

Interview

with

SUZY POST

June 23, 2006

By Sarah Thuesen

Transcribed by Emily Baran

The Southern Oral History Program  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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## TRANSCRIPT—SUZANNE WOLFF POST

Interviewee: Suzy Post

Interviewer: Sarah Thuesen

Interview date: June 23, 2006

Location: Post's home -- Louisville, KY

Length: 1 disc, approximately 1 hour and 48 minutes

ST: Today is June twenty-third, 2006 and I am at the home of Suzy Post in Louisville, Kentucky. My name is Sarah Thuesen and I am conducting this interview for the Southern Oral History Program, our Long Civil Rights Movement project. Thanks so much for sitting down with me today. Since you have talked with us before about some of your earlier activism, particularly regarding the school desegregation component of your activism, I thought we would start more kind of in the mid-70s and go from there. First I wanted you to help me set the scene for what was going on in Louisville at that time. In the mid-70s, you of course had had the open housing legislation passed. You'd had a school deseg plan put in place, which you were really at the center of. Was there any moment during those years where you felt like the civil rights movement was over? What was your general sense of where things were headed?

SP: Well, those of us, I think, who were wrapped up in school desegregation couldn't think that it was over, because that lawsuit was the beginning of a struggle that continues to this day and this is 2006. The struggle has been to try and get for black kids in the public schools an equitable educational opportunity and to try and get for black kids an educational opportunity that didn't involve suspensions, multiple suspensions, or didn't involve disproportionate

corporal punishment. So that even though we desegregated the buildings in 1975, we really did not do anything to dismantle racism. So no, I never thought the civil rights movement was dead and I used my experience with the school desegregation in Jefferson County as a platform from which to launch a Title IX monitoring project of that same system.

I was employed at that time by the Louisville and Jefferson County Human Relations Commission and I had started that job on the very first day the schools were ordered to desegregate. I came to work. I was hired to be the women's rights director, but the agency was so small, I turned out to be the only one in this five-person agency who had any knowledge of what was supposed to be happening in the schools. So from the moment I walked in the door, after seeing every Louisville policeman lined up in the parking lot across the street from our office, because the police department was right across the street, in riot gear, which was one of the most chilling sights I ever saw in Louisville, from the moment I walked in that door, it was I, it had to be me, who was going to keep an eye on the schools to make sure that the schools were adhering to the court order and to see where there were violations, or I perceived violations of the deseg order, and they were numerous.

I spent every other Tuesday night at the Jefferson County Board of Education, which was their regular meeting night. So it was me and the pro-deseg people and the Klan and the Save Our Community School people. I mean, there would be as many as two hundred people jammed into that building. And I've always said that one of the healthiest byproducts of the lawsuit was the surge of community interest in how our public schools were being operated. And that went on for a couple years that you had all these raggle-taggle gypsy groups, the liberals from the east end, the reactionaries from the south end, the Klan from out there, the

Save Our Community School people. I mean, we were all out there. We got to know each other. It was really fascinating.

But I was there specifically to raise issues about violations, what I perceived to be violations of an order that was supposed to result in equitable delivery of programs to white and black kids. Almost from the very beginning, disproportionate suspensions was like in your face. So I was out there for a couple years watching what they were doing and in the process, I started to realize that whatever it was they were doing bad for black kids, they were doing bad for girls, for female students. I had become aware of a project that the National Organization of Women had got funding for called the PEER Project—Project for Equal Educational Resources or some such. The PEER Project had devised questionnaires to be used by monitors in schools to determine the degree to which Title IX was being complied with. Now Title IX, it's sort of interesting the way all this interacted. The school desegregation lawsuit was filed in '72. It wasn't effective until Judge Gordon demanded that it happen in September—I think it was September or maybe it was August—of '75. Title IX, which was the federal law saying that any educational institution receiving federal financial assistance had to provide equal opportunities to girls and boys, it annoys me to this very day, thirty years later, that newspapers and other groups refer to Title IX as if it only related to athletics. Title IX relates to everything, counseling, curriculum, opportunities for teachers, everything.

ST: What sort of violations of Title IX with regard to gender were you seeing?

SP: I'm about to tell you.

ST: Oh okay, good.

SP: Because it's one of the high points of my life. It was just so joyful. This is all by way of saying to you that in the course of being in the school building so long, something in me

gave birth to this notion that they're doing this to black kids, but what are we doing to girls? I somehow became aware of the NOW PEER Project. So I wrote to NOW or maybe I went up there. I know I went up there a couple of times to Washington. At any rate, I got copies of their survey instruments and they had survey instruments for everybody, for students, for teachers, for principals, for coaches, for parents, for vocational education teachers, for assistant principals, for school board members, for the superintendent of the school system. I mean, there were twelve or thirteen different instruments. I looked at them and I thought, "Boy, this is really cool if I could get people to go into the schools and could get them to use these instruments to find out what this school system is doing vis-a-vis its female population." And I was young, let's don't forget. I was much younger and I had an enormous amount of energy and an enormous amount of rage in terms of inequities of any kind.

At the same time I'm sort of watching the school system for violations on the basis of race, I proceeded to go out into the community and recruit volunteers who would work with me and with the Human Relations Commission and go into the schools with these questionnaires and get answers. So I went to the National Council of Jewish Women. I went to the League of Women Voters. I went to church women's groups. I went to any organized woman's group I could think of and I announced at their meetings that we needed to know how our schools were treating our girls and I needed volunteers in order to implement this survey. So I ended up with about thirty different volunteers.

One of the assistant principals—no, he was assistant superintendent of the school system, a friend of mine, an African-American friend of mine, told me to call a woman who worked at the Race and Sex Desegregation Center in Florida. She had done some training for him. Her name was Dr. Norma Mertz and I called and she came up for free. I had these

volunteers. I had a massive meeting. I think I had food, but I'm not sure. Being a Jewish mother, I probably did. I can't remember exactly. We had one of the meeting training sessions over at the League of Women Voters building. I can't remember where we had the second one, but we did have two different trainings. We took these women and Norma was wonderful. She told them very explicitly what Title IX allowed and what it didn't allow. And these are women who had never heard of the thing, you know? Really, in '75, very few people had. So she's teaching them about a law that had been enacted, it was passed in '72 and became effective in '75, that had become enacted, that could be a great tool for us women to use to secure for us women the same kind of equitable education that guys got, supposedly.

