Narrator: Marilyn Rands  
Interviewer: Mildred Andrews  
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Transcriber: Teresa Bergen

[BEGIN INTERVIEW]

Andrews: The following interview is being conducted with Marilyn Rands, on behalf of the Washington Women’s History Consortium for the 1977 Ellensburg/Houston International Women’s Year Conference’s Oral History Project. The interview is taking place on February ninth at Marilyn’s home in Bellevue. The interviewer is Mildred Andrews. As a beginning, Marilyn, would you tell me about your growing up years? Something about your family, your community, your school? Some background as to how you developed your ideas as a woman in the home and in society?

Rands: I grew up in mostly Rosemead, California. I was born in Hollywood. But we moved. That’s outskirts of L.A., kind of a rural area. It was still recovering from the Depression, so everybody raised rabbits for food, and chickens, in our backyards. We didn’t have a vegetable garden, I don’t know why, but we had rabbits and chickens. And there was one car, and it had to be shared. So my mother drove very rarely. And if we had to go to a piano recital or something, she had to take my dad to work and then drive us. And we had to sit like statues, because she was so nervous. [laughs] If we talked to her or anything, she’d fall apart. And she was a very capable woman, but driving was a challenge.

So it was a pretty normal, happy childhood. I went to Muscatel Elementary School. In those days, they didn’t really involve the parents too much. They skipped me half a year because I learned to read early. Didn’t even bother to ask my parents. [laughs] Then when I graduated from elementary school, the eighth grade, and went to high school, they were disbanding midterms. And so I had to either go to summer school and go to high school three years, or I had to stay an extra half year. So I went with my friends. So I was young, I guess sixteen, when I graduated.

And my father died that fall, when I had started Pasadena City College. And that was life changing, to have all that upset. And we had to move, and Mother had to go back to work, and she had to go back to school because shorthand had changed systems, and bookkeeping was totally different since she had worked, and so forth. Mother had borrowed money to go to school on, to go to business college. Because her shorthand teacher told her she’d be just taking up space of a man who would be earning a living, and she’d quit anyway and get married. And that she couldn’t do it. So Mother went bound and determined to do well, and did.

And education became, for me, really important, because she thought it was important. So after my father died, instead of working and helping, great sacrifice, she sponsored my tuition and got me through school. It was extremely important. And of course, that’s passed on to my daughters and to their daughters as a high value. Mother and Father were both active in the youth program of the church. So they had, were sponsoring big dances and had kids in our house.
Andrews: And this is the LDS Church, correct?

Rands: Yes. The LDS Mormon Church. They had sponsoring dances, hiring orchestras, kids planning meetings at our house, campouts, things were going on, and we often went with them. Now that was not a paid job. In the Mormon Church, there’s no paid clergy, except a few people at the very top. Everybody has a job. You teach children, or you teach teens, or you’re Scoutmaster, or you’re on a committee. You do something. And that’s what my parents were usually involved with. And I was usually, as an adult, involved with the women’s organization, which is Relief Society.

So after college, I started to teach. I met my husband the second year I was teaching. And we were married in 1953. We were living in California. By that time, I was living in Westchester and he was in Inglewood. We drove to the St. George, Utah temple to be married. That was our closest temple.

We had all of our children in Inglewood. I can’t remember the name of the hospital. We had four children. Our first son, Jon– Do you want all of this?

Andrews: This is fine. Sure.

Rands: Well, I had two boys, and then my daughter. And I remember, same doctor, and the doctor said, “No outside plumbing,” so this was my daughter. [laughs] We expected a boy. So then we had another boy.

We left the Los Angeles area in 1968, and came to Bellevue, Washington. My husband had a job opportunity. And we became involved in the Bellevue schools. I had taught school in the L.A. area. And up here, I opened a preschool, because there was no room for my children, coming in February, they were all full. So I opened my own. I went over to BCC, Bellevue Community College, and kind of got some training and courage, and opened my own, and went for it. And I did that for about ten years.

Then when my kids were out of school, and going to college and so forth, I went back to teaching, couldn’t get back in. I subbed for a few years, and then I got a job at Somerset Elementary, it’s the next hill over, one of the best schools in Bellevue, and was there twelve years. And I enjoyed that. And I retired and subbed another four years. I retired in ’99. I think that’s, you know, you have odd jobs. Like I taught sewing at Mercer Island Fabric, and did different things like that from time to time. But those were my main teaching, in California, Redondo Beach was the district I was in the most.

Andrews: Now we’re going to go back to the 1960s and ‘70s. And I’d like to have you talk about the organizations you belonged to at that time, and at the time of the Ellensburg conference, and what roles you played in them.

Rands: I was a stake relief society president. The Relief Society in our church is the women’s organization. Every woman eighteen and older is automatically a member. It’s worldwide. It started in the 1800s. It’s the first auxiliary of the Mormon Church. It’s supposed to be the oldest continually meeting women’s organization in the world.

The women that started it are kind of heroines of mine. They did wonderful, great things. In those days, they didn’t meet in the Mormon Church. The built their own
building. By “built,” I don’t know if they physically, but they raised the money and they owned it; it would be like a store on the main floor, and a big workroom on the top, where they made rugs and quilts and they sold things. And with that money, they were able to give a great deal in relief to poor people, widows, hungry people. Immigrants were coming in, and they were persecuted immigrants, and there were lots of people that needed help. So to me, I thought, build your own building, if they want me to work at this church, I mean, it’s already there, it’s not a problem. [laughs] Life looked much easier. So I kind of delved into that history a little bit.

As a stake relief society president in Bellevue–

Andrews: Before you go on there, we’re talking about the beginning of the Relief Society.

Rands: Yes.

