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**U.16 Long Civil Rights Movement:
The Women's Movement in the South**

Interview U-0486
Lucy Henighan
21 May 2010

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FIELD NOTES – LUCY HENIGHAN
(compiled May 21, 2010)

Interviewee: Lucy Henighan

Interviewer: Jessie Wilkerson

Interview Date: May 20, 2010

Location: Seymour, TN

THE INTERVIEWEE. Lucy Henighan was born in Palo Alto, California and she grew up in the Midwest. She attended Oberlin College in the 1960s, and there she learned about the civil rights movement and took part in an exchange program at Tougaloo College in Mississippi. In the 1970s and 1980s she worked on various community projects and was on staff at the Highlander Research and Education Center.

THE INTERVIEWER. Jessie Wilkerson is a graduate student in the Department of History at UNC-Chapel Hill, currently conducting research for her dissertation which will explore social justice activism in southern Appalachia, with special attention to women's activism, from the late 1960s through the 1990s.

CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW. She discusses her childhood in Oskaloosa, Kansas; years at Oberlin College; being an exchange student at Tougaloo College and learning about the civil rights movement; race relations in Nashville, TN; attending Bank Street College in New York; teaching at Pine Mountain Settlement School; relationship with eastern Kentucky families; communal living in Nashville, TN; consciousness-raising group; marriage to Richard Henighan; organizing the St. Charles Community Health Care Clinic; childcare and women's issues at the Highlander Research and Education Center; children's camp at the Highlander Center.

Interviewee: Lucy Henighan

Interviewer: Jessica Wilkerson

Interview date: May 21, 2010

Location: Seymour, TN

Length: Approximately 82 minutes

Jessica Wilkerson: I'm Jessica Wilkerson, here with Lucy Henighan on May 21st, 2010, and Lucy is going to begin by telling me about her childhood.

Lucy Henighan: Okay, I grew up in a little town called Oskaloosa in Kansas, where my parents did research in this town. My father was a psychologist and they had a research station there, and they also lived in this town. In a little way, it was a good place to grow up, in most ways, but we weren't typical of the people there. I can put it that way. My parents felt they couldn't do a lot to influence the town because they were studying it, you know? But after the research quit, my mother got very active in improving the town, but it was a good place and we certainly were accepted and all. However, I have to say that things like the schools weren't great, and there were no cultural advantages there. It was a town of nine hundred people. It had some other advantages.

I went from there to Oberlin, which was a huge step. I always have thought I got into Oberlin because they were so excited to have somebody from Kansas apply [laughter]. Oberlin was certainly a real eye-opener to me, and I met so many different people. I became really aware about the civil rights issues all of a sudden.

JW: What year did you enter Oberlin?

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LH: It was [19]61, the fall of '61. You know, this all gets a little vague in my mind about what happened, but I ended up--I mean, it was the time people were starting to go to the South to intervene in the civil rights issues. I didn't feel comfortable doing that, but I felt very concerned about what was going on.

So, I went to summer school at Tougaloo College near Jackson, Mississippi. It's a small [pause]--at that point, it was an almost all-black school, with a lot of white teachers, however. I liked it; it was interesting; I felt comfortable there, and I ended up staying the whole next year at Tougaloo. I kept making the decisions each semester and stayed on, and ironically, it cost me, not being able to have quite enough credits to graduate when I was supposed to. So I had to take a summer school class, so I didn't go to graduation. And Martin Luther King talked to our graduating class, but I wasn't there [laughter].

The rest of my time at Oberlin, I continued to be active in a group that promoted exchanges with Tougaloo, and also with a white college in Birmingham called Birmingham Southern. I visited there at some point; I can't remember. This was all a feeling on my part, I think, that we all had to understand more and had to have better communication with everybody.

JW: So how many white students were at Tougaloo when you were there?

LH: Oh, three or four. Three I can think of.

JW: So what was that experience like?

LH: Well, people were real nice. I mean, they were awfully--I think it must have been very weird for them, and there's a book that a person who was there at that time named Anne Moody wrote, and it's called *Coming of Age in Mississippi*. I re-read it, some of it just recently, after reading *The Help*, which is about that exact time, because I

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knew that what *The Help* said wasn't my experience in Mississippi. Anne Moody talks about being at Tougaloo; she transferred there from a state school. She mentions another one of the white women who are there, and I know from what she said; it was weird. It was a new experience for her to have white people she could trust.