After doing this training twice in two different groups and we were very clear in talking to these women that if we found violations in the schools, that we would write a letter to the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, which had enforcement authority, so that we had a tool that we could use against the schools if they were violating Title IX. So the next thing I had to do was get permission from the school system to let these people in. The only reason I was able to get that was because the acting superintendent of the Jefferson County school system, a man named Dave DeRuzzo, had been brought in to sort of clean up the school system. He was sort of a hatchet man and he saw me as being a principle catalyst in the racial change in the school system. He believed that he better do this. And the associate superintendent who had drafted the school desegregation plan was a man named Frank Rapley and he was a friend of mine. So I called him and I said, "Frank, I want to get these volunteers in the public schools to see where we stand on sex equity." He said, "Well, send me the instruments and I'll look them over." So I sent them the whole thing and he said, "Okay,"

which was truly amazing. If the system hadn't been in such a state of fluid flux because of deseg, I never would have gotten them into there. There is no way.

We turned them loose and they usually went in teams and they interviewed principals, coaches, students, parents, all these different interest groups. Then we sent a second group in. We had two groups. At the end of the period of time that it took for these two groups to do these surveys, I took the surveys and with a friend a mine, who worked for the American Friends Service Committee, a little office here monitoring schools, and she was a very fastidious woman.

ST: Who was that?

SP: Her name was Marian Keyes and she's now in West Virginia, a wonderful woman. She was very precise. I did everything half-assed and slapdash. I wanted the results and I was always ahead of myself and I'm not a careful person. I don't balance my checkbook. I don't even know what I've got in the bank most of the time. I go to an ATM machine to see. I mean, I hate that kind of stuff. I'm a big brush stroke kind of person and I can only do what I can do when I'm working with somebody like Marian, who crosses the t's and the dots on the i's. So when we get all these results back, she and I got together and we had to read every one of these questionnaires that our volunteers turned on. After we read it and compiled the results, we found twenty-eight violations of Title IX. After finding that, I drafted a letter to the Office of Civil Rights in Atlanta alleging that the Jefferson County Board of Education was in massive violation of Title IX and I listed every one of the violations. Is this interesting to you? Does this help?

ST: Yeah.



SP: Having gotten my letter, they contacted me and the Board of Education and said that they were sending up a team to look into the schools to see if they could substantiate our claim of violation. They sent up six people who were here for one week fanning out and going into the schools and checking these. The head of the team and I just love this, I just love this, the head of the team for OCR was a woman named Marge Justice. She was blonde and beautiful and buxom. It was just perfect. So they go back to Atlanta after they do this on-site and it wasn't very long, about a month later, the Board of Education and I got a letter. They substantiated twenty-seven of the twenty-eight violations. The one that they didn't substantiate, which I think was a mistake, I alleged that corporal punishment was used on the boys and not on the girls. They didn't consider that a violation. I don't know what it is. It's chivalry dies hard. I mean, get rid of corporal punishment.

So when all that happened, there was really—oh what year was this? This must have been in '77. So the schools are embroiled in deseg and now they're going to be embroiled in Title IX. Marge comes up to meet with the administration in the board room at headquarters. The board room had this huge long table as board rooms want. Every damned principal and assistant principal and superintendent is sitting around this table. Of course, in those days, to be a superintendent, you had to be a coach. All the superintendents had been coaches. So they go through this letter issue by issue and say, "Well, okay. We'll try and do something about that." They were resistant, but they weren't passionately resistant until we get to my complaint that the girls' basketball practice was at mealtime. No, the girls' games were at mealtime and the boys' games were after dinner, which meant that the girls' games had fewer attendees than the boys' games had. All hell broke loose when she starts telling them they have to alternate. I mean, it was like the world is going to end next Wednesday. They were visibly shaken when



she told them that that's what they had to do. There were a couple more things like that that were athletically-inclined.

[conversation breaks off as phone rings]

SP: Getting back to Title IX, every issue involving athletics just freaked them out. Spending the same amount of money on trophies, "Oh my God, we can't do that. We don't have enough money." That was crazy. Uniforms, "Oh my God, we can't do that." Travel by bus instead of getting their parents to get them to the game, "Oh my God, we can't do that." Every single thing that touched on athletics was like poison. She just sat there and she was just totally unruffled: "Well, you have to do that. This school system gets x amount of millions of dollars in federal financial assistance and you don't want to lose it." So the long and the short of it was that they agreed. She said she would be back in, I think, three months she gave them to see what kind of progress they'd made, and she left. The next thing that happens is I get a call from the assistant superintendent for public instruction inviting me to have lunch with him and the superintendent. And I happened to like the superintendent very much, the hatchet man, I really liked him. He had no hidden agenda. He didn't bullshit. He let you know what--. He was just never playing politics. So we went out to lunch and the superintendent says, "I would really like you to come to work for the Jefferson County Board of Education as a Title IX coordinator.

ST: And who was the superintendent again?

SP: Dave DeRuzzo.

ST: Okay, that was him.

SP: And I thought, "Pretty crafty." I said, "Oh, David. I'd be really interested in doing that with two strings attached." He said, "What are they?" I said, and this was, mind you, back

in the 70s, "Well, you have to pay me fifty thousand dollars and I'd have to report directly to you." So I never heard from them again. They advertised for a Title IX coordinator and a lot of people I knew applied and I organized a meeting of all the applicants at one of our houses the week before they were going to have the interviews, and explained to them how important it was to women that they had some power, that the Title IX have some power, and that they aren't going to have power if you go to work for them for seventeen thousand dollars and report to a minority affairs superintendent. So everybody agreed they wouldn't take the job unless certain conditions were met. Well, the job went to a coach, a woman coach, who fancied herself a feminist, but she was part of the system. A few things changed for awhile, but not the way they should have. The interesting thing for me in all of this is that in terms of athletics, the school system started being really responsive to girls once fathers started filing complaints and fathers did, in soccer particularly. Once dads got into it, it was a whole new ballgame.

ST: Interesting.

SP: Yeah, and I don't know what's going on over there now. I'm sure that there's a lot of problems, but things were shaken up for awhile to a degree that I don't think they could have, there is no way they would ever return to the place they were. And athletics was so terribly important because some of these girls were never going to get to college without an athletic scholarship. It was an economic issue, pure and simple.

ST: Were some of the violations concerning classroom practices?

SP: They were violations that included steering away, let's steer girls away from higher math. They don't have the capacity to do higher math. In terms of classroom practices, I don't remember too much of that. I remember that they were stopped from programming girls into home ec and boys into woodworking. That changed a lot. The classroom practice that I'm most

familiar with as a feminist is the tendency of teachers to call on the boys and overlook the girls. But that's probably still going on.