Andrews: Did this have something to do with your story about Susan B. Anthony?

Rands: Yes. Yes.

Andrews: Would you mind telling that?

Rands: The Mormon women, the state of Utah was the second state to vote; Wyoming was first. And the opinions of people were varied. But there were strong women working for the right to women’s vote, and I supposed you’d say strong men. Well, there was an industry in Utah for women to earn money by raising silkworms and making silk fabric. And one room of their house would have these ugly worms, smelly worms, and they would feed them mulberry leaves and they’d make the silk. So they made a silk dress and presented it to Susan B. Anthony. And I have seen a picture of it in the Relief Society history book. So they were involved in that cause, and considered her very important and special.

So this organization, by the time I was involved thirty years ago, I would have been forty-six. I was the Relief Society president. I served in that position for nine years. I had thirteen congregations. There would be like thirteen people on each women’s board, because there would be two counselors, there would be a woman supervising or teaching each class. We were involved in the welfare, assisting the bishop with welfare and social issues in the congregation. And I did, as my stake board, we would meet monthly and train our people, and keep them orientated, and know what their jobs were, and have them get together and answer problems and tell things that worked, that kind of thing.

And then we would go to Salt Lake City for a conference every year in October. And the city was taken over by women in knit suits. [laughter] You know, poor men couldn’t get in a restaurant to get lunch. The tabernacle choir, you know, the tabernacle was full. We would meet there for general meetings. And then there would be all the meetings for the classes we taught. And the Salt Palace was a huge place, and they would have all kinds of homemaking booths. Crafts and things that you could take back to use in your homemaking department, because we had a class in that once a month.
So we would travel, the thirteen of us would fly or travel, stay in hotel together, go to these meetings, talk most of the night about how we would apply and what we could use and not use, and then come back and have these training meetings all year. So that’s what we did.

So the Relief Society has visiting teachers. Every woman in the church has two ladies assigned to her who come to visit her once a month. And if there’s a need, death or unemployment or anything, they are the main resources that the Relief Society president works through. So for us to get word to all of our people in three days is not a problem. I mean, the setup is there; it’s the way it’s organized. I simply called on my presidents and said we’d got this packet, and we were encouraged to go to this conference, and we would like to have somebody come from their board and get information and go back and see how many of their people could come. But we were not supposed to meet, my leader said, “I don’t want you to meet in the church. We don’t use the church for political purposes.” So we met in homes, mostly.

One time I was just flustered. I thought, three days they want me to do this, and I can’t meet in the church? I haven’t got time to find a house in the area I needed it. So I met at the church, and I heard about it. [laughs]

Andrews: You’re talking about the IWY Conference now. You were saying, too, that it was Fourth of July weekend.

Rands: Yes. Fourth of July weekend. Well, a friend of mine in downtown Bellevue called me and said she’d heard about this conference, it looked interesting, would I like to go. And I talked to my husband, and we decided it would work out. It was fifty dollars. I don’t know if that included your meals or what, but it was fifty dollars and three days. So we made arrangements. She registered us, I believe. I don’t remember registering us. And then later, quite a bit later, Fourth of July weekend, comes this packet from Salt Lake that only has it in articles about ERA from the newspaper, just copies of them. A letter, as I recall, that encourages us to go to the conference in our state, it doesn’t say when the conference is, or where. Just go to your state’s conference and express your opinions on family issues.

Andrews: Was the letter from the Ladies’ Relief Society?

Rands: I can’t remember. I know we have it someplace. When I find it, I’ll call you. But it was official. I didn’t question the authority of it. I remember calling my local leaders and they said, “Don’t use the church building. Do the best you can.” They didn’t know why it was coming so late. But they were coming.

So at that time, I don’t remember just exactly what I said, but we contacted our local presidents, who started organizing. I think we ended up with fifty-one women that went from Bellevue, and that’s from like the Fourth of July weekend to the eighth. So it’s just phoning and calling and going.

So when we pick up the newspaper and it would say, “This highly organized, sneaking in at the last minute to take over the conference,” you just had to laugh. [laughs] Because we were so untypically unorganized that it was frustrating. But that’s the way it was.
Then Susan Roylance, I knew she had been in politics, because I knew her mother, who lived in the Bellevue area at one time. And somehow she contacted us, and there was to be a headquarters at the conference, and we were to wear blue and white ribbons. And I remember calling my advisor and saying, “Who is she? And why would I be following her directions?”

He didn’t know. He just said, “Just go and do what you feel right about.”

Well, we put these badges on, and we got to the conference. And people would look at you and your badge, and some would come up and shove you sometimes. It was instant anger. And I thought, are we here to build bridges? To talk, to learn, and to vote the way we feel individually? Or are we going to be two teams, fighting? So we took our badges off and went as individuals. We didn’t wear them. And that was probably my idea that we not wear them.

Andrews: This is the whole delegation?

Rands: All fifty-one. Our fifty-one took off the badges. And I can’t remember where we slept, but we must have had dorm rooms. And I know we were together eating, and we would meet, because most of the meetings were in this huge gym, sitting in the bleachers for hours, endlessly, without backs. So we were together a lot. And I know, I just know that I told my people, “Do what you feel is right. But I don’t think it’s right that someone tells you how to vote. We’re intelligent people, we know how to vote, we know what we’re thinking. So we just do what we each think is right.” So I think most of them took their badges off.

Well, somewhere along the line, I met Susan Roylance briefly. And somehow she asked about our badges and I said, “We came as individuals to vote the way we feel, and we don’t think we should be wearing them and being antagonistic, or labeled.”

