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## **P.1. Southern Journalism: Media and the Movement**

Interview P-0010  
Lorna Chafe  
5 September 2014

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## ABSTRACT – LORNA CHAFE

Interviewee: Lorna Chafe  
Interviewer: Seth Kotch  
Interview Date: September 5, 2014  
Location: Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
Length: Approximately 45 minutes

Lorna Chafe was a founding member of Lollipop Power, Inc., a children's literature press with a progressive, feminist political bent in Chapel Hill, North Carolina in the 1970s. Chafe grew up in the northeast, attending college in Boston and living in New York City and upstate New York before moving to Chapel Hill with her husband, Bill Chafe, in 1971. In the interview, Chafe recounts the influence of her mother, whom she refers to as a "strong role model," as well as her own political awakening late in college which led to her involvement in an activist book publisher for children. Topics include: Chafe's mother, widowed at 35 and never remarried, raising her family alone after her husband's passing; reading Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, assigned as a senior in college around its initial publication and developing a feminist politics; marriage to Bill Chafe at age 22 and family planning; New York City's feminist movement in the late-1960s, which Chafe describes as "harsh"; joining a feminist consciousness raising group in Poughkeepsie, New York in 1970; founding Lollipop Power, Inc. with Paula Goldsmid, a professor of sociology at the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Sara Evans, described as a "historian in the making," among other feminist women; titles published by the press including *So Many Mommies (Two Mommies?)*, *Exactly Like Me*, and *Grownups Cry, Too*; publishing children's literature featuring lesbian mothers and persons with disabilities; the power of vocabulary and gender-neutral language; the feminist and women's community in 1970s Chapel Hill; Chafe's life after leaving the press including her graduate studies at the UNC School of Social Work, working as an abortion counselor at UNC Hospital, and other social work positions at the Interfaith Council for Social Services and Community School for People Under Six.

## **TRANSCRIPT: Lorna Chafe**

Interviewee: Lorna Chafe  
Interviewer: Seth Kotch  
Interview Date: September 5, 2014  
Location: Home of Lorna Chafe, Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
Length: Approximately 45 minutes

### **START OF INTERVIEW**

Seth Kotch: My name is Seth Kotch with the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina, and I am here in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, at the home of Lorna Chafe, a former member of Lollipop Power, Inc. The date is sometime in August, 2014. What day is today?

Lorna Chafe: It's actually September the fifth.

SK: [Laughs] September the fifth, 2014!

LC: [Laughs] Time flies!

SK: Time flies. And I will empower myself with a sip of coffee, in order to put myself on the right page.

LC: [Laughs]

SK: You've said, Lorna, in a previous interview that—I don't know if awakening is too strong a word for it, but part of your education about feminist ideas came from reading Betty Friedan in high school. Is that the case?

LC: College.

SK: In college, okay. Can you talk a little bit about that sort of early sense of learning?

LC: Yes. Thank you for reminding me. When I was a senior in college in Boston, in 1963, our professor of literature assigned to us in, I think, an American literature course Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* the minute it hit the press, I mean, the minute it hit the streets. So, we read it and discussed it in class, and it was just a total awakening for me then. I was fascinated with the ideas and thought, even though my life was very different from the life of the suburban housewives that Betty was talking about, I could see the possibility of being just stuck as a housewife, unable to do anything really interesting and, of course, having gone through college and been very much interested in ideas and in, you know, more serious topics than changing diapers and mopping floors, etcetera.

So, I remember deciding that I would have my children—every two years, I'd have a child. I thought I was going to have four children, have my children close together, relatively, definitely timed and, you know, planned. And then, after about eight years at home, I'd go back to work. And I was trained as a teacher, so I saw myself in the classroom, and that was my plan. And I was dating Bill Chafe at the time, and he was very interested and amenable to those things and very much an early feminist, I guess, before thinking about it in those terms.

And then, we actually—we married young. We married at twenty-two. We each had been out of college for a year or, in his case, two years. And we had a traditional wedding, but I thought I was so revolutionary in insisting that—I took out the word “obey” [laughs] in the wedding vows. So, we—I did not—I wasn't going to obey.