ST: I want to back up to something you said a few minutes ago. You said you were really ready to take on this challenge, because you had enormous rage on these issues. Where did that rage come from?

SP: Well, I think all rage comes from a realization that something is unjust. One day many years ago, I don't know, ten years ago, eleven years ago, one of the really good writers for the newspaper here before it was sold to Gannett called and asked me if she could interview me, because she said that she'd really always been interested in my work. I said, "I would love for you to interview me. I would love anything that would encourage--exposure that would encourage other women to choose the path I've chosen." So she came out and she wrote a really long, long article, which you could probably get from the archives. I have a copy of it here, but it's probably yellowed. Ask me to look later. Her name is Diane Aprile.

[conversation breaks off as phone rings]

SP: So anyway, in the course of interviewing me for this very long interview, Diane and I, we were sitting downstairs and she said, "What makes you do the things you do?" I said immediately, "Hmm. Nobody's ever asked me that before." Then I said without skipping a beat, "Injustice. It just pisses me off." And that whole quote was in the paper and all my women friends thought, "Oh, yes." (laughs) "We love it that you used that word." But it does. It really, really makes me--. Now where did that come from? I have no idea, but it just changes my whole body and changes what's happening. When I witness something that I think is unjust, it just makes me furious. All you have to do is get injustice embedded in a big system and pretty soon, fury turns to rage.

ST: Were there particular injustices that you had experienced as a woman that really had made an impact on you?

SP: Absolutely.

ST: Can you give me an example of something?

SP: When I was thirty years old, my husband received an award that was to be given in Florida and I'd never been to Florida and he told me he would take me. So we went to Florida for this conference. It was a Jewish conference. At that time, it was a conference of all the Jewish intellectuals and the Jewish community nationally has always had a disproportionate number of intellectuals who are spinning this and that and the other. The thing lasted three days and on the last night, they had a discussion. I'm so sorry, Sarah.

[conversation breaks off as phone rings]

SP: On the last day of the conference, which was a very big deal conference for the national Jewish community, they had a discussion on open housing. So this would have been 1963 when I was maybe thirty.

[break in conversation]

SP: I was thirty years old. They had this discussion on open housing and I'm sitting at a table with eight of us all from Louisville, three women, I think, and five men. After the discussion was over from the stage, we're sitting around the table having coffee and the men started talking about what they heard and what their thoughts were. What I'm about to tell you, Sarah, is a really important experience in my life. It really ended up being the formative experience in my life. So the men are talking about open housing and whether or not they thought the time was right to really proceed in Louisville and what the difficulties might be and blah blah blah. I think the men were all lawyers. I said, "Well, you know--." And there's psst.

That was it. Nobody recognized me or heard me and they kept on talking. A few minutes later, I said, "Well I think," and they just talked over me. I did that three times. I tried to become part of the conversation three times. Three times I was ignored.

When the group disbanded and everyone went back to their hotel room, I walked in and I threw myself across the bed and started sobbing in frustration and anger. And my husband, who was a nice man, but he wasn't where he really should have been at the time, said, "Suzy, honey, what's the matter?" I said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I tried to get into the discussion you were having at the table three times and three times I was ignored and I'm as smart as those men who were talking about what the strategy ought to be in Louisville. And nobody let me in." He said, "Oh Suzy, honey, darling." That was his way, very patronizing. "Oh Suzy, honey, darling, of course you're as smart as any of us." He said, "But you have to understand that they see you as a Jewish wife and mother. That's how they see you." I thought to myself that I was never going to be not heard again.

So from 1930 [Post probably meant to say here from age thirty on] on, I started building a presence for myself outside of the home and I started first in a political campaign and I moved from that political campaign to the McCarthy--. Started learning, I had to learn a lot. I got more involved in the ACLU than I had been. I mean, I just started doing whatever I could do to accumulate experience so that I could climb whatever stairs I had to climb to own my own voice and to make it heard. That was one of the most painful experiences I ever had in my life. And to this day, it brings tears to my eyes to think that, "Oh, honey dearest, you're just a wife and mother." I don't think without that, that I would have probably—I know without that experience, I wouldn't be who I ended up being, because I wouldn't have had to, I wouldn't have had to.

It's really interesting, but I started learning more and more and I started doing more and more and I started developing more and more power and eventually became one of the most powerful women in the social justice movement in this part of the country. And it was very conscious. So when I say injustice pisses me off, that was probably the mother injustice of it all.

ST: And you said you were about thirty years old, so that was about—

SP: '63.

ST: '63, okay. Once you started getting really involved, I mean by the mid-70s, you had of course been involved in lots of different movements. Once you started getting involved more closely in women's movements, how did your husband feel about that?

SP: Well, he was pretty--. I guess it got to the point where it didn't matter to me what he thought about it. He didn't really become supportive of what I was doing until 1975 when I ran for the legislature. He, as long as supper was on the table and the kids were taken care of--. At one point, I said something about a job and he said, "No wife of mine is going to have a job." I mean, he was really old-school, but he changed too. The times forced him to change and I was changing so fast that he didn't really have a choice; he had to. He was very, very happy in his work and he adored his children. And I was not that consequential really, which was probably lucky for me or maybe not. But the women's movement became extremely important to me. And it's really interesting, Sarah, that when people think of me today, they think of me in terms of racial justice and housing. They don't really think of me as having been a women's right activist and yet I think that my contribution to the women's movement was probably more significant than anything else I've done.

ST: Why do you think people don't remember that part of your career as much?



SP: Because I don't think the women's movement's that important anymore, if it ever was to most people. I mean, that's what I think. And there hasn't been a viable women's movement, an organized women's movement here for years and years and years and years and years. So that's probably another reason. There's nothing, no screen to look at it from. There's a book that Genie Potter did on Kentucky women and I had lunch with her not too long ago. I said, "Genie, why didn't you interview me?" She said, "Well, there's just so many people," but I think she just wasn't cognizant of all the change that I've provoked. I think that's true of a lot of people. The women's movement sort of died, you know? It's so sad, because there's still so much to be done. But it just kind of died and I think it died at the time that it was obvious the Equal Rights Amendment wasn't going to go anywhere.

ST: Well, to back up and talk about some of the contributions you feel like you did make on women's issues, what comes to your mind as your most significant contribution?

SP: I think my most significant contribution was forcing the national ACLU to deal with sex discrimination and create that Women's Rights Project that Ruth headed up, which resulted in all kinds of litigation across the country. I mean, it had all kinds of incredible results. I think I was a prime mover in that; I know I was. So I think that was significant. I think that there's no question in my mind that the creation of the Reproductive Freedom Project at the ACLU in Kentucky has been a big contribution to the women of this state.