And she said, “Well, you weaken our position.” And she’s right. I’m sure we did. But I didn’t see it that way. So we weakened their position. And that’s the way we proceeded. [laughs] And I’m sure she had her hands full, as I read your booklet. She couldn’t worry anymore about us. She might have been able to have talked to me and explained how these things worked. But I was so naïve about political strategies and everything that I probably wouldn’t have believed her.

Andrews: The booklet that you’re referring to, just for the listener, is the Women of Ellensburg that was published after the conference. It was organized by the conference planning committee.

Rands: Now look what they talk about, how they would have their people, I don’t know what they call them. The pro-ERA people would be in a workshop. And if it looked like it would be dominated by conservative people, which they could tell by the badges, they would send to other meetings and bring more pro-ERA people in so that when the voting happened—well, to me, that was a political strategy that I wasn’t even aware of considering. And that happened.

But the worst part of it for me, at the end of the conference, was hours and hours of sitting. And we had decided, I had back trouble, and I thought, my back is killing me. Let’s go sit where we can lean against the back wall. There were a couple of rows up
high, behind. So we all went over there and sat down there. And I think we sat by the radical lesbian group from Seattle, or military, whatever. But they were very, we were having a good time visiting with them, and everything was fine. And they kept getting runners telling them what to do, their strategy. People would come in from the lobby and tell them what to do. So when we stood up to vote, they turned around and said, “No, you’re mixed up. Sit down. Not now.” [laughter]

And I’d say, “No, this is the way I’m voting.”

“No, no, no!” They thought we were part of their group. Then they were really upset. And I thought, they’re going to hit my women! But we still kept talking and staying. And they would turn around and say, “Vote yourself. Vote the way you think.” And then they’d be waiting for runners to come.

So it was a political environment where some non-political people were dropped in and kind of just got swallowed up, I think. But at the very last of the conference, I didn’t understand what happened until I read in the booklet, the conference. Well they’re running out of time, we’ve been there for hours, the conference is going to end, buses are leaving, you’re right squeezed against the end. And the last, they haven’t presented all the workshops, haven’t been able to present all their material. And the black women want to present theirs. And it is, if you vote for the black women’s rights, tied on to it is pro-ERA and pro-abortion. It’s all tied together. So you can’t vote separately. You can’t choose. So people who want to vote against the ERA and for the black women are trying to get to the mikes and fix it, but they’re being parliamentary procedured right out of it. The book says Susan Roylance tried to speak and they wouldn’t let her because a vote was in process, and that was the way.

But that was the sad, sad thing, because you’d been there for three days, and now you couldn’t vote. And that’s not democratic. It was kind of rotten. And people were really, really upset. Then someone started singing, “We Shall Overcome,” I think it was. And everybody sang together. And we went home not knowing how the vote ended, or what had happened. And it was the next day that they posted their results. And according to the booklet, they thought the conservative women had won. But it was the other way, assuming that the ballots were counted honestly at this point. [laughs] With the anger that was there, who knows?

To me, it was so much anger, so much hatred, and so much intolerance. People would say things against the Mormon Church. From the booklet, I understand two Catholic ladies started the blue and white ribbon. But they would scream, “Don’t vote Mormon!” Why weren’t they saying “Don’t vote Catholic?” [laughs] The Catholics were opposed to abortion, probably more organized and efficient than we were. But it was just, they latched on to us, I don’t know if you want to say a scapegoat, but a visible symbol. And I saw that, this was ’77, right?

And Andrews: Mm hmm.

Rands: Okay, 1980, our temple was dedicated here. And I was on public affairs committee to take, like I took the Bellevue Journal American reporters through the temple before on a VIP thing, just to keep people informed. Well, there was a huge campaign.
There were Former Mormons for Christ, led by Ed Decker, that went house to house in the whole city of Bellevue, and warned you about the Mormons coming with this temple. Former Mormons for Christ were like a missionary group. And their church basis was opposition to the Mormon Church. And they would tell all the pastors that they were going to come in here with zillions of missionaries and take people out of your congregation. And it’s really bad.

So these people came to my house, and they just knocked on my door. My son is in high school. He invites them in. And we sit down, and they start telling us what Mormons believe. I said, “No, they don’t believe that.”

“Oh, yes. They do.”

I said, “No. I’m a Mormon. We don’t believe that.”

“You don’t know what you believe. You don’t know your doctrine.” It was just a wall. You couldn’t talk to them.

So my son invites them back. [laughs] I was working that night at Mercer Island Fabric. So I had a friend come over that was more into scriptures, that could help him, because I’m leaving this kid alone with these two men. And they brought somebody, and I guess they had a good time, but I wasn’t there. That was such a thing.

The Lutheran church, St. Andrew’s, across the street from the temple, they befriended us. And they would say, “Why don’t you want a temple here? Is that better than a bowling alley or something else? What’s the deal?” And they’re about the only ones in an organized way, and their people would get upset, but it was quite a deal.

My daughter was going out with someone at high school. She would have been a junior, senior. Her parents forbade him to go out with a Mormon girl, because their pastors were preaching. There was a lot of uproar. The only point of this is that at that time, I recognized many of the women from the Ellensburg conference at the temple, picketing, chaining themselves to the gate. And there was a picket sign, “Ayatollah Kimball.” Kimball was the president of our church. It would have been like “Ayatollah the pope,” pope’s name.

My son ended up with that poster, and he had it under his bed for a long time, so I know it existed. He said, “I was talking with this lady. She gave it to me.” And I thought, yeah, you took it when she wasn’t looking. [laughs] But, whatever. He had it. And he was just interested in talking to these people about their intense feeling.

Well, they chained themselves to the gates of the temple, thinking that Sunday morning everybody would come, and they couldn’t get in, and the media would be there. Well, we go to our own churches on Sunday. The temple isn’t open on Sundays. It’s for ordinances that happen during the week with small groups. It just isn’t used with the whole congregation coming. We were at our own churches.