There was a white teacher named Ernst Borinski who taught social studies, and he had what he called a lab in a basement of a building. It was a place people went to hang out, I think, in retrospect, or maybe they went to study, but I don't know what else it would be. That was important, and then at that time, there were beginning to be some rallies and people went from there and did some voting rights work. There was this newspaper that I went and helped some called the *Mississippi Free Press*, and its editor was this guy from Oberlin; Biggs was his name, I think.

I played a lot of cards there at Tougaloo. I learned to play Whist, and I seemed to be able to do that kind of thing and fit in, in a social way, but at least I fit in at some level. You know, clearly they can't have been [pause] just completely open with me, but I mean, I was in a room with two women who were sisters who were my roommates.

JW: Did you stay in touch with people from school?

LH: I haven't. I feel bad that I haven't, and nor have I ever been back. I think I should do that.

JW: And did you get involved in activism? You said you didn't want to go into doing activist work; you went to the college.

LH: Right.

JW: Did that introduce you to activism or were you more committed to the social--?

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LH: Not a lot. I mean, at Oberlin, there was always activism going on, so you always were involved at some level. When I was at Tougaloo, I just worked on that paper and attended some meetings that were at Tougaloo. I don't think I went off campus. This, you can imagine, was pretty scary to my parents [pause] but they were good; they were good. They didn't express that to me; other people have said that to me since then. You know--"You don't know how hard that was on your parents."

So, I guess from Oberlin, I had worked a couple of summers in Nashville, and at that time, I did go to some things at [pause] the college. There were some rallies and things. It was very weird: the summer after I was at Tougaloo I worked in Nashville in a child development program, and I stayed in a dorm with white, young women. That was really weird, because they had no idea what I had just done. I mean, I did not say anything.

JW: So these were white women who...?

LH: ...Who were probably pretty racist people, you know? I mean, I can't remember any details except feeling that I was really out of place. The next summer, I stayed in a house with some people and that was fine. But that's where I did this--it was kind of an early intervention program with young children, a pre-head-start, so that was a background for my work I've done later with young kids, so it all fits in.

But from Oberlin, I went to Bank Street College in New York City, which is a college of education, and I took enough credits to get a teacher's certificate, but I didn't finish; I didn't get a master's. I think I shouldn't have done that because I--all of a sudden--they were much more lax than I felt they were at Oberlin. When people weren't holding a grade over my head, I just didn't do all the work! Because I to go back one

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summer a few years later and finish something up, but, I did it. I mean, it's a great school and it was fun to live in New York.

But upon finishing that, I had to do something [laughter]. I had to get a job. In Nashville, I had met a woman; I lived with a woman who was teaching at Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County, so I applied to Harlan County and I got a job as a reading teacher. I went there knowing nothing about Appalachia, really. It was really exciting, I have to say. Are you at all familiar with Pine Mountain?

JW: I am, a little bit. I've read David Whisnant's--.

LH: It is a gorgeous place. It was a gorgeous place then; I think it's less--the environment has been more strip-mined around it. Not at it, but--and it's so remote. My parents drove me there, which was a real experience and eye-opener to them.

JW: So what was the school like during that time?

LH: Well, it was a regular county elementary school then. Pine Mountain has beautiful buildings. It's an open setting, lovely things wherever you look, and there are log buildings there, old buildings that were nicely maintained. But, it was a county school system, so you had all that to deal with.

I taught reading to small groups of kids, and I hadn't any particular experience in this, but it wasn't hard to do; it was fun to do. I did a lot of things like having them write stories and illustrate stories, and put on little shows and stuff. You know, it was all literacy, whatever you did. I lived with two other women in a house, and that was nice. We went on adventures, driving around.

JW: Were they two other teachers?

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LH: Um-hmm, and one of them particularly was somebody who had been a good friend all these years. It was the era where they still did paddling and all that. I didn't have to do that because I just had five kids or something, but it happened to other people. I was interested in crafts, so you go and see this wonderful basket-maker or this wonderful woman who makes dolls, cornshuck dolls. So it was great, in lots of ways. It was really neat. The second year I was there, I taught at Pine Mountain half the time and at another school down the road, Straight Creek, half the time. That was a building that-- just one-room schools pushed together, literally pushed together, so you'd walk up these steps and open this door and be in this room, or then you'd go out and walk up these steps and go in and be in another room. There was no connection between them. Each of these rooms had a stove in it, a pot-bellied stove that you had to keep going. The teacher next door to me was a new teacher, and she paddled the kids so much. The first few times, it made my stomach go, ugh! when it happened. I'm afraid that I got immune to it after a while, but as I recall, teaching was okay for me, too. I don't really remember as much as the kids at Pine Mountain.