ST: And you created that in what year?

SP: That was when I left, 1990.

ST: Could you go back and say a little bit more about the ACLU work you did on women's issues? You were chair of their committee on women's rights, is that right?

SP: Can you turn it off a minute?

[break in conversation]

SP: ACLU national board, I was an organizer. I started organizing to get more women elected to the board and then I started getting the few of us who were there to meet at every board meeting and the board meetings were only every other month. I would run out and get sandwiches and run back. You had to have a ton of energy to do what I did. It's insane. We'd sit in a room and we'd talk about the issues that were on the agenda or the issues that weren't on the agenda and should be. That caucus just grew and grew and grew until the national staff realized they needed to get us a special room to have these things in. So it got very institutionalized and it was really important in increasing the numbers of minorities and gays and lesbians. It started with women, got that, had almost fifty-fifty from the affiliates because of measures that we put into effect, moved on to African-Americans, less successful there because the ACLU didn't appeal to that many African-Americans, moved on to gays and lesbians, oh boy, great. So now the national organization is much more diverse than it was. By organizing that caucus, it just had a lot of long-term results that I hear about to this very day.

ST: And you were going to these national meetings in New York—

SP: Once a month.

ST: Once a month for how many years?

SP: Twelve.

ST: Twelve years.

SP: Now the national meetings in New York, twelve of them were executive committee meetings and four of them were board meetings with an executive committee attached. Then there would be a big national conference and so that was another opportunity to organize women. It was great. I just loved it. I was crazy, I was just crazy.

ST: And most of this was in the 70s. You said it was about from '69 to '80, is that when you--. Part of the goal of that was not only to make the ACLU more diverse, but also to bring issues before the ACLU dealing with women. What sorts of issues were you dealing with?

SP: If I remember correctly, we were dealing with affirmative action. It was a really hot, really hot issue, because a disproportionate number of the ACLU national board were academics and a disproportionate number of the ACLU board were Jews, and Jews had historically been shut out of higher education by quotas. In fact, I had been told by my mother when I was fifteen, while we were washing dishes and I announced I wanted to go to medical school, that that was impossible because they had a quota for girls and a quota for Jews: "You'll never get in." Affirmative action was a really big issue for women to promote in terms of the ACLU taking the right position, because there was a lot of resistance among these male academics, Jewish—not just Jewish, but there was a lot of resistance to affirmative action.

ST: Did you sense that there was more resistance on affirmative action with regard to women or more resistance with regard to—

SP: Women, women, women. Awful. I mean, there was just a huge amount of sexism in that organization. They were products of their time too. It's very hard to rehabilitate sexists. The only way it can happen is if their moms decide that they're going to raise different children.

ST: Can you remember any particular comments or discussions among these male academics about affirmative action?

SP: No, I really can't, Sarah, because it was done on such a high level. It was always done in a veiled kind of way. Nobody came out and said--. I can't even remember precisely. It was very charged, I remember that. Those were very charged debates and one of the men on the

national board, who was a volunteer general council, who was a law professor from Rutgers and the head of their constitutional law clinic and a very, very close friend of mine, was very opposed. He said the difference between discrimination against people on the basis of color and gender are just totally different. It's just so much worse. And I had a gazillion discussions with him and would get angry. Finally, somehow, I don't know, over a period of a couple of years, he changed his mind and realized it was the same damn thing.

My position was every man's got a nigger in his household somewhere and she's probably wiping his kids' bottoms and they want to keep it that way. They just don't see it. They just cannot see it. They're too close to it. It's pretty insidious. I'm sure that my husband believed in his heart that he didn't feel that way and yet every Passover when I would have twenty-one of our family to my house for Passover service, I would do all this work, because I was working too. And I have to organize a meal and make matzo ball soup and da da da da da, all that stuff. Ugh. You start three days in advance and two days in advance and you have to be an engineer to get it right. And you come home from work early that evening that you get off at say three o'clock, so that you can get everything set up. And at six o'clock in the evening, your husband walks in the door and walks to the head of the table and sits down. I began to really resent the hell out of it. There were times when I perpetuated that.

So getting rid of that stuff by women and by men, it just takes a really long time. To raise your children asexually just isn't easy. It really is true that the boys go for the trucks and the girls for the--. It really is not easy. The only thing you can do is try and show them that the roles in the family between the mom and the dad are as devoid of some of that baggage as possible. You're never going to eradicate it all. I mean, we're different. We're different.

ST: Aside from the ACLU work you were doing, you also were the founder of Kentucky's pro-ERA—

SP: Alliance. I have really created here four organizations of which I'm very proud. The ACLU was moribund when I took it over. There hadn't been a director for a long time. It was moribund, didn't exist. So there was that one. There was the Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, which is still operative. There is the Reproductive Freedom Project and the Metropolitan Housing Coalition. So I'm an entrepreneur. The pro-ERA alliance was really fun. It was an organizing job and that's what all that was. I did it pretty much the same way I did MHC [Metropolitan Housing Coalition]. You go to these organizations and ask them to endorse it and send a representative and you call demonstrations and you try to get them to get their members out. It was not hard.

ST: So in general, you felt like the progressive community in Louisville was fairly united behind you in that effort?

SP: The pro-ERA alliance?

ST: Yeah.

SP: Not at all.

ST: Oh, so by saying it wasn't hard—

SP: It wasn't hard, but it wasn't the progressive community I was trying to organize, because the progressive community really was much more into racial justice than gender justice. Anne, I don't think she really was a feminist. I don't think the Kentucky Alliance, of which I was a charter member, really gave much thought to gender justice. It's all racial. It was all racial. And God knows, there's so much. We've got so many racial justice problems here. I did, while I was with the ACLU, when I was president, convene the first civilian police review

board, which was just amazing. We had, as members of that group, the ACLU, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Black Panther Party, and NAACP, the Kentucky Alliance. There were like nine groups, Church Women United. And the white groups were in because back in '69, white kids with long hair in the East End were getting hassled by the cops and their parents didn't like it one bit. So that sort of brought it all together. It was fun.

ST: So you created that board in what year?

SP: '68 or '69.

ST: Okay, right on the heels of that.

SP: Yeah, and then I started organizing in the gay community, because they were having a terrible time. So I don't think there's a community around except the Christian fundamentalists.

ST: You mean, you don't really see a coherent progressive community? There are lots of different ones, is that what you mean?