Then they decided to picket Norman Calhoun. He was the Bellevue Stake president at that time. So they looked in the phone book, and they found Norman Calhoun in Newport Hills, went up and picketed his house. And it was the wrong Norman Calhoun. He wasn’t a Mormon. [laughter]

Well what I’m just saying, which is fine. There’s always opposition to temples when they come in, because they’re large. There are environmental studies that are required. We had to go over every six inches of the acres and tell what animals and everything would be displaced. And Bellevue didn’t want to give us a permit. But it turned out toward the very end of this lengthy legal process, somebody said, “Well, we
notice from the survey that you’ve built your fire department on part of our land.” So they decided to give us the permit, and we wouldn’t ask them to move the fire department. [laughter]

But at any rate, it’s just, it was that feeling you have of if you don’t agree with us, you’re wrong, you’re stupid, you’re misguided, you’re misled, or you’re evil. There was no coming together to discuss or find middle ground. It was like a war, I guess. And that’s sad, because it was such an opportunity that was missed.

One of the things that I learned as you go to these different workshops is they would talk about women that were abused. Or what was the big issue? They called it displaced homemakers, people unprepared to earn a living that suddenly are divorced and left. And I realized that many women didn’t have a support system. There was nobody to help. In the Mormon Church, if there was an abuse issue, the bishop would be looking into it, providing counseling. And he would excommunicate the man and help provide the woman, there are resources. There are things that could be done. So they’re not standing there alone, trying to find some shelter to go to, etcetera, etcetera.

And the same thing with the welfare program, we could provide support, paying utilities, and we could provide. We were always organized, in a sense, with resources to help people. Now that doesn’t mean people didn’t go through the cracks, or that we didn’t fail in our job sometimes. But I was involved in the welfare and social concerns. And I knew, it was just shocking to me that these people were totally alone, with nobody to help them. So I could see a need for programs to be of assistance. More so, I just had been sheltered, I guess is what you would say.

Somebody would say to me, because we were famous for being as anti-abortion as anti-ERA, “How can you expect some little kid to have a baby? Why can’t you understand the need for abortion?”

I said, I understand it. But I’ve gone to be in the hospital, fourteen year-old kid with long hair parted, just had a baby. I have to be the witness that interviews her and makes sure that she understands what she’s doing when she gives the baby up for adoption, that she isn’t being coerced by someone. I’ve had to do that. I know. I understand. I can understand an older woman with an unwanted pregnancy wanting to end it. But you’ve got God-given free agency and choice, but you’re in conflict, because you’ve got the rights of the baby, who wants to be born, and you’ve got the rights of the mother, who doesn’t want the baby, but is pregnant. And it seems to me the best answer is that the baby’s rights are gone for a whole lifetime, and the mother’s, basically, for nine months to a year.

We have a program, “unwed mothers” is what it used to be called. The young mother could be moved to a different state, stay in a nice family, have a weekly counseling, a support group, a big sister type relationship when she lived in the home. The medical bills paid for, the baby taken care of, and she would be shuffled back into her own life and home with more education and counseling, and able to get on with a normal life. And the baby would have a good, loving home. My mother was involved in that program for, I don’t know, fifteen years.

Andrews: Is this an adoption program?
Rands: Yes, yes. Now, you didn’t have to adopt the baby. You could keep it. But that was hard. The baby didn’t have as good a chance, anyway, but that was through LDS social services. And I knew the lady that ran that. And one day the regular woman who went to interview people and be the witness couldn’t go, and she called me. And it was so traumatic and sad to see this little girl in the hospital, too young to have had to have a baby, anyway. So I relate. I just figure that the options are against each other, and hopefully the woman had the right before conception not to get pregnant. In rare instances when she didn’t have control over it, with rape and so forth, then that’s a little different situation. And I believe that we support abortion in terms of rape or when a mother’s health, life, I guess they say, is at risk. I don’t know what the Catholic stand is on that. I don’t know. What else did you want to know?

Andrews: Just wanted to backtrack to something you said about Catholic and Mormon women. Do you have any idea what the percentages were at the conference, for the conservative women? How many might have been Catholic, and how many Mormon? And there were a few others, too.

Rands: The two chairpeople were Catholic women, were mentioned in the booklet.

Andrews: Dolores Gilmore and Dolores Glesener.

Rands: Yes. Right. In the junior high school in my area, which would have been Ringdall, my son, oh, he was always so brave. He was the one that invited all these people in our house. He took on the task of abortion for like a debate thing. And so I want to get him some information. Oh, no, he knows it’s wrong, he doesn’t need any research. [laughter] And I said, “Jeff! You’ve got to back up what you’re doing.” On the same debate team was a Catholic girl, and they went together to the Catholic association someplace and got all kinds of facts and literature. So I know that they’re prepared, and the two of them debated. And she probably carried Jeff, although he’s a very good speaker. [laughs] She probably had the facts.

I don’t know, I don’t have any way of identifying them. I assume they wore blue and white ribbons, but I don’t even know that.

Andrews: It sounds like the Mormon women did, too.

Rands: A lot of them did. And a lot of them were not well prepared. We tried to get literature to our people, but in the few days, they hadn’t studied the ERA at length. They had their own lives and were busy, and they just sort of dropped, and went to express their opinions. So I don’t know. I remember somebody screaming, “Keep them barefoot and pregnant!” And I thought, oh—[laughs] It was almost funny.

And I still think that the ladies who came three years later, flew in from wherever they are, to picket at the temple, were still of the viewpoint that there weren’t any educated, intelligent Mormon women. That’s the thing that hurt.