JW: Were most of the teachers people who were coming from outside of--?

LH: Well, they were--there weren't too many teachers. Also, it's not very big. There were a couple of people I can think of that were local people, or pretty local people, but maybe I can think of five or six that weren't. But getting to know the people that lived there, it was wonderful. I can remember going with Connie, and I don't know if (16:43) went to this family for dinner. You know, we were invited for a dinner, and they had many children and you go up this little, long, narrow road up a holler, and there's a house on the side of the hill. There was all this food. They'd made all this food and then

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we sat down and ate, and then we were done and then somebody else sat down and ate until the end when the children got to sit down and eat. There wasn't room for everyone, but I mean, we were the first, probably we and the father. The people were very open and friendly to the teachers from Pine Mountain. I think they were quite appreciative— Anyway, I remember that time very fondly.

JW: What years were--?

LH: So this would [pause]--oh, I was in New York in [19]65 and '66, so it was '66 to '68. I can't exactly remember why I left there. I don't know if Connie also left there that year. She had been there the year, she and (18:07) had been there the year before as well.

JW: And that was the woman you lived with?

LH: Uh-huh. Then I beat around a little bit. I went to Nashville; I stayed with friends. Well, I drove a bus for a preschool program from Peabody, and then I met Brenda [Bell] at some point. I can figure out the date I met Brenda. We worked one Christmas at a bookstore. It turned out she had met my brother in Peace Corps training, so we became friends, and then the next fall and also that-- [pause]. Well, I'm missing a year, but then we made plans to live in a house together.

JW: Did you meet Rich [Henighan]?

LH: I met Rich because [pause] there was a year I lived with Kathy Hutson, who is a member of FOCIS [Federation of Communities in Service], and it was through Kathy. Kathy was there getting a master's in speech, and I guess I knew Kathy from my driving around when I was at Pine Mountain. You know, it's not too far; it's over a mountain or so, to Big Stone [Gap, Virginia] from Pine Mountain. So, she knew Rich;

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Rich was down doing his alternative service, and I went with her for Thanksgiving up to Big Stone, and that's where I met Rich. He and some other people came down and visited Kathy a time or two and we continued our acquaintance. Then, the next year, we moved in together! [Laughter] I think living together in that group, and Rich also, certainly, and meeting Brenda, and later, meeting Fran, was an eye-opener to me about women's issues. I don't think I'd really thought it had anything to do with me much. I certainly heard about it, but I don't feel I had any problems.

JW: So, can you describe that process?

LH: Of--?

JW: Of how moving in with them and meeting other women like Fran and Brenda led you to different ideas about women's issues? What sorts of things were going on that made you think that you had a different relationship to it than you thought?

LH: Oh, I don't know if I can answer; it's been a long time ago, but I certainly would have given them credit. Brenda, at that point in time, was working at *Motive* (magazine), and--I mean, I think I was exposed to many--I mean, at Oberlin I had to have been exposed to some of these ideas as well. I did belong to a consciousness-raising group there that Brenda's sister was in, and some other people.

JW: Was this Marsha?

LH: Marsha, right?

JW: I'll be talking to her tomorrow.

LH: Are you? Okay, well, maybe she'll remember more about this group than I do, but we did meet, and I'm sorry I can't remember.

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JW: At that time, did you also have meetings with your partners, your male partners? I know that happened later. I'm not sure if you were a part of it, but mixed-gender political discussion meetings?

LH: Well, I don't know that we had anything formal, but living in that house, we had many, many discussions because everybody was very interested and it was a very interesting time.

JW: So what led you all to live together?

LH: I don't know. You know, I was thinking--I had this assumption when Rich and I were starting to feel like we were in love, that we said, "Okay, we'll get married," and Rich said, "Well." I think he was the person that had more open-minded ideas. I mean, I don't think I expressed this, but I just assumed it, that that's the course of things. Then it turned out that we would live in this group house for a while, and it was great. Once I had this idea, I wasn't at all disappointed. It's funny that I didn't feel gypped; it was good. So, I think it would be interesting if Brenda remembers. It was Brenda and I and Ed [Hamlett], and then Connie. Connie is my friend from Pine Mountain, so she and the person she married--they initially lived there. Then, the next year was when Fran [Ansley] and Jim [Sessions] lived there, in their room. We were a veteran house of a year when they came, and a woman--do you know Joan Boyd? She lived there; she lives in Big Stone. I bet Ed and Brenda hatched up this plan.