SP: It's gotten more mutually supportive so that when there's a gay and lesbian problem, you'll get the ACLU out and the Fellowship of Reconciliation out. If NOW exists at this moment, NOW will get out. That's gotten much better. I tried to do what you're suggesting when I was working. I guess I was still at the ACLU. I tried to pull together a coalition of civil rights groups and it was the NAACP, the ACLU, NOW, FOR, three or four other groups. It just never gelled. I really felt that we should have more communication among us on a regular basis, so I did try to do that. It just didn't happen. The time wasn't right. I think it will happen at some point in the future; I don't know when.

ST: How much support were you able to get locally for the ERA?



SP: We got a lot of support for the ERA. We got a lot of support for the impeachment campaign. The ERA, we got all these middle-class women, like Women Trial Lawyers' Association. We got groups like the League of Women Voters and the Kentucky Nurses Association and the Kentucky Education Association. It wasn't hard to get support for that.

ST: Were there folks that you expected would support it who did not?

SP: I can't remember. I can't remember.

ST: Was Anne Braden supportive?

SP: No, she really wasn't. It's not that she was opposed to it. That's just not where her priorities were and she had a limited amount of time and energy like the rest of us. She didn't do anything to stop it or anything. She just wasn't in there.

ST: On a related note, you attended the International Women's Year Conference in Houston in '77, right?

SP: Mmm hmm.

ST: Tell me a little bit about that experience.

SP: That was a hilarious experience. We had had a state conference first to elect women to go to the one in Houston. We had adopted an agenda at that conference at U of K. The agenda was four things. Has anybody told any of this yet?

ST: No.

SP: We adopted an agenda that called for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, gay and lesbian rights, child care, and choice. So we had those four things and we had yellow t-shirts made. God, I wish I still had mine. Down the front of the t-shirts, overlaid on a map of Kentucky, we had these things. People said, "My God, how did you get those passed in a place like Kentucky?" It was a really good question. I mean, it's a very conservative state. But

we were able to get support for choice, for gay rights, for child care, and for the ERA. So we get to Houston and you're going to laugh at me, but one of the things most I remember about Houston, which had ten thousand women descend on it and the hotels were really not prepared, was that the second day we were there, you couldn't find a tampon within two miles of the hotel. They had sold out of boxes of tampax. So when you figure that one-fourth of the women are going to be menstruating at the same time during this conference—is it one-fourth or a third?

ST: I would say one-fourth.

SP: Yeah, okay. So it was hilarious. We couldn't find tampons. The other thing we couldn't—we had to liberate the men's bathrooms constantly because there wasn't enough women's bathrooms. It was highly charged. It opened with a march led by Betty Friedan and Bella Abzug and one of our local judges. They had a mini-marathon and somebody carried a torch in. This huge hall, it was very heavily charged, because there was an enormous anti-ERA, anti-choice, anti-gay's rights bias there. I honestly didn't think we were going to get what we wanted; I just didn't think we were. I'll be damned if we didn't get every one of those things passed.

ST: A resolution in support of them?

SP: Mmm hmm, which is amazing in 1977. I mean, it was just totally amazing, because there's so many bible-belt states in this part of the country. The other thing that I remember really well about Houston is that I had bought a pair of jeans on sale that were way too tight for me and we were all living out of vending machines because they weren't set up to handle us. Within a day or two, the buttons on my jeans, oh God, it was just agony, it was agony. But it

was really fun. I was so glad. Now Anne did go to that, she went to that. I think she went as a reporter.

ST: Do you think the different perspective you and Anne had on some of these issues, like you were saying, it's not that she was so much opposed, it just wasn't a priority, do you think that's because you were a little younger than her or how would you explain it?

SP: No, I think it's because she was Southern-born and because she lived with Carl and Carl was a fiery, really fiery working-class Communist and I think he had enormous influence on her. I don't think he would have thought that women's issues were paramount. He would have thought that economic issues were paramount and that next, civil rights. It's not that Anne didn't support it. It's just where she put the majority of her energy. She did talk to me one day and we said we would try to start a chapter of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which is a wonderful, wonderful organization. There's never been one here. But like everything else, we just both got so busy and she would have had to be the leader and she just wasn't doing it. So I don't think it was age, I really don't. I think it was coming from the South, knowing that she had lived totally blind to racial injustice until she was older, although God knows I lived pretty blind to it too.

ST: I was going to ask, do you see your--. I mean, you grew up in Louisville, right, so you were both Southerners?

SP: Yeah, I don't know.

ST: She was deep South.

SP: She was deep South. I gave lip service to racial justice even in high school. I went to an all-white girls' public high school and my yearbook said that in twenty-five years, Suzy Kling will be collecting funds for the Urban League in the Fiji Islands. And I had no idea that I

was proselytizing in high school, but I guess I was. The thing of it is that the races in Louisville and probably all through the South were so efficiently segregated that it really would take something monumental to remove the blinders that we wore. Just because life went on smoothly and why when I went away to school the first year, I joined the NAACP, I have no idea. I mean, that was in 1953 and it wasn't on the top of the national agenda. So something in me--. My parents believed in racial justice without even using the language. They just let me know that I shouldn't use words, that the n-word was really bad and I don't talk like that. They were good in general. I was born in '33, so during the Depression, men used to come to our back porch for food and mother always fed. I'd look out the window and she'd say, "Stop that. Don't stare. He's having his dinner." Little things like that, I think, begin to accumulate as you grow and they're back here in your mind and germinating. Also my uncle was a Socialist and a friend of Norman Thomas's and ran for mayor on the Socialist ticket in thirty-something.

ST: Here in Louisville?

SP: Uh huh. I always define myself as a Socialist. In fact, Anne used to say to Ed whenever they'd get into hot discussions after dinner at my house, he'd start arguing with her and complaining about me getting out there too far, and she'd say things like, "Edward, you knew Suzy was a Socialist when you married her. What's the problem?" When I got married, I was nineteen years old. So I don't know, but I've always felt that that--. I always liked Eugene Debs and I always liked what he wrote and I always liked what he said and it made perfectly good sense to me. I ran with a group of college kids who were supporting Henry Wallace when he was making his and I used to leaflet. I was fourteen. I think they had an impact on me. I thought they were really hip and I wanted to be like them. Don't ask me why. I was supposed

to be at home worrying about Saturday night dates. There was a part of me that was always very politically sensitive. Unformed, uneducated, but politically sensitive.

ST: By the late 70s, well when you got back from that conference in Houston, at that time in general, did you feel like the women's movement was on the cusp of bigger and better things or did you already start to sense that it was declining in momentum?