Oh, I did make a copy for you. All the newspapers, after this was over, Bellevue Journal American, and I don’t think The Seattle Times, they didn’t send anybody over to the conference. [ed. The Seattle Times sent reporter, Mayumi Tsutakawa, and
photographer, Kathy Andrisevic, to both Ellensburg and Houston.] You know, big deal, there’s a conference. They didn’t spend their money to send a person.

Andrews: The *Journal American*?

Rands: The *Journal American*. No, they didn’t.

Andrews: I don’t think they were aware that it was going to be a big event. And it was.

Rands: Well, I have a card from a Jane Cartwright that interviewed me from the *Seattle Times*. I mean, I’m an ordinary person. I wasn’t being interviewed by newspapers. All of a sudden they’re calling me, wanting to interview me and ask me things. And they wanted to talk about, I remember this lady who interviewed me from the *Journal American* said something about, “Well, you’re educated.” And I said yes, I was. And she said, “Well, do you have other educated women?”

I said, “Good heavens. We’ve got a pediatrician on Mercer Island.”

So she interviewed this pediatrician on Mercer Island, Jan Woolley. You can keep this, if you like. [Rands gives the interviewer a copy of the article.]

Rands: Jan Woolley. But she’s a very nice lady. She lived in Newport Hills. She was Relief Society president, a pediatrician, a mom, an amazing lady.

Andrews: The title of the article is interesting, “Mormon Woman Sees Church as Support, Not Strait Jacket.”

Rands: Yes. That was the way it was, the feeling, like we were, and the interesting thing is, they thought we were male-dominated, is what they were sure. And probably we were the first liberated women in the world. Because back in the times of the pioneers, you’re on the frontier. You’ve got houses to build, towns to run, governments to run, businesses to start. We were needed, and we did those things. I put in there a quote from Brigham Young, who was ahead of his time on women’s issues. But I practically had these memorized. I used to use them in my talks a lot. “If you have to choose between educating a son or a daughter, educate the woman. Because when you educate a man, you educate one. When you educate a woman, you educate a family.” And I thought that was so true.

And then he talked about, back in the 1850s, “Women are useful not only to sweep houses, wash dishes, make beds and raise babies, but they should stand behind the counter, study law or physics, or become good bookkeepers and be able to do the business in any counting house.” I assume a counting house is a bank. “And all this to enlarge their sphere of usefulness for the benefit of society at large. In following these things, they are but answering the design of their creation.” And you know, that’s revolutionary for ’79, probably, much more so in 1850. And people did that. That’s why they had the silk industry. They had their own stores and buildings. They did things, because they needed to do it.

Now as people got richer, I think they lost some of their rights because they could afford to stay home and do less. They had more money. Anyway, that’s my perspective.
We always, since the church started, when they vote on anything, women vote as well as men. Always have. And the fact that Utah had women’s votes early on, it just was amazing to me that they would think that we couldn’t think for ourselves. But, oh well. That was the mindset. Whether it was an emotional issue, I don’t know. But they had to be stunned that we were coming. I don’t think they really wanted conservatives; it was made available to all women, but probably it was made available through NOW organizations and chapters, and federally funded. But it was our tax money, too. We paid taxes that were sponsoring these events. But I don’t know that we were really expected to come, or welcome. But we were there. [laughs]

Andrews: I know you didn’t feel welcomed, from what you said.

Rands: Well, it was strange. You know, I didn’t go by myself, or I might have gone home. We had our own little group to be with. But it was just interesting. Very different.

Andrews: You’ve addressed some of this already, but in your opinion, were there some positive outcomes to this conference? Or was all of it negative?

Rands: For the conference itself, I think most women realized that as busy as they might be in their own little world, and the areas they picked to do volunteer work, they better start paying attention and getting involved. And that may be exactly the opposite of what the sponsors might have wanted. I think also they became aware, people, many people were in more need. They didn’t have any support system, and that those issues needed to be addressed.

I had read a lot of, you know, all of us in college and so forth read things by authors that were considered women’s lib, and a lot of it sounded good to me. But after that conference, I began to look at it differently. That it came from a more radical, maybe not practical, that there was some good in it, but I could see that, it just looked different to me. But then, I was in my forties by then.

Andrews: What about negative outcomes?

Rands: I think there was a lot of intolerance, false beliefs about each other. We didn’t really have the opportunity to really talk and get to know other people and why they felt that way. It was too much, you got your badge on and you were already decided. Well, anyway, maybe it couldn’t have been done; maybe it’s idealistic. I have people in my family, extended family, that have been gay. And I like them, and I know their friends. It would have been nice to have had a better relationship of real communication, and not so, anti– I don’t know. It was difficult.

Andrews: And everybody’s assumption that they knew what the other side was thinking.

Rands: Yes, that’s true. That’s true, where they were coming from. There were a few Mormon men, I’m assuming they were Mormon. They were called Mormon men. Women would say, “Get out of here! Your women can think for yourselves.” And I think
probably some men brought their wives and were kind of afraid to leave them, you know? [laughs] I’m not saying a lot, maybe five–

Andrews: Who was telling them to leave?

Rands: Oh, people, like women would stand up, and you’d see some men by the door, and they’d say, “Go home!” It would be chanting, and yelling, like football games. [laughs] Oh, dear.

Andrews: And what about babies, or families?

Rands: Well, I read in the booklet that there was free childcare. I didn’t know that. I don’t think any of our people brought children. Most of us had teenaged kids that could be left. I was not aware of free childcare. And they had a lot of free, talked about scholarships, so people could come. Fifty dollars is a considerable sum now, and it was more then. But I’m sure they needed that for the space and everything.

Andrews: What about the election of delegates to Houston? Do you remember that?