SK: [Laughs]

LC: But otherwise, it was traditional. And we led a pretty traditional life, with the roles of me doing the cooking and the housework and him being a graduate student. And there's a funny story that I remember. I used to be such a dutiful, good housewife, and a good provider for him. I would get up at probably six-thirty to get ready to drive from New York City to the suburbs, where I taught school, but I would make sure I cut his grapefruit for him, so that when he got up at about nine, [laughs]—

SK: [Laughs]

LC: He would have his breakfast. And I would make cookies for him to take in and things like that. [Laughs] So, so much for Betty Friedan!

SK: [Laughs] Yeah, right!

LC: [Laughs]

SK: So, you sort of got at a question that I had, which was what it was like to read about Friedan's critique of this very domestic life, sort of before you had experienced it yourself.

LC: Um-hmm. [Clears throat]

SK: Did you have women in your life who you saw leading the kind of life that you either wanted to emulate or avoid?

LC: No, I really wasn't thinking about that that much. I had—my mother was unusual in that she was a very strong—she still is—a very strong-minded, independent person. She had been widowed very, very young, at the age of thirty-five, and not remarried. And she was doing just fine taking care of our family and providing for us, so she was a good model in that sense.

But it was more the beginnings of the whole sense of change, [05:00] social change, that was happening in the [19]60s. And I was swept along with that current. I was very interested in all the social change: civil rights, the hippies and the Yippies, and all of that caught my fancy, really, and the feminist movement coming right along with it. So, I started to read the *Notes from the Second Year*, which was—I never saw the *Notes from the First Year*, but that was a feminist publication in New York that was incredibly good and powerful.

And by that time—this was the late [19]60s, probably [19]69, I'm going to guess—by that time, I *was* feeling somewhat oppressed and I was feeling like, you know, I was doing too much of the work. And, also, we had our first child in 1968, the end of 1968. And I was definitely doing that domestic thing of staying home, by choice, wanted to do it, stopped working, stopped teaching, and stayed home. And I was feeling trapped. I definitely was. I didn't have enough social life. I couldn't, you know, couldn't—didn't have enough money to afford the help to get out and do all kinds of things. So, it meant much more to me at that point.

And reading those *Notes from the Second Year*, there was an article—oh, was it Letty Cottin Pogrebin? I don't know who it was, but either the title or the theme of it was “Click”. And you read a scenario where a woman is doing all the usual things, and something clicks in her mind, and she realizes, “Wait a second. This isn't fair. This isn't right.” And so, that kind of led to a whole analysis of, okay, let's switch the roles and put the man in the situation that the woman is facing. What would be the outcome? But that was very important to me.

So, we moved to—I did not get involved in the Women’s Movement in New York City, because it was harsh. It was very, very confrontational. People were tearing each other apart in front of each other. They were having consciousness-raising groups and they were criticizing each other, and that was the way to become, you know, purer in feminism. And I didn’t want any part of that so I stayed away from it, but I stayed reading in it.

And here comes our man to—.

SK: We’ll just pause for a minute.

LC: Okay. [Answers door] Hi! How are you?

Male: I’m alright.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

SK: So, you were saying that, I guess, the consciousness-raising groups or group that you were aware of in New York were all about tearing you apart before you put yourself back together, perhaps?

LC: Yeah, um-hmm.

SK: So, was this when Bill was at Vassar?

LC: This was when he was finishing at Columbia.

SK: Okay.

LC: So, we moved to Poughkeepsie, New York, or rather to the countryside near there, in 1970, [clears throat] in the summer of 1970. And I knew that I was interested in joining a feminist group then, a consciousness-raising group, and at Vassar, there were—there were students who were already doing that and who were willing to—there was one person who would start the groups. So, I joined a newly-formed group of—actually, they

were maybe one or two faculty women, and the others were spouses of various faculty or IBM workers. So, we did consciousness-raising. And then, after about six or eight months of that, very intensive and wonderful, then we began to be activists and we chose abortion rights as our activism.

And then, we were moving down here in [19]71, just one year at Vassar, and when we came down to look for a house, it just so happened that one house that we looked at to buy or to rent had cartoons up on the wall, and it was *Martin's Father*, the illustrations for *Martin's Father*. And I looked at them and I understood immediately what that was and I said, "Okay, that's for me. That's what I'm going to do when I'm here." So, I joined immediately.