SP: Well, I don't know that I gave it much thought. By the time I got back from Houston, we'd finished our Title IX project here and I'd seen changes wrought by that. I don't know. I don't know. I think that the women's movement in Louisville and in Kentucky has been pretty quiescent for years and years and years. Some people say, "Well, maybe that just means that you all got what you wanted," but I think that's total bullshit, because working-class women and poor women sure didn't get what they wanted, which is jobs that paid the living wage. I mean, we're so far from that it isn't funny. I mean, God, I can't believe that that's come to a standstill in Washington again. So see, here I go.

ST: Besides those sort of economic justice issues, were there other big disappointments with regard to the women's movement, issues that say in the early 70s, you really thought were going to take off and then never did?

SP: What I guess I remember most about what I thought and felt back then was I thought that we settled cheap, that we settled too soon and we settled too cheap, that we had not really done what we needed to do to fulfill our commitment to justice for women and that we sort of quit too soon as an organized entity. I think partially that is because a disproportionate number of the women in the women's movement were comfortable middle-class women. I'm not sure that there was ever any really serious attempt by us to reach out and pull in those women in greatest need, other than displaced homemakers and abuse victims; I think that in

that regard, we did. We wrote grants and got resources captured for displaced homemakers so that there was a program. We got a spouse abuse center set up. But we didn't do anything about the economic justice issue for working-class women. I don't know why.

ST: Was there much of a welfare rights impulse here?

SP: There was a little one. There was a little one. And I worked with them for a year or two. There was a welfare rights and a tenants' rights group simultaneously. The tenants' rights group was far more effective than the welfare rights group and I think that's partially because the tenants' rights group had a single focus. They wanted a landlord-tenant act and we got it.

ST: This was the Louisville Tenants Association you're referring to?

SP: Right. It was originally called the Louisville Tenants Union, but we changed the name a few years ago, because there was some concern that we wouldn't be able to get the money we needed if we continued to call it a union. Stupid.

ST: But the welfare rights organization was short-lived?

SP: It was, it was a couple years and it was short-lived because the affected class had terrible problems with life. They couldn't go to a meeting unless they had somebody to take them. They had to get somebody to watch their kids. And then you had the clash between, if we were supportive, we spoke different languages. It's really been hard, it's hard. I think economic chasms are hard to bridge. I always felt that the Metropolitan Housing Coalition suffered by not having low-income people on its board, because it's us talking about them and doing things for them. But the reality is it's just harder than hell to get low-income people, who are very often working two jobs and still barely getting by, to have any energy left to participate in something like this. I sort of think that anything that's going to come is going to have to be indigenous to



the group, that the group's going to have to give birth to it. There's a welfare rights group that you may be familiar with in Philadelphia that's been very successful.

ST: Is this part of ACORN?

SP: Yeah, well, I think they joined ACORN, but they stood alone for awhile. They started themselves. There might have been a couple social workers who were there as advisors. I can't remember the name of it. But I just don't think middle-class people can really speak for or organize people at another level. In a way, it's pretty arrogant to think that we can do that. On the other hand, it really makes me uncomfortable that nobody's doing that. There's something wrong with the equation.

ST: Since you brought it up, I want to talk about the Metropolitan Housing Coalition. When that was founded in '89 or '88—

SP: I think a few people first started to meet in '88. They were mainly community ministries people and then they got a few more people in as the homeless situation exploded here. Then in '89, they applied for a 501c3 and wrote a grant to the Bingham Foundation for a million dollars for seed money for staff. When I walked off the board, walked off the job of the ACLU, how old was I? I was fifty-seven years old, no visible means of support. I felt great for about two weeks and then I started waking up in a cold sweat. I envisioned myself applying for a job at a convenience store and then I thought, "No, they get shot. You don't want to do that."

MHC at about that time got a hundred thou from Bingham, not a million, but a hundred thousand to be used over three years to provide for staffing. A friend of mine who had been meeting with them came over and she said, "Suzy, you need to apply for that job. It's going to be great." I said, "Blanche, I don't know anything about housing." She said, "Yeah, but you're the best organizer in the state." I said, "Blanche, I don't know anything about housing." It just

really didn't grab me. She said, "Come on, apply." So I did apply. I got a call. I had an interview with five or six of these lovely people, a couple of whom I knew. They wanted someone to work on contract so that they wouldn't have to pay health insurance. They wanted somebody who would work for twenty-five thousand dollars a year on contract. I talked to them. I said, "You know, I've started a lot of coalitions and I think coalitions can be really effective. I think you're going to find somebody who can do this job." I said, "It's just not me. But thanks for the time and lots of luck."

So I came home and about two hours later, the president of the board calls me up. He said, "Suzy, what would it take to get you?" I hadn't even really thought about it. I said, "It would take twenty-five thousand dollars a year. You pay my taxes. You pay health insurance. And the executive committee agrees to meet with me once a week and I don't mean for three months. I mean ad infinitum, because I don't know a damn thing about housing." He said, "Okay." So for two years, we met at a local cafeteria at seven-thirty on Wednesday mornings until about nine, for two years until we got a new president and she didn't want to be bothered getting up that early. It was a shame, because they were getting a lot out of it, they really were.

ST: Who all was represented on that executive committee just in sort of general terms? Were they mainly people who worked directly in housing?

SP: Yeah, mainly people who worked directly in housing, with the exception of the community ministry people who were providing social services to their service area. Plus the executive director of Legal Aid.

ST: That was Dennis Bricking.

SP: Dennis, uh huh. For awhile—well I guess not. I started to say for awhile the director of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, but no, he didn't come. It was a pretty motley

crew. The city's CDBG director, who was Blanche, she was a really good friend of mine. She and I ran the Impeach Nixon campaign together and a couple of really great antiwar demonstrations. We had an antiwar demonstration that had five thousand people after the Cambodian bombings, which you're probably too young to even remember, but it was pretty terrifying to us that we would go bomb these people. It looks like child's play today compared to what we're doing. It was a good group of people. They were straight. They were committed. The housing people were profoundly housers. A lot of the housing people saw housing as a basic human right and they saw housing as a way for low-income people to accumulate wealth. When I used to hear that, it set my teeth on edge, but over the years, I've come to realize how important that is in terms of having something.

ST: Building equity.

SP: Building equity in your home is accumulating wealth and without that home, you know--.

ST: What was the general impulse behind starting the coalition?

SP: Ronald Reagan and the cutback in housing staff and the homeless, who were becoming more and more visible on ours' and other streets.