JW: [Laughter].

LH: They had known each other a little bit longer. It was a very organized house in that we had work charts and schedules and all this, and house meetings [laughter].

JW: Who first set up all of the structure?

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LH: Well, I'd say we all did, but Ed was a very structured person, so he had probably--. Brenda and I moved in and were setting things up when I had this accident in which a cabinet, a big, heavy wooden cabinet in the kitchen in which we were putting things, fell off the wall. Slowly, you know, but it turned out to be nailed up with big nails, which is not a good idea, but its fall was blocked by a cabinet, so it could have been worse, but I did get cut, and I used to have a scar here. No, I have a scar here; that scar's from something else. This scar is from a cut because there were jars that broke. We were right about two blocks from a hospital--this was handy. She took me to the hospital, but I went in there reeking of vinegar and cloves and pickle juice and everything! It was quite funny.

I think that's when I got to thinking more about fairness to gay people because one of Brenda's co-workers was a gay woman, and also, a male friend worked there with her. I mean, it was all a very growing kind of time. You know, you can see, in looking back, at how important all these different stages were in opening up my ideas.

JW: What led the group-living to come to an end?

LH: Fran and Jim wanted to move over here and start whatever that organization or that higher education thing was. They had come, as you probably know or will know, they had come to figure out what to do in the South. Joe [Bogle] and Brenda had decided to move over here, and I'm not positive what their reasoning was now. Rich had finished; he had done a master's in--how he managed to do his conscientious objection--second year being a student, getting a master's in psychology at Peabody. So that was over, and he had decided to go to nursing school, and I don't know why we decided to do what we did, so I don't know. He went to Harlan and I got a job in Wise County, Virginia, so I

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don't know how that all came about, but it certainly did, and it was a plan. Mainly, it broke up because people were ready to go do something else. We had realized that this fall or end of summer is the fortieth year since we moved in together. So we'll have to get together [laughter].

JW: So could we go back a little bit to your Pine Mountain experience? I'm curious as to how you felt, going from your experience, even if you weren't directly involved in some of the civil rights activism--I mean, it sounds like moving to a college, a black college, and being a white woman is a pretty big deal.

LH: Right. Oh, it was.

JW: So doing that, and then you being from Kansas in the first place, and then going to the mountains where you [saw] poverty with white people that was, I imagine, a newer experience. What was that like? How did you see those things as tying together or not fitting together? How do you explain those experiences?

LH: This is not exactly answering that, but one thing that helps me be able to do both those things is growing up where I did, because the one thing we had to do in Oskaloosa was fit in, and it partly is my personality also. I'm not a pushy person, and I wait and see, and wait until somebody's ready to open up to me and that kind of thing, so I think that enabled me to manage okay at Tougaloo. I think it also is skillful. Anywhere you go, it's--I mean, it has helped me anyway. There are certainly other ways to be, but also all through my life I have been taught to be respectful of other people in the way they are in their cultures, so I think whether it's living in a small town in Oskaloosa or at Tougaloo or in Harlan County, [pause] it's the same thing. It's the same.

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One thing that did happen at Tougaloo, and I want to ask Connie what she remembers about this, but we, at some point, felt that the people that were running Pine Mountain were not being inclusive enough with local people who were involved in Pine Mountain. I remember we wrote a letter about this saying we thought this was wrong in some way. So, clearly, I had this idea that I couldn't get rid of, of people being in charge of their lives. Of course, you have to give Oberlin the credit. Oberlin is full of all kinds of activism. It really is a hotbed of it in a very good way, an eye-opening place. After I left Kentucky, and then for these years I wandered around, I wasn't focused. I did little jobs; I did weaving for a while. I did that when we lived together. We had a loom in the dining room. I mean, a lot of people go through times of not being focused, but this kind of lasted a long time in my life, in a way. But it's been okay. It's been okay, but it's not as if I decided I'd go get a law degree and help people like Fran has done.

JW: But you did move back to--were you living in Harlan? Rich was working in Harlan, and you--.