SK: Um-hmm. What's interesting to me about that is that *Martin's Father* is very much in line with the [10:00] un-sexist, anti-sexist mission of Lollipop Power.

LC: Right.

SK: But there are no women in that book. [Laughs]

LC: Um-hmm.

SK: So, it's not on the nose, as far as feminism goes.

LC: Um-hmm.

SK: And yet, it still captured your fancy.

LC: Well, it was totally on the nose, in that we understood that men had to come along. We were not separating ourselves from the lives of family and men, etcetera. We totally understood that this was a revolution, and this was, you know, men were going to be involved in it, and this was an example. And a man can be a parent and do it alone. So, I thought it was.



And you're right. I mean, we talked about nonsexist. That's what was on the back of every book. We were a nonsexist collective.

SK: Right. So, was it as easy as just calling them up and saying, "Hey, I'm in?"

LC: Yeah. [Laughs]

SK: [Laughs] They were eager for help.

LC: I'm not sure why but—it was a matter of working. You know, we weeded ourselves out, because it was a once-a-week meeting at each other's homes, and we would—by that time they had been in operation over a year.

SK: Um-hmm.

LC: And they were just in the process of printing their first book. And you may know this, but they—one of the members of Lollipop Power knew somebody who was in publishing in New York, and they went up and liberated the press overnight and printed it in New York City. [Laughs]

SK: [Laughs] Nice.

LC: So, that was funny.

SK: Were—you were married at the time. Were there other members of the press who were married?

LC: Yeah, I would say the majority were married.

SK: And did husbands participate in meetings?

LC: No.

SK: Or were they around at all?

LC: No. They were taking care of the kids and they were supportive, very definitely. In fact, we were gone a lot. I was gone a lot during those years. We had two

children by that time. And Bill was writing his dissertation on the history of women in America since 19—since the Second World War, but—yeah. And so, I was living out what he was writing about, so he certainly was supportive.

And so, there was a—there were lots of consciousness-raising groups in town. And one of them was mostly women who lived right down the street on Tinkerbell, and they decided to hold a town meeting sometime in the mid—well, probably [19]73, maybe, or [19]74. And they invited all the other feminist groups in town to participate. And the husbands were asked to do all the childcare, and they did. So, there was a room for kids, and, you know, the husbands were in there. And maybe some of them participated in the workshops and the sessions, etcetera. But that was one instance where the men came together.

SK: So, did you have a sense of a feminist community or a women's community when your first came to Chapel Hill in 1971?

LC: Yes. I also joined a consciousness-raising group here. And it was an interesting mix of older and younger women of lots of different backgrounds, and I found that to be very helpful, too. So, I was going out a couple of times a week just with those two meetings. And then, sometime a year or two later, I decided to form a consciousness-raising coordinating collective. And, with two other women, we decided to try to help start other consciousness-raising groups and to make ourselves available to do that, to get them going, help them with reading, help them understand the form and the promise you make to each other for confidentiality and that kind of thing. So, we did that for at least a year, if not two years. So, that was three nights a week I was out doing this, and I definitely felt a feminist community. [Clears throat]

SK: Yeah. In the [19]70s, certainly, there's a real kind of flowering of print culture, if that's the right phrase, around women's activism and around feminism.

LC: Right.

SK: There must have been a lot to read. [Laughs]

LC: There was.

SK: Is that right?

LC: Um-hmm. *Sisterhood Is Powerful* was one of the early books that really helped me move along in that way. *Ms.* magazine formed right then.

SK: Um-hmm.

LC: And, ironically, they wrote [15:00] to Lollipop Power and asked us if we'd be in the first issue. And because they wouldn't give us absolute final control over the final product, we said, "No." [Laughs]

SK: [Laughs]

LC: [Laughs] So, we were not.

SK: [Laughs] Right.

LC: Even though we knew about Gloria Steinem and we knew some of the women's names, we declined. [Laughs]

SK: Yeah. There's an article that was published, I think a couple of years ago, in *New York* magazine about the creation of *Ms.* magazine. You might be interested if you haven't seen it already.

LC: I have not.

