my grandmother's was. So it's all worthwhile.

Boswell: Now you got involved, ultimately, as a co-president of NOW in Seattle. Tell me a little bit about when and how that position came about.

Lane: Well, we were, again, highly experimental. As I said, there was nothing we couldn't do. We didn't feel we had to do anything the way everybody else did it, or the way that the larger society did it. I was approached to run for president of NOW, as was Jean. So the two of us just said, "Why don't we do it together and share the work?" because it was by this time getting to be a pretty big job.

Boswell: Now when you say Jean, was that Jean Withers?

Lane: Jean Withers. So she and I just took on the job, and we shared the co-presidency. Others did, later, as well. I notice that Nordstrom's now, for their company, have co-presidents.

Boswell: Co-presidents.

Lane: I think so does the Bridge family for Ben Bridge. Anyway, because we were feminists, we could experiment with new ways of organizing.

Boswell: And did it work? I mean, was it effective?

Lane: Yes, it did. It did. It did. There were a lot of different programs and issues that we were involved in.

Boswell: Now tell me a little bit about what some of the duties as co-president of NOW would have been.

Lane: Let's see if I can. I'm going to look at some of these materials I have and see if I can find more information. This is about the Equal Rights Amendment. Job sharing, that's what we were doing, too. Job sharing. We were also pointing out that in the workplace, for some women, depending on the time of their lives, they might prefer, if they had children at home, to work part time. So we were then recommending to the larger society that people share a job, that two women could share a job. You'd, in fact, get two more productive people for the same amount. It provides flexibility. So we were also championing job sharing. If you've got two working parents, you know, you can do that. And we were talking about the women's bookstore. Twenty-five people work on various jobs in flexible ways. So what else did we do? I'm trying to see. Why don't you turn it off for a minute, because I'm going to just skim this again.

Boswell: It's back on. You were mentioning that you did a lot of work at the downtown YMCA.

Lane: YWCA

Boswell: Excuse me. YWCA. As an organization, did they become interested in women's issues? It's interesting because it is a separate organization from the YMCA

Lane: Oh, quite. Yes. Yes.

Boswell: So I was just curious, was it meant to balance? Or was it meant to keep the two separated?

Lane: What they did is they gave us space to meet. We could meet, and we could use their meeting space. Then, I'm reading here, there was a feminist coordinating council that had offices there. That was made up of a number of different women's organizations.

Boswell: I've never heard anybody talk about the YWCA before involved in women's issues. It would be an obvious group, and certainly not only as a meeting place. That's really interesting. What year is this?

Lane: My recollection of the Y at that time, of the downtown Y, because there were different Ys. There was the University district Y, which had its own very strong feminist agenda. I don't know if you've followed that, but that's where Rape Relief started. I think the Lesbian Resource Center started there. That's a unique story all to itself, the University YWCA. I don't know if it was disaffiliated; I don't remember the specifics of it, but there was real tension between that organization and the downtown. They were very different groups. Then there was new leadership in the downtown YWCA, so we were quite at home there. The downtown Y was very interested in helping poor women, and also seeing if there could be childcare services. We wanted to establish a resource center for women at the downtown Y, so they were very helpful to us. This is the one at Fifth and Seneca. They were very, very helpful to us.

I'm looking back; I'm reflecting back at this article of January 21, 1973. That's when Jean and I were co-presidents. We're saying that one of our goals is to help poor women, and with women in religion. We wanted to evaluate women in the Bible in contemporary religion. There was another group of women who were very active with the church council, and there was a council of women in religion at the same time that was very ecumenical. It was not just across the Christian religious spectrum, but from all religious groups. In 1973 it was ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and disparities between men and women's ability to get credit. So this was around credit and credit cards.

Boswell: Sure.

Lane: So I'll give you this article. But we were also job sharing, and demonstrating that two people can share a job, a full-time assignment, and do even a better job than one person could, as a way to demonstrate flexibility.

Boswell: Oh, that's great.

Lane: So we were busy. This next article is 1978. And I'm being interviewed now by Sally Raleigh.

Boswell: The title is "ERA is 5 Years Old." Yes, that's great.

Lane: Yes, that was passed in 1972. It changed 110 state laws. Now by this time, I'm director of the Office for Women's Rights. I was selected by Wes Uhlman, after interviews with the Seattle Women's Commission, and then confirmed by the city council. I had a staff of about twenty people, and we had enforcement for all of the city's laws against discrimination in employment for employers of four or more, for affirmative action for the city and for women's programs. We did operate a resource center for women that we'd been hoping that the Y could do. We ended up doing it there.

[Interruption]

Boswell: Okay. I'm sorry for the interruption. So we were just wrapping up and I wanted you to talk just a little bit more about Alice Paul.

Lane: Yes, an addenda. Thinking about Alice Paul, I got her to reminisce a little bit about the suffrage battle, but she was so much about the present and the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. She could tell you every year that the amendment had been introduced, and it had been introduced in every session since 1923, she was quick to say. She could name every member of the judiciary committee on a year by year basis. She knew all the key votes on the judiciary committee, and how many she needed, and where they were, and who were the key proponents. She was absolutely completely tracking on the Equal Rights Amendment. It was just an amazing tour de force because by that time, it was in the early 1970s. You know, that was like forty-seven years she'd been tracking equal rights, pushing it and tracking this Equal Rights Amendment. And she kept an updated playbook in her mind. [laughter]

Boswell: That is remarkable.

Lane: She was.

Boswell: She must have been just an amazing woman.

Lane: She was. She was an amazing woman. That was like meeting Gandhi to me. It was really like that, to meet her.

Boswell: It sounds like it. And who was it that introduced you to her?

Lane: Meta Heller.

Boswell: Meta Heller.

Lane: Have you met Meta? I don't know if she's still around. She lived over in Kitsap County. She was a very active Democrat and a very interesting, very interesting person. I don't know if she's still alive.

Boswell: What an experience.

Lane: It was. It was great.

Boswell: It's a wonderful, it's a wonderful story.

Lane: Well, it changed my life. My life was going this way, and I met Alice Paul and it went this way. It was just like that. First, it was the boom of Betty Friedan's book and the earthquake, and then going to Washington and meeting Alice. My life changed for twelve years. It was like I was completely out there working. I was working for Alice Paul's army.

Boswell: Yes.

Lane: But she was the voice I was waiting for. It was her voice I was waiting for. That's who I needed to hear. And I heard it.

She said, "Do this."

And I said, "Yes, Miss Paul."