LH: Yeah, then we moved back, right. It's just over a mountain from--we lived in Lee County Virginia, and he had to drive over the mountain to Harlan, and I did work in that same area. That is where we helped organize this St. Charles Health Care Clinic, so we did get involved locally with things that were going on. That was neat; that was neat. And I had a job; my job there was also a good job. I don't know what my title was, but anyway, I went to visit families with young children that were at risk for some bad thing, and visited them weekly with activities to do, which is about the same thing I finished doing a year or so ago here for a Tennessee organization. So, I got to travel around and go into people's homes and try to be useful to them. Also in that program, you took them

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to appointments and stuff too, but I learned a lot and met people, and it was a good job. So I did that, and Rich went to nursing school. Then he finished nursing school, and then he worked at a clinic over there. No, no, no--then he worked at Big Stone in the hospital. Then, we went back to Nashville for a year when he got his nurse practitioner training. At that point, we had a baby.

JW: So can you tell me a little more about helping to organize the health clinic?

LH: Right. We went and talked to people, and there was a woman who still is there named Beth [Davies]--Sister Beth--she's a nun. I could probably dredge up her last name. She is a really remarkable woman, and she and another sister, and there may have been others; we went and talked to people that--in this community. St. Charles is a real coal-mining community, and has lot of coal camps that go out from it. At that point, it still was--I'm not sure if it still is mining coal there or not, but it certainly was in a decline. So we talked to people, got them together, had meetings, made a health council. I was on the health council. Rachel was a baby, and she would come to health council meetings as a baby. It was neat; it was neat. The Vanderbilt Health Fair people came there. We had a health fair, and we established a health clinic. A health clinic got established, and it may have been established after we left, and it's still going. Art Van Zee has been the doctor there for decades. He should get a medal. [Pause] See, we lived there at some point after Rich came back from--and was a nurse practitioner, and then he worked at a clinic in Harlan County as a nurse practitioner. That must have not been for very long. We moved here when I was pregnant with my second child and Rachel was two.

JW: Did you stay in touch with people there?

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LH: We did some for a while, and we are in touch somewhat with Art. We see him now and then, but I'm not in touch and there's nobody, a local person I'm in touch with now. We lived in a house, initially, that was a three-room house with an outhouse. So it was a three-room house arranged like this, like an "L," and it had two porches. It was heated with a coal stove. It had a sink; it had a drain; it didn't have running water. It had a spring and it had an outhouse and it had a creek that went behind it, and it had these roses or something really pretty on it. I thought it was lovely [laughter]. Later, maybe fifteen years ago or so, we went back and looked at it, and it was just a *shack*! But I think it really looked better when we lived there. It degenerated over the years. The rent for that house was fifteen dollars a month.

JW: Wow! [Laughter].

LH: So we stayed there, and then when we were going to have a child, we moved into Pennington Gap, in another very odd house, but it had running water and it had a toilet in the bedroom. It's rent was thirty-five dollars a month, or maybe thirty, and then we moved to another house that was--anyway, in that neighborhood.

JW: So was the clinic and I guess even--this might go back to your experience at Pine Mountain Settlement School also, but those are the years the Appalachian Regional Commission was--it's still in existence, but I think more grounded in giving more money to communities and directly funding things like that.

LH: Right. Well, I actually think--I bet the program I worked for was funded by then. It was from (42:25) and it was, you know, this early intervention program, so I bet a nickel it was. And we certainly knew people in that area who were--like Beth Bingman and Rich Kirby and all the old FOCIS people. You know, they were all out, hustling

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around, trying to do good things. So, it was quite a community of people [pause] that we knew that had the same [pause] political outlook.

JW: So did you interact often with those people?

LH: Yeah, yeah, we certainly--we did socially and [pause] I think, organizationally, we were involved a lot with that health council, but--for sure--yeah. And we still know them, you know. That's really a wonderful thing. I feel very glad about that, as well as being glad about this group of friends around here. That has been super.

JW: So, when you were trying to start a health clinic and have meetings with community people, were there challenges that you remember from that?

LH: [Pause] I can't remember; I think it went pretty well, as far as getting people involved and then getting something to happen. Rich and I left, as I said, I think before the clinic actually happened, but I remember, this was an eye-opener to both of us as organizers. Not that we went on to do that much, but we both thought it would be better to scale down--kind of the goal, and get, I don't know, something less than a clinic, that it was just more realistic. But it was clear that what people wanted was a clinic, and that's what they would work for, and they were right. There was no question that the community needed one, but in an organizational way, it was also important for it to be a clinic.