SK: It's written by somebody whose last name is Pogrebin, but it's—I'll send you a link. It's quite interesting.

LC: Maybe I did see it. Letty Cottin Pogrebin was one of the founders.

SK: Yeah, I think this is—the author is Abigail, so it might be a relative or daughter or sister or something like that.

LC: Could be. Very likely, yeah.

SK: So, I'm curious a little bit about what was going on at these Lollipop Power meetings and sort of what your—the kind of daily or nightly or whatever it was, the nitty-grittiness, sort of day-to-day kind of existence of the press. Were you soliciting authors, receiving offers, discussing subjects that you wanted to publish books on, or was it more of a “let's see what comes in” kind of process?

LC: All of that, actually. We certainly tried to get our own selves to do writing and illustrating. I never did. I'm not sure why I never did, but I decided I wasn't going to. But by the time I joined, there were already, I'm going to say, a couple dozen manuscripts every week in the mail, and it became many dozens every week.

SK: Wow.

LC: So, we would each take home a pile of manuscripts to read, and that was our homework, just to decide which ones to let the others look at. And then, it was just the work of, “Okay, this is the one we're going to do. What do we think of it?” Rough outlines, and then, maybe one of us would take each one and polish it and submit it back to the group for approval. We were—I think we were pretty tough, you know, editors, and we were very open about what we thought.

SK: Yeah, that really interested me when I saw some editorial notes on some of these manuscripts, the way in which a eighteen-page children's book can inspire pages of

editorial conversation, not only among the members of the collective, but also between the author and a representative of the collective.

LC: Yeah.

SK: One struck me in particular. There's a—I'm sorry to say I don't remember the title of the book, but it's about a girl who has more than one Mommy.

LC: Yes.

SK: Maybe it's called *So Many Mommies*, or something like that.

LS: Um-hmm.

SK: She's made fun of at school and she tells people this. And then, all of her mothers show up when she has a crisis. She dislocates her shoulder, I think, on the playground.

LC: Uh-huh.

SK: And there's a lot of writing about the nature of an elbow dislocation or a shoulder dislocation and how to represent it in the illustration and in the text.

LC: Uh-huh!

SK: It was kind of an incredible attention to detail.

LC: Yeah, that's the way we were. [Laughs]

SK: Did any of you have backgrounds in children's book publishing?

LC: I don't think so. I think we were total neophytes at it. And we had varying backgrounds. We had Paula Goldsmid, who was a sociology professor, or was she in the School of Social Work, maybe? And Sara Evans, who was a historian in the making. And people who had wonderful writing talent themselves, but usually in another direction. But, you know, they allowed their creative selves to come through.

Yeah, and we were—I'm afraid to use this phrase, for lack of a better one, but we were very politically correct. We wanted to get the feminist message out there, you know, as we saw it should be. We were teaching as we had fun with it. So we discussed every little detail, for sure. [Laughs]

SK: Yeah. I believe the group operated as a collective; that is to say, it was egalitarian. Am I right in that belief?

LC: Right, um-hmm.

SK: Was there a way of assigning—I don't want to say hierarchy but sort of roles within the group per project, or generally?

LC: I think we rotated things. That was basically it, [20:00] took turns. We finally had to get more organized and we hired one of us to be in charge of all the incoming mail. And eventually we got our own printing press. We each—.

SK: That may have been around 1975-ish?

LC: Earlier than that.

SK: Okay.

LC: I would say [19]74, maybe, but I'm just guessing.

SK: Sure.

LC: But at that point we realized that our volume was such and our income was good enough so that we could—.

SK: Right.

LC: Well, we couldn't afford to. We each coughed up about five hundred dollars. Each woman tried to do that, more or less, according to ability, and loaned it to the Press.

SK: Okay.

LC: So, and we got paid back in reasonable time. So, yeah, there were some kinds of tasks, appropriations, that just seemed to have to be done. And I left Lollipop Power in 1975 to go to work, actually. I think I stayed in it while I was in graduate school somehow. Maybe not. Maybe I had quit earlier. Maybe I had quit in [19]73 or [19]74. I think actually I did, because going to graduate school and having two young children was pretty much. I needed to be reading and writing papers.