Rands: Well basically there were two slates, and the whole slate–Remember Jill? What was her–

Andrews: Ruckelshaus. Jill Ruckelshaus?

Rands: Yes. She was from Medina, a neighborhood in Bellevue. She was one of the first speakers, as I recall, very effective speaker. But in the middle of her talk, very dramatic oratory type, she said something about, “All you women who have left your families, aren’t you afraid the men will put the toilet paper on backwards?” Like nothing you do at your home has any value. And I just wrote her off. I thought, that’s insulting that you have no value for running a home. And she, apparently, withdrew, because there were too many people who wanted to go to Houston and felt they couldn’t withdraw because they had obligations to the groups they represented, so she did not go. But my first impression of her was really good and then I had, whew, suddenly common sense. But I can’t say that I knew any of the people.

The front of the book mentions that they talked to a Jean Dance, and there is a Jean Dance in Bellevue now. She was in a wheelchair. She’s older than I am. She’s probably in her eighties. And she was there at the conference, because she was in a wheelchair, so she was visible. And she’s been in a wheelchair, still is. But I don’t know if it’s the same Jean Dance that they talked to, but it’s one of the few names that I recognized.

Andrews: What was the story about Jean Dance?

Rands: Well, it’s just that she was mentioned in the front of this book as being interviewed, and I thought, I wonder why, if it was because–here, on this page, they mention the various philosophies, and so forth. Pam Roach, I have heard her speak. And I
have, just that brief encounter with Susan [Roylance]. I don’t know what Jean’s connection with this was. I was going to call her, and I didn’t have time.

Andrews: So she’s still here in Bellevue?

Rands: Mm hmm.

Andrews: And you also mentioned Janice Woolley. Is she still here?

Rands: Yes, I believe she is. I’m not positive, but I think she is. I could find out.

Andrews: Maybe I can talk with one or both of them, too.

Rands: Yes. You never know. I don’t think Janice went, but Jean obviously did.

Andrews: Oh, Janice didn’t go.

Rands: I don’t think so. She’s just talking, a Mormon’s women viewpoint, but I don’t think she was at the conference. This went on for years after we got back. And another thing, like at the time the temple was being built, there would be a real angry letter into the editorial section of the Bellevue paper, the Journal American. And so people would write back, I wrote back several times. And somebody pointed out to us, “That’s just what they want. You’re just selling papers. Quit answering.” [laughs] And I thought, oh, yes.

Andrews: Was the newspaper unbiased?

Rands: No. No. They were just getting articles in the editorial section. People would say shouldn’t have a temple. And others would say, “Where’s freedom of religion? What harm are they going to do?” And they just encouraged, you know, anybody should have known or expected. But I liked to write, so I wrote to the editor and then I quit, because I realized that’s exactly right. Someone would respond, just keep selling papers.

And then there was, at that time, there were people, as I said, going door to door, Former Mormons for Christ. And then somebody would have a big meeting, exposing the Mormon faith and their place with women. So finally, our stake decided to have a meeting, if you want to learn about Mormons, come and ask a Mormon. So they had a meeting, and you could come and ask. And I was invited to speak. I sweat blood over that one. You want to represent your church fairly. And it went well.

Then in the paper, the Bellevue Journal American, the next day they had a review by the religious editor. And he pointed out, he said, “That woman obviously was happy with her role in the church, and felt she had influence and everything, but I would have been more...” how did he put it – “would have been more acceptable if she hadn’t been the only woman on the program. And I thought, oh my gosh, I was! [laughs] I hadn’t even noticed that, because women say the prayers, they play the piano, they conduct the music. But it just happened to be on a Saturday night, and there were mostly men involved.
So I think that in the Mormon Church you have, I mean, I’ve sat on councils and gone to meetings. And you have your influence and that type of thing, but I’ve never felt uncomfortable or belittled or browbeaten or anything like that. I’ve always been able to get my say, budget wise, or anything else. I’m not saying, you know, you present your information. It just has never been, it was just amazing to me that we were viewed that way. But we are.

Andrews: How big is your stake? Or what are the dimensions?

Rands: At the time I was serving, we went into, we went from the mountains, you know, like Snoqualmie, from the Cascades to Seattle, which would be like to Lake Washington. So we had Mercer Island, a couple of Rentons, up to Kirkland, Redmond, that area. Now, it just keeps growing and growing. Bellevue, and Kirkland and Redmond have their own stakes. And Issaquah will soon. But I think there’s like ten wards in our stake now. But a ward has about, I should guess, about three or five hundred people. And when it gets to a certain point, they divide it. And you go to your church by geography, not by who you think the best speaker is. You go by geography. And you pitch in, and everybody has a job, and you make that work and grow. And then when it gets big, where everybody can’t have a job, you divide. That’s just the way it works.

I’ve gone to Cougar Mountain Ward, which is behind the temple, for the last few years. But they just took about a third of us and put us in Somerset, because Somerset was getting really small, and they needed help to be normal sized. So anyway, I don’t know how to tell you how many in a stake. I could look that up.

Andrews: No, I was just wondering what the dimensions were, because you talked about being president of the Relief Society in your stake.

Rands: Well, it was hard when I first did that because, to even find the places. I mean, I didn’t go to Kirkland or Redmond very often. But of course, you get to know everybody and get used to it. We had Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond, Snoqualmie, Renton, some of Mercer Island, Newport Hills, Bellevue, those areas were in the stake.

Andrews: A lot of that was rural at that time, too.

Rands: Yes. Some of it was. I’ll still see, I’ll go someplace and see women that I worked with many years ago. And it’s just good memories, good memories.

Andrews: Did you go to Houston?

Rands: No.

Andrews: I don’t think any of us were elected. You had to be elected to go there.