ST: Was there discussion in any of the initial meetings about housing integration as a concern?

SP: No, that was mine. I mean, that was my issue.

ST: At that time or earlier or both?

SP: I don't know about earlier, but what followed me into this job was economic and racial equity. So one of the first things I did, I think I worked a year before I did it, I created a Fair Housing Coalition and it is still meeting, not as vigorously as it had when I was the

director. What I did was I invited all the organizational members of MHC that had a fair housing bias of some kind, whether it was the Tenants Association; the banks, which are required under the Community Reinvestment Act to loan equally; the Community Action Agency, which was dealing with poor people; the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, in which housing segregation is a no-no; the Louisville and Jefferson County Human Relations Commission. There were about ten or eleven groups and we met once a month. The purpose of me, why I did this was I thought that it would be beneficial for these groups to keep each other posted on what was new in the field, because they were all understaffed and they couldn't know everything there was to know. That was number one. Number two, I thought it would be emotionally beneficial for them to get together with their PEERs, because burnout is so high in so many of these jobs. Thirdly, I thought that it would be beneficial for it to plan a community program every April, which is Fair Housing Month. They've been meeting for fifteen years. I mean, the member ebbs and flows and it's not the same people from every agency, but it has created a presence.

ST: Among the folks involved with that, what's the general consensus with regard to how much progress we've made since the open housing movement in terms of housing integration?

SP: I think that there's generally a consensus that progress has been made. I think that there is a general consensus that some of the big problems, the problems that remain, involve predatory lending is a big one. Foreclosures is a huge problem. I guess those two are sort of on the top of the agenda in terms of: can anybody move where they want to move, where they can afford to move? I think that there's a feeling that that's pretty much okay, but on the other

hand, there's real concern, I think and I certainly echo it, that federal programs like Hope VI are just resegregating people.

ST: I was going to ask you about that. Louisville's had a couple big Hope VI projects. What do you think?

SP: I think they shouldn't be considered housing programs. I think they should be considered neighborhood revitalization programs. I'm very concerned and have been since we got the first one six, seven years ago.

ST: Was that the—

SP: Park DuValle. Very concerned that we haven't a clue as to where all those people went and not only that, but that it looks good down there, but there's no damned amenities to speak of. As a real neighborhood, it's not. That's one concern. The second concern is where did those people go, because the previous director of housing kept everything very tight, so I'm not sure where they went. This Hope VI program down at Liberty Green I think is going to run into some of the same problems, although the new housing director is much more open than the previous one and he also got really burnt one time on the airport expansion program and he doesn't want to get burnt again. You can work with him. He is committed to one-for-one replacement, so any public housing unit that goes down, he's committed to finding another one somewhere in the community.

Now that raises questions that nobody's asking except me and that's probably because I go looking for trouble. When you do something like these Hope VI programs, we're not doing anything, we as a community aren't doing anything to measure what happens with the disruption of the social capital in a neighborhood. What happens when Mary Anne isn't right next door to lend me a dollar if I need money for the baby's milk? What happens if Johnny gets

his hand stuck in the door and I got three other kids and I got to get him down to the hospital and there's nobody, none of the neighbors around that I can ask? We're not even asking those questions. I think that social capital makes a neighborhood as much as the buildings.

ST: How do you achieve housing integration while also keeping some of these communities that already exist in place and vibrant?

SP: Honey, I wish I knew the answer to that. I would be the national housing guru. I don't know. I don't know how you do that. I don't know if anybody knows. I don't know if Nick Retsinas knows. I don't know if Chester Hartman knows. I don't know if Gary Orfield knows. I just don't know. I don't know how you do that. It's hard.

[conversation breaks off as phone rings]

SP: No, I think that's a crucial question that we just haven't got the capacity to answer as a society.

ST: The MHC, its main goal was to sort of stimulate dialogue on these issues and point policy makers in fruitful directions. Was it also trying to partner with financial agencies and banks to try to develop certain neighborhoods?

SP: No. Its interest in the banks has been one, getting money out of them for us, and two, at least my interest was to see that they were doing was they're supposed to do in terms of CRA. I don't think the last two directors have been really interested in that, because that's very potentially explosive.

ST: So you think there's more disregard for some of the fair housing legislation from the 60s than is being openly acknowledged?

SP: By the banks, you mean?

ST: Yeah.



SP: I think the banks have been taken by the Community Reinvestment Act kicking and screaming to invest in low-income communities. I don't think they want to do it. I mean, occasionally you'll find an enlightened banker who knows that it's good business, but most of them, it's just another goddamn regulation that the feds are cramming down our throats. We get, or we used to get and I guess we still get, the reports from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, I was on their board for awhile, as to who's doing what to whom and we'd gotten some bad reports on a couple of our member banks. And I, in a moment of great foolishness unmatched by any other except the foolishness I felt one time for a man, started to file a complaint with—I forget which of the three agencies this was written to. There's three different—

ST: Oversight.

SP: Uh huh. OCC. (pause) Isn't it terrible how all these federal things sound alike?

ST: They do blend together.

SP: Oh, my God. Anyway, I was on the verge of doing that and I got called off. So I don't even know what the performance--. I think that they're doing minimally what they have to do, which is to lend to low-income people. I mean, if they're taking money out of a low-income community, they got to be putting it back; that's the rationale. I think some of them are doing a fairly good job. But the problem is, you see, we've only got two or three locally-owned banks here anymore. They're all taken over and the farther away they get from us, the less emotionally involved they are in doing right by us.

ST: You retired from the MHC position in 2000—

SP: It's very murky. Let's see. I had this surgery six years ago. So in 2000 after I had my lung taken out, I realized that it was going to be virtually impossible to work full-time. So I

began to sort of ease out and one of my board members and I plotted my replacement, which turned out to be a very bad idea. She was there, I think, not even quite two years and she got pregnant again. If I hadn't had lung cancer, I would be working full-time still. I loved it. I love that group. I had the longest honeymoon I ever had in my life with that board and I realized after I'd been there a couple years that housers have their heads and their hearts in the same place. Civil libertarians are only heads. They don't have a heart.

ST: What do you mean by that exactly?

SP: I mean it's all an intellectual exercise. I had a terrible, terrible experience while I was working for the ACLU twenty years ago. Not one person on the board came to the hospital. Nobody sent flowers. Nobody brought food over afterwards. I mean, it's just all in their head. They're great people, but--. I didn't realize any of that until I started working for people who had a great deal of heart.

ST: Had it both.