SK: Yeah. Three jobs is enough (21:35). [Laughs]

LC: Right. [Laughs] But I was thrilled to know that it was ongoing and lasted for quite a few years, really.

SK: Right, which I feel makes it an exception, perhaps, among a kind of activist startup press. I mean, it was actually making money. It was selling a lot of books.

LC: Um-hmm. Well, one of the principles that we had was to make our books affordable. They were one dollar apiece.

SK: Um-hmm.

LC: And we chose materials that were inexpensive—not very long-lasting, I’m sorry to say—but, you know, at first, so that people could afford them. And that was our idea, is get it out there as much as we can.

SK: Right. Did you have a sense of how people here in North Carolina or Southerners responded to these books?

LC: I think that they were gentle enough that they were not that provocative.

SK: Um-hmm.

LC: I think something like *Martin’s Father* was eye-opening: “Yeah, this can actually happen!” *Grownups Cry, Too*, which I’m looking at, it touched things that were

within people, and they could say, “That’s really true.” So, I don’t remember any opposition. I don’t remember really any criticism. Chapel Hill and Durham and Carrboro are not places that you would hear that kind of thing.

SK: Um-hmm. Did you understand your project as being—as having a sort of regional identity of any kind? Was it about the South, or was it just about American women and American families?

LC: American. It was definitely American. We were from all regions. We were, I would say, mostly not Southerners.

SK: Right.

LC: So, yeah.

SK: And how did your work or your books fit into that larger picture of American feminism? I know that, for instance, *Ms.* magazine was aware of you. I know that there was a concerted effort going in both directions to make sure that the press was listed in publications that described—women’s oriented publications and things of that nature.

LC: Um-hmm.

SK: And there were lists that must have been circulating.

LC: Um-hmm.

SK: Do you recall the depth or sort of style of connection with other print publications, other publishing houses, like the Feminist Press or things of that nature?

LC: I honestly do not remember. But I think we were all kind of aware of these things and were [clears throat] interested in them and reading them and wanted to have ourselves out there. So.

SK: Sure.



LC: It was just a natural process.

SK: Yeah. What about other media in the area? Did you listen to the radio and read local papers and things like that?

LC: To a certain degree, yes. I listened to the radio. NPR came on just as we—it began just as we [phone rings]—pardon me.

SK: Sure.

LC: I'll get that. [Gets up to answer phone]

[Recording stops and then resumes]

SK: So, you were just saying that NPR had just started.

LC: Yes. So, I loved the programs there. And our local UNC Radio had terrific programs. [25:00] I loved the jazz. And I guess I probably read the *News and Observer* back then. And I'm trying to think what other—I certainly read the *Feminary*. We mentioned that in corresponding a little bit. So, I was aware of what was going on in the immediate area in the Feminist Movement.

SK: It's hard for me to imagine that anyone would criticize these children's books. [Laughs]

LC: Um-hmm.

SK: But were you in touch with feminists who might have thought they were too gentle?

LC: I don't remember that. I think we were—even though they were gentle, we were just enough on the cutting edge. We were aware, including lesbian moms and people with differing abilities, you know, the whole “abled-ness” movement, we were

kind of on the cutting edge of that, too. So, I think we managed to be sensitive enough to, you know, to open our minds to different ways of thinking about things.

SK: And did you find that the movement here in Chapel Hill in the press reflected that kind of diversity that you were advocating?

LC: I would say no. I would say it was a slow process, and it's still kind of—  
[laughs] still happening, still unfolding.

SK: Yeah, yeah.

LC: So, you know, it was not smooth and easy in every sense of the word. There was certainly disagreement among our groups, among our group, among our members, but we really had the ideal of resolving conflict in a communitarian way, I guess you could say. So, [beep of camera/recorder?] it was a very exciting movement to be a part of.

SK: Yeah, I bet.

LC: Yeah.

SK: Do you recall any of those disagreements? I'm curious just because when you look at a polished product, you never see the sort of turmoil [laughs] that might have led to its publication.

LC: Yeah.

SK: And I think children's books may be especially deceptive in that way, because they are—or at least in this case, they are gentle and they are positive—.

LC: Right.

SK: Even if there is conflict in them.

LC: Um-hmm. I wish I could say I did. If I pored over notes, which I didn't take the time to do—but I know we did have disagreements. And there were personality conflicts, certainly.