Andrews: There were alternates. The elected delegates, with the exception of Kay Regan, who was Catholic, were all liberals. And then there were alternates that were all conservatives.
Rands: Interesting.

Andrews: Yes. That was just the way the vote was tallied.

Rands: Yes.

Andrews: Did you have any involvement in the referendum that came after the conference?

Rands: No.

Andrews: They abolished the state women’s council. Do you remember that?

Rands: No, I don’t.

Andrews: There was a state women’s council. And the conservatives brought about a referendum process. Apparently Susan Roylance had quite a bit to do with it.

Rands: Maybe.

Andrews: Anyway, they organized successfully. Took the petitions out and got them signed. And managed to abolish the state women’s council in the next election.

Rands: Hmm. Didn’t know that. Well, I know there were county, after that, I found in my journal I had kept a copy of community awareness. I was supposed to, as a stake person, keep the wards aware of anything in the community that would be worthwhile. Like if the library was going to have children’s hours, or something, the women needed to know so they’d take their kids. But this was, the family asked for help, there’s going to be a county conference. And I have just said, “Many women from our state attended at the cost of fifty dollars, three days’ time and travel expenses. At this conference on families, it will be much simpler, as it is free and in our own city. And it will be one of six held in the same day, and should be less crowded.” So you can keep this copy, if you like.

Andrews: Is that the White House Conference for Families?

Rands: Yes.

Andrews: And that was in 1980, wasn’t it?

Rands: Yes. But it’s still, we were just saying, hey, if you want to talk about families, this is a lot cheaper and easier. [laughs] So we did that. This is community awareness. We were supposed to be involved in a community. We believed that we should be involved in the community. And it just seems like you take care of your own family, and you reach out as far as you can, you’re a scout leader, whatever you do. And to get
involved in politics and things, you run out of time in between. My youngest son gets involved in politics quite a bit, but we probably don’t do what we should.

Andrews: Did the conference on families attract the same, the first–

Rands: I didn’t hear anything about it. And I can’t remember if I went or not. Long time ago.

Andrews: What kind of follow-up activities did you participate in? Or was there anything related to this conference?

Rands: I would expect that I would have reported like to the stake president what happened, but I don’t remember if I did. It would be logical. But the thing that surprised me was newspapers calling me and wanting to interview me. That just seemed amazing. But they didn’t have anything better. They didn’t have anything from the other side. They didn’t know where else to go. And probably they heard “Mormon,” so they probably asked the Mormons. Like I think Myrna Conger told you about me. She turned my name in to someone.

Andrews: I don’t know her name, but she may have talked to Shanna Stevenson.

Rands: Yes, she told me she was going to turn my name in. I thought, oh do I want to do that? Say the wrong thing?

Andrews: I’m glad you did do it.

Rands: But I found that the newspapers, you know, you expected them to twist things and not make it right. But they would send you a draft, so you could see. I found them very professional and fair, which was nice.

We did, I felt a stronger appreciation for the Relief Society that I belonged to, the history of it and the power that we had to do things. I probably became more committed and involved in that, although that has always been a real love. Relief Society made a big difference in my life, from just learning the skills that I needed to, to run a house, that I hadn’t picked up. And the support of the women you go to your congregation, you’re frustrated with a situation with one of your children, and somebody there has been there and already done it, and can talk to you a little bit. And maybe you follow it, or maybe you don’t, but there’s a sisterhood, there’s a support, that’s important.

I often think that, oh, who’s the woman that has the magazine once a year, Martha Stewart, is a well paid Relief Society president. [laughter] Well, she’d be more of an enrichment leader, the counselor who’s over the monthly meeting of teaching new skills on how to save money at your house, and run things, and bring speakers in that pertain to you. Anyway, it’s been a practical help to me, and a spiritual help, and it’s provided support. I’ve often thought, how does anybody get through a death without their church and the support? How do they get through a long illness? And when my babies were born, the support of people, just giving you moral support and helping and meals.
One time, I was expecting my second baby, and I had him, I think it was my second baby, I could be wrong. And my husband was home. I was Relief Society president. And I said, “Gary, this sister has a migraine, and she’s got these little kids. I’m just going to take one of the casseroles that I have in my freezer.” Because, you know you’re going to have a baby, you fill the freezer with casseroles. “I’m going to run it over, and I’ll be back.”

So he was watching the kids. And he called me, he said, “Come home quick. The women are bringing you dinner.” And I thought, gee, I’m trading a frozen casserole for a full blown dinner. “Come home quick and get in bed.” [laughter] And we laughed and laughed, because they just felt like I was burdened with these little kids, but I knew this lady, I couldn’t take her a dinner that I’d fixed, but I could take her a casserole. In the morning, it would be thawed by night, and she could stick it in the oven.

So it’s just been very much of a support all my life. But I don’t know, maybe wiser and more understanding, and that less naïve after going there, and sorry that there’s misconceptions. I don’t think there are as strong of misconceptions now as then, but maybe there are. Maybe I just know different people.

Andrews: From your perspective, have women’s lives changed since the conferences? And, if so, in what ways?

Rands: Well, I think you’ll find the majority of women are working since that time, and that wasn’t the way it was then. There were lots of women home with families or working part time. So the economical pressures, and therefore, people are eating out more, you know, fast food, and things like that, to make it easier on families. It’s harder. I think it’s harder to raise a family. I have noticed with children, like if they play baseball, or whatever they do, gymnastics, whatever they’re in, they want the whole child. There will be rehearsals on Saturday and Sunday, at night. Very hard for the family to have time with their own children. They’re running, everybody’s running, taking people places.