SP: And had heart, just had heart, had empathy, compassion, had no trouble saying, "I love you." It just makes a work environment so different. So I probably would have stayed in that. I told them, I said, "I'd stay in this job until you all send somebody to me or until you get together and say, 'What are we going to do about Suzy?'" (laughs) Because I really loved it, but it just wasn't possible.

ST: I know we're getting kind of close on time, so I wanted to ask just a few kind of general wrap-up questions. Looking back on your whole career of activism, were there any civil rights changes broadly defined that you had really expected to see by now that you haven't?

SP: Yeah, I don't know expected. I think I hoped to see some kind of public policy requiring health care for everybody, access to health care. Now I'm not talking to Medicaid and I'm not talking about Medicare. I'm talking about equal access to good health care. I think I had hoped that we would be closer to my ideal in terms of economic justice, that people got what they needed to live on. I always loved Eugene Debs and 'from each according to their ability, to each according to his needs.' I really hoped that at some point, we could at least start a dialogue like that. And instead, I'm seeing a country that has become more and more of an oligarchy. It's just, it's really ugly what's happened in this country, this amassing of incredible wealth and the rape of ordinary people and the rape of the land. I just sort of can't believe that's what's happening has been allowed to happen. I keep thinking, "Where are you, Michael Harrington, now that we need you?" It's not like everything that he recommended got done, but Johnson sure paid some attention to that and so did Bobby Kennedy. Who's looking now? So yeah, it's pretty grim. I used to love this country and I don't love it anymore. I'm ashamed of it. That's sort of sad.

ST: Are there any issues that have progressed more quickly than you imagined when you first became an activist?

SP: This is such a silly, simple answer. I think the fact that half of all law schools are now female and half of all medical schools are all female, I mean the classes, ah, I mean so fast, because we're so smart as soon as they get the roadblocks out of the way. I just think that's fantastic. I wish that African-Americans had progressed that same degree in terms of the proportionality in the population. I don't know what the figures are. Years ago when I was at the Human Relations Commission, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and maybe you can find this, put out a report called "Social Indicators of Equality in Minorities and Females," and

distributed it and I used it widely in community organizing, because it had some really damning data in it. This was in the 70s. I would love to see something like that done again and distributed. I suspect that it's not being done, because it would be so damning. So yeah, there are a few things that have happened that amaze me and there a few things that haven't happened that amaze me. I think job opportunities for black women is pretty discouraging. Oh, and I think that the prison population problem, God, what Angela calls a prison industrial complex, I mean, gee, how terrible is this that children are being raised with no fathers because we lock them up for practically nothing? I really do blame that largely on the drug war and the outrageous sentencing. That all got started with Rockefeller. And so expensive.

ST: If only all that money could go into the public schools.

SP: Oh, my God, the public schools and housing, medical care.

ST: I imagine you talk with your kids quite a bit about your work or have over the years, or maybe not.

SP: They're kind of bored with it.

ST: Really?

SP: Mmm hmm.

ST: What would you most like for them or future generations in general to remember about your activism?

SP: I think I'd like them to remember that I was an ordinary person and that ordinary people when motivated can do really extraordinary things, because I was and am very ordinary. I was an English major. I didn't learn how to do this in school. I goofed up along the way. Nobody taught me. It was something that I taught myself to organize, because I love and like people. I do think that there are a lot of people out there who, and they told me so, people

would tell me that they would love to do what I've done with my work. I would say, "Well, do it." They'd say, "I can't afford to" or "I wouldn't know how." I think anybody could do it. I mean, you have to have a rage threshold that's fairly low, but if you've got that. I hear people think, "Oh my God, she's the most amazing creature. I mean, she's just unbelievable and she's this." I'm not. I'm just another ordinary person who got really pissed and on many occasions decided to do something about it. Does that make sense?

ST: Yeah. Were there any things you had wanted to bring up or talk about that I haven't asked you?

SP: I feel like I've talked for months to you, Sarah. I think if I were you, I would want to know where I've gotten my support. I have gotten my support from an incredible network of women, different kinds of women, black women, white women, wealthy women, poor women, just women who love me and who have been there for me and who I think are absolutely essential to anyone who's involved in working as an organizer, activist, or entrepreneur, whatever you want to call me. I just don't think you can do this work without that.

ST: Has that been a constant factor throughout your career or is it more so since your husband died?

SP: No, it's been pretty constant, because he wasn't particularly supportive for some of those years. But of course, for many years he was. But I think just in doing the work I've done, I've met such wonderful women that I wouldn't have met if I hadn't been doing this work. And I have developed relationships with them that have really stood me in good stead. They're women I can call up and say, "Listen, I've just written something to read at Anne Braden's memorial service. Can I email it to you?" So I emailed it to this friend and she cut it fifteen times. She's totally no bullshit. And I said, "Good God, leave me something, Jan." She said,

"You don't have more than twelve minutes." I said, "Nobody told me that." You weren't there, were you?

ST: Uh uh.

SP: When I was finished and I got off the stage and I'm walking down the aisle right past her, she says, "That was eighteen minutes." I said, "But there was a pause, Jan, in between. You have to make accommodation for that." So people like that who have an expertise who can help me, people who don't, people who know somebody, I mean every woman I know is an amazing resource person for something or other. I don't think I would have done as well, I know I wouldn't have done as well as I have without that, not to mention how enriching of my life it is. It's just the richest life. I think I'm one of the luckiest people I know. I have been able to do work that I have really cared passionately about. I've done it largely with people I care passionately about. I've had a lot of fun in doing it. I got great kids. It's been fabulous. It's just been fabulous. Now there's a Jewish superstition that says you mustn't say things like that, because God will punish you.

ST: Well, maybe you should end on a negative note then.

SP: Yeah, my shirt is really dirty. I'm going to have to clean the whole outfit.

ST: Would you like that to be the closing words?

SP: I don't think so, no, I've enjoyed talking to you.

ST: Likewise. Thanks so much for taking—

SP: It's been a pleasure.

ST: --your afternoon to do so.

SP: Have you met anybody who didn't like talking about him or herself?



ST: Well, I suppose most people do, although yeah, I suppose I have met some folks who—

SP: Didn't like to?

ST: Yeah.

SP: I always said that one of the hooks in running for public office is it's the only time in your entire life when you have permission to only talk about yourself: me, me, me, me. It's very heady. It's very heady.

ST: Yeah. Well, I hope this has been likewise a heady experience in some ways.

SP: You and Michael are both very provocative.

#### **END OF INTERVIEW**

Transcribed by Emily Baran. July 2006