SK: Sure.

LC: Um.

SK: Do you have books that you recall as either being fun to work on, difficult to work on, or just that are sort of favorites that you feel proud of?

LC: I love *Exactly Like Me*. I think it's just marvelous. And the copy that I have there—it's probably on the very bottom.

SK: Um-hmm.

LC: It's a very sassy—.

SK: I haven't read this one.

LC: Very sassy little girl.

SK: Oh, I've read this! Yeah, okay!

LC: Yeah.

SK: Yeah. And so, this is a book that's representing a girl who is—how do we put it? She's not interested in traditional women's roles at all.

LC: Right!

SK: It's celebrating her aspirations and her body and her projects.

LC: Yes, right. And she, unlike most little girls, *is* aware of what women have done in the past and she wants to be like *those* women, you know, not stuck in some typical traditional role. So.

SK: Um-hmm. One of the things that struck me about this book is that one of the roles that she points out as being traditional is teacher.

LC: This is true.

SK: Right?

LC: Yeah.

SK: And you had mentioned that, despite your feminist politics, you had for some time lived a fairly quote-unquote “traditional” life with Bill.

LC: Um-hmm.

SK: Was that—did that sense of yourself change over the course of your time at Lollipop Power? I’m not saying that that particular experience would have changed it, but you had said that by the time you arrived in Chapel Hill, it was starting to become a little bit—you were starting to become a little bit—I don’t recall the exact word you used, but maybe overwhelmed or trapped by the routines or something like that.

LC: That was actually in New York City.

SK: That was in New York, okay.

LC: Very early, when we had—when I had our first child, and that’s when I realized I did need to be liberated. I really did need to change the way things were happening. [30:00]

SK: Um-hmm.

LC: So, we went through—Bill and I went through the process of change, really, the year that he was at Vassar and I was in that first consciousness-raising meeting and going through, you know, talking about personal lives and balance of tasks at home and

power in a relationship. So, that's when that changed around. By the time we got here, we had already remade our lives to a great degree—.

SK: Interesting.

LC: In our power balance and everything.

SK: Yeah.

LC: So, the Women's Movement was absolutely essential. I don't think I—I don't know if I would have done it alone. But to have other friends who were doing it at the same time and rethinking everything—I do remember, you know, I was very much radicalized. I have gone backwards into more traditional modes, but I was very radicalized in every kind of—use of language. That was one of the things we discussed a lot in the book process: using feminist language. And we evolved to thinking of ourselves as feminists, as a positive force, rather than just non-sexist, but rather promoting a feminist way of thinking.

SK: Right.

LC: You know. One of the members of the consciousness-raising group in Chapel Hill—I'm trying to remember this funny story. She drove a mail truck. [Laughs] That was her vehicle of choice. It was an old mail truck, but she called it her female truck. [Laughs]

SK: Right. [Laughs] That's cool.

LC: But we really did kind of cleanse our own language and think about ways of saying things: "mail carrier", you know.

SK: Right.

LC: The whole thing, the whole nine yards.

SK: Yeah.

Male: I don't mean to interrupt you. I'll just get a signature.

LC: You sure can. Does everything look okay?

Male: Yes ma'am.

LC: Good. Alright.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

SK: So, you were just saying that language became important, or was important, and you were advocating at the least a gender-neutral style of phrasing: mail carrier, firefighter, things of that nature.

LC: Right, exactly, yeah.

SK: Was that a sort of evolution from early books that you published early in your time there to books that were published closer to leaving? I guess I'm trying to sort of think about how things may have changed.

LC: I think we understood that, the importance of language, from the very beginning.

SK: Sure.

LC: But I remember it as a personal evolution, going through my own vocabulary and questioning everything. I also remember a time when I personally felt like I needed to change my mode of dress and I became more, I would have to say, masculine in the clothes that I chose. No more frilly stuff, you know. Pink is out, [laughs] which is funny about Code Pink, which is, you know, totally loud pink! [Laughs]

SK: [Laughs]

LC: So, and there's something else that I went through personally, in terms of—oh, yeah! I mean, I would not allow any man to open a door for me. I would open doors for men, you know, just reversing the roles and challenging all of the mores that suggest—I didn't wear an engagement ring. I took my engagement ring off for years and years, because having a diamond seemed to be very, you know, corrupt. So, I did go through a very serious self-study and change of many, many personal habits.