We have family night. Monday night, nobody’s supposed to call you, do any church business, or have any meetings on Monday night. That’s left for families. And it’s a battle, because somebody will have a gymnastics rehearsal or, you know, it’s just very difficult, I think, for all families to have as much time with their children as you really need to do a good job. Signs of the times, I guess. And children expect more financially, so we work longer, and provide it, and have less time. Technology has changed all our lives with cell phones, computers, call waiting, conference calls, etcetera. It is much easier to serve in an organization with e-mails, etcetera.

Andrews: Are there things that haven’t changed since the conference?

Rands: I don’t know. I’m not blaming this on the conference.

Andrews: Oh, no, no, no. I was using that as kind of a benchmark.

Rands: Yes.

Andrews: Since the 1970s, let’s say.
Rands: Well, that’s kind of generational. My children now have children the age that mine were then. I can’t even say financially. Some of my children have more, a great deal more than we had, and some have less. They all feel the time pressure of time with their children. The job market used to be a little more stable, and there were health benefits and things. That’s a concern that I have for people today, is health insurance. Like after you retire, you don’t have that anymore, most people don’t. When you retire, they have to buy that privately at a time when they need that the most. And that used to be a pretty standard perk of your job, that that went with you. So I think that our health issues are going to be quite great. Nobody seems to have good solutions. That might be one of the critical issues facing families. But that’s probably not what you had in mind.

Andrews: No, I think you make a very good point. From what you’re saying, women’s issues are family issues.

Rands: Abortion is a woman’s issue, but they kill boy babies and girl babies. And men lose their children, and women lose their children. It affects everybody, except that more directly, the women. And education and abuse, all those things are people issues. It’s somehow, maybe more directly affecting women, but they need to be solved for everybody. Everybody needs to help.

Andrews: If there were some specific issues that concerned you during the Ellensburg conference, how have these issues been resolved? Or are they still being debated?

Rands: I think I was concerned about education. And I think women are more and more accepted in education. We probably have more educated women than men. I think it’s kind of gone the other way. Childcare was frightening to me then. People would come to my preschool and they didn’t care who I was to take their children, it was how long I would keep them. [laughs] Childcare is hard. If you have to work, it’s hard. And I don’t know if we’ve come to good solutions on that, but there are more and more things available. Kindergarten is full day, that type of thing. Those were my concerns then. I don’t know that, those were the issues, those were the workshops I went to.

Andrews: And, of course, abortion rights is still being debated.

Rands: Isn’t it amazing? It goes on forever. Probably never be settled.

Andrews: Is there anything else that we haven’t touched on that you think you’d like to add?

Rands: Oh, I made a few notes. I don’t know if I, I think it was, we were so underestimated as being a minority, hardly worth bothering with. Just misled, confused, not capable.
Andrews: Right now Marilyn is looking at some documents. She’s kept records, some of them from the time of the conference, from the ‘70s. She’s just taking a glance to see if there’s anything else.

Rands: In ’79, that would have been two years later, so this is still in effect. Someone invited me to come to their home and speak about Mormon women. I don’t remember why or where, but it would go back to this conference. And I had spoken about them, and talked about the things that we all have in common, but you would notice some different things would be our health code. You would identify a Mormon lady at a PTA meeting who didn’t take the coffee, but took the punch, that kind of stuff.

And some of the issues that we would face, but it’s always amazed me that early pioneers had barely settled in Utah when some women were sent back East to become doctors, because they were having women die in childbirth and so forth. And they would leave their family with their mothers, the grandma would take them, they’d go back, and then come back in the summer, and go back to school. So we were not underestimated as being incapable. I just think there are issues that face the family and all people that are not strictly women.

And I’m always concerned that when we talk about women’s issues, we like to blame them on the man, and become adversarial instead of working together to solve. And that, I realize that there are many men that cause the problems, but I do think we can work with them. I work with an interfaith council in Bellevue, of social concerns, and I just see many people of many faiths trying to solve problems, and trying to help people from homelessness to food, to emergency food, to counseling. It’s amazing how many people are trying to help. And, of course, the needs are great. But I just think we need to work together to try to do the best we can to serve. Service is the rent we pay for our space on Earth. We need to do what we can.

I do think sometimes young women, they have their family, and they’re trying to raise that family, and they’re trying to do all the things that their mother did when she was older. And the balance, I think there’s a time and a season. When your children are tiny and small, then in school, you have more time. But you can’t go back and raise the children or spend time with them. You need to give them the best you’ve got, and then later on there will be a time and a season to do more.

Andrews: So did you have anything else?

Rands: I don’t think so. I’ll think of it after you leave. [laughs]

Andrews: I’ll probably think of more questions, too. Well, thank you so very much, Marilyn. It’s been such a pleasure talking to you, and this will be a tremendous contribution.

Rands: Well, it’s been interesting to go back through the things that I have stuck away for writing in a scrapbook someday, and to update my journal. So maybe I will get to it. And if I run across the actual packet that came, I will call you, because apparently nobody’s seen one.
Andrews: Did the packet come from the church?

Rands: Yes. Church headquarters. But I don’t remember if it was from the women’s organization or what.

Andrews: And this is from Salt Lake City.

Rands: Yes. We would just, you’d just kind of say, well, it came from Salt Lake–

Andrews: That would be a wonderful contribution.

Rands: If I can find it. I’m going to start, you’ve motivated me to get more detail, and a life story to leave my kids. And I will come to that point. I must have filed it someplace. I’m not a thrower. [laughs] So it has to be someplace.

Andrews: The Mormon Church keeps such excellent records, excellent archives. If you don’t have it, they probably would.

Rands: I wonder. Well, I could call a few friends and see if they kept it. Well, anyway, I appreciate you taking the time.

Andrews: Thank you so much again. And I’ll turn off the recorder at this point.

[END INTERVIEW.]