And we brought up our children, as very much as we could, to be open to every possibility, so that our son could cry, and he could wear pretty clothes and he could play with anything he wanted to. And our daughter could be strong and could, you know, do—in other words, all those roles, all those possibilities, were open to both kids. And, you know, as much as one can in a world where everybody doesn't agree with you, we challenged those norms in the community.

SK: Um-hmm. It feels like a lot of the Lollipop Power books are just about helping kids feel normal, even if they're non-traditional.

LC: Yeah, um-hmm.

SK: And sort of accepting themselves and demonstrating, [35:00] illustrating, quite literally, how parents can be loving and be loved by children, too.

LC: Um-hmm.

SK: One of the more interesting books involves a girl whose mother's girlfriend leaves her.

LC: Um-hmm.

SK: And they've ended a romantic relationship, which is particularly interesting now, with the question of marriage and same-sex marriage.

LC: Right, um-hmm.

SK: And how that book would be written now might be a little different, just in terms of the relationship between the grownups.

LC: Yeah, um-hmm.

SK: But it's very interesting, because the woman's girlfriend or partner only appears very briefly in the book, sort of towards the end as they represent a little bit of their relationship. But she's gone at the beginning, and the mother is struggling but not communicating with her daughter. And it's very touching, because it gives the daughter a lot of autonomy in how she deals with an emotional crisis and then helps the mother deal with it.

LC: Um-hmm. That's great.

SK: I just found it—.

LC: I don't remember that book. There was *Two Mommies*. They were doing *Two Mommies* right when I left Lollipop Power. Do you think that might have been it? Or was there another one along the way?

SK: That could have been it, absolutely. The title eludes me at the moment. But certainly that's how the girl understood these two people in her life.

LC: Yeah.

SK: Yeah.

LC: That's wonderful. I love what you're saying about that. So, kids were empowered in our books, and it was understood that they could figure things out and they could, you know, they could manage, they could handle stuff.

SK: Um-hmm. Did you get a paycheck? [Laughs]



LC: It was all-volunteer.

SK: All-volunteer?

LC: Yeah. One person got a paycheck eventually, the person—we decided there was at least a halftime job that needed to be done, and none of us had the time to do it. So, that's the only time that I remember. And then, maybe after my time, when we had our own printing press and our own office, and it was much more of a business in that sense, I'm sure that the printer, you know, was paid.

SK: Sure. So, you left, you said, in 1974 or [197]5, perhaps?

LC: Probably. It was probably [19]74. It might have even been [19]73, because I started in [19]73 in graduate school.

SK: And you wanted to get a master's in social work, is that right?

LC: Social work, yeah.

SK: And then, you taught at or led the School for Children Under Six?

LC: Not until a lot later.

SK: Oh, okay.

LC: In [19]86, end of [19]86 through early [19]89.

SK: Okay. And what were you doing between leaving Lollipop Power and working at that school?

LC: My first job as a social worker was as an abortion counselor at UNC Hospital. I did that for almost three years and then came back and, let's see, we went away for a while. I worked at Interfaith Council for Social Services as a social worker for individuals and families for five years. And then, I was a psychiatric social worker at a

school up in Henderson. Then I came back and directed the Community School for People Under Six.

SK: Okay. I love that phrase, “people under six”. [Laughs]

LC: Yes.

SK: So you maintained your interest in reproductive rights that you had worked on when you were still in New York?

LC: For sure. I got very, very active with NARAL in about 1980, I would say. And eventually—well, right away, I think I was asked to come onto the state board of NARAL. And we also had a local group, so I was really very much involved with abortion rights for ten or fifteen years, I think.

SK: Um-hmm. Did you remain connected to Lollipop Power at all?

LC: I did not. I had a few friends that I would see but, no, I didn’t.

SK: I’m curious just about if you recall anything about sort of your departure. How did you explain to your—I mean, I understand, you told me you had [laughs] a lot going on in your life.

LC: Yeah, yeah.

SK: Did you recall anything about what that conversation was like with your fellow workers there?

LC: There was one person who said, “I’m doing an awful lot, too. You can keep coming.” And I said, “No, I can’t.” [Laughs] And she was the only one who said, “You shouldn’t be quitting.”

SK: Um-hmm.

LC: But I said, “I’m going to quit.” [Laughs]

SK: I'm curious generally about activist work and how people who are activists or have done that kind of work [40:00] measure the impact of it. Do you think about what effect Lollipop Power may have had or is having or had? Is that something that you've considered? And if so, how does one measure the impact of that kind of work?

LC: Well, the obvious way is to look at children's literature today and see that we don't need Lollipop Power anymore. [Laughs]

SK: [Laughs]

LC: We got into the consciousness of authors and of the public. I'm sure we didn't do it singlehandedly by any means, but it's just wonderful to see how many books are written today that do have that consciousness.

SK: Yeah, yeah.

LC: Not that everything—my God, everything is not solved! Oh, I'm horrified!

Another thing we did in Lollipop Power: We had a speakers' bureau. And we would go out to anybody who wanted us to come and present—at a PTA meeting or at any kind of gathering of people who were interested in what were we doing and what was it all about. So, I went out, and Bill went out with me to a couple of things, and that had lasting effect. I remember the woman who was head of the Durham Daycare Council was at one of those meetings, and that was seminal for her understanding of feminism and of how to help children and teachers, you know, evolve to a different way of behaving. So, we did the speakers' bureau.

There was a lot of outreach. There was a lot of effort to get our message out there. I guess I was going to say something negative. I'm horrified at the pink—every girl has to be a princess and wear pink, so that the sexism is horrendous. We did a lot about toys.

We did articles. We did talks about children's toys and trying to avoid sexist separation of kids' toys.

SK: Yeah, yeah.

LC: So, it was a *big* effort to change kids' lives.

SK: Yeah.

LC: And I'm horrified, really. [Laughs]

SK: [Laughs] I've had occasions of—be doing shopping for young people in my life recently, and it's definitely color coded. I mean, if you go to Target, there's the blue aisle and the pink aisle. There is the green aisle, too, [laughs], the green and the yellow aisle, right?

LC: Yeah, yeah, that's good.

SK: So, you still have to make a choice, but maybe there's three choices rather than two.

LC: Right.

SK: You know, I think of the sort of, you know, culprits in that kind of representation of girls and boys—boys are soldiers, girls are princesses—I guess one of the biggest villains has to be Disney.

LC: Oh, yeah.

SK: But even Disney lately, it seems, in a small way at least, has been realizing that change is happening. I guess there's been a couple of movies recently about other—there's a princess, but she doesn't want to be one, and she's a warrior. [Laughs] Right? So, so that's trying to have it both ways, maybe!

LC: Well, the princess-warrior thing is big, too, the flying princess-warriors.

SK: Yeah.

LC: I don't go to those movies, so I'm not that familiar with it, and our grandchildren don't go to those movies either. [Laughs] They absorb it. So, actually, I think it really did take, in terms of our own family. Our kids did not rebel against this. They did absorb it and they did agree with it. And our son has raised his kids, and his wife agrees one hundred percent, with the importance of cutting out the sex stereotypes as much as you can and being free to explore anything.

SK: Um-hmm. So, there's a very local impact there. [Laughs]

LC: Yeah, yes! Hallelujah! [Laughs]

SK: [Laughs] Right. I'm just going to quickly make sure that we're not running over. So, sort of thinking back on this enterprise generally, do you remember when Lollipop Power closed its doors?

LC: I heard about it.

SK: You said you made a fairly clean break.

LC: Yeah. I heard about it, with regret, but with great pride that they'd lasted that long. I think it was only about ten years ago, or maybe closer to fourteen or so. I'm not sure.

SK: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

LC: Yeah.

SK: Is there anything else that I should have asked you?

LC: [Laughs] No, you've done a wonderful job.

SK: [Laughs] Thank you very much. Well, I really appreciate you taking the time, and I learned a lot. Thank you.

LC: Thank you very much. I enjoyed it.

SK: Good.

LC: Yeah.

[Recording ends at 44:56]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Sally C. Council