JW: So was that a discussion that you had with the group?

LH: Yeah, I think we had some, but it was clear that we were wrong and were outvoted, so it was not a big issue.

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JW: So did you see yourselves as part of a movement of people who were more educated and had moved around the country more, and some had joined things like VISTA and ended up in these little mountain towns in Appalachia? Was there a sense that you were a part of that movement?

LH: Yes, I think so, yes.

JW: Was that a conscious thing at the time or is it a reflection now?

LH: I think it was conscious, and I think Rich went into health care because he thought it was an area that needed work done on it, you know, in that way. Oh, I think so.

JW: And where is Rich from?

LH: He grew up in New York City.

JW: I guess another question that comes up for me about those experiences that you had is that you were tapping into--Pine Mountain, the Settlement School was associated with religious--? It wasn't, earlier?

LH: I don't think so. I mean, there is certainly a chapel there, but it's not a big deal. It was Eastern women who came down [pause] and established the school, but I don't know that they were associated with a church.

JW: Well, I guess the other part of that was how did you meet the sisters who were working for FOCIS?

LH: Well, Rich went there because he was a Catholic. He had gone on some trip down South that was an eye-opener for him earlier, and then, you know, he knew about them, so he was able to get in touch with them when he needed a conscientious--when he was getting drafted. So that's how he got to them, and it was through his Catholicism, which then ran out pretty fast, I'd say. And I got to know them because they were handy.

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My family were Presbyterians, but religion has never been a very important part of my life.

JW: How did your experience living in this communal household with other activists--how do you think that influenced what you did later in moving to southern Appalachia?

LH: [Pause] Well, in a way, we were going out from that house to do work, to do work in the real world. There was a little bit of that feeling, as well as the feeling of getting started on a marriage and all that, because we got married at that point, but it would be interesting to talk with Brenda and Fran and Jim about that. I think Joe felt that way a bit, because he went and did work at ALCOA, which I think he thought of as being [pause] the place you should be with the workers. Oh, I think there was a bit of that, and I'm sure Rich felt that way. I was fortunate and got that job, and then we did have the idea of the health clinic and that worked out.

JW: You said that you felt like Brenda and--being in the house, but I think you mentioned Brenda specifically led you to start thinking more about women's issues, and can you give examples of how that influenced the way you lived your own life after leaving, and what impact that had on you?

LH: Oh, [pause] I think it made me more aware, and I certainly was more able to pay better attention. You know, in my work, I worked with mothers and children, mainly, who were not always very powerful people in their lives. So, I had the role of trying to make them feel--give them skills to make them feel better at their jobs of being mothers, so I could think about what I was doing in a little bit more of a political way. I also

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learned to pay better attention to news and what was going on and to read more things.

And Rich, I have to say, he's always been a good influence in learning things.

JW: How do you think--? I guess the better question is, did you see yourself as part of a women's movement in the seventies?

LH: I think so.

JW: And what does that mean to you?

LH: Well, I think it meant a great feeling of sisterhood with a lot of people, of sharing with things. One wonderful thing that happened after we lived here and--see, we moved down here a lot because after having a child, we got to feeling more isolated there, so we moved here because these people we knew lived around here, and Rich got a job. Then we started this wonderful thing called "mothers' meetings." Have you heard about them?

JW: Briefly, yes.

LH: So, we'd meet Sunday mornings at someone's house, and this would be Fran and Brenda and I, and maybe Marsha—Juliet, maybe.

JW: Juliet Merrifield?

LH: Uh-huh.

JW: Okay.

LH: So, several people. Oh, and then Gwen. I don't know how often we did this, but we did it regularly for a lot of years. The children and the fathers would stay home; we'd get together and eat and talk about whatever, but a lot of it involved mothering and children, but I don't expect it all did. That was a great resource and a source of strength. I would advise anybody having children to find such a thing. I don't know when it stopped.

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JW: So, did it go on for years?

LH: Some years.

JW: Okay.

LH: Oh, I think so.

JW: So what --do you remember the types of things that would come up, and also how the meetings were run? Was there a certain theme for each one, or was there--?

LH: It was pretty informal as I recall. I think, just people talked about what was going on and what their kids were doing, and we compared notes on our husbands, what they were doing. It was a great way to [pause] to learn things and get some ideas, but also, to feel a kinship with people. It was wonderful, and I still feel that we still can get together. We still have children; they're just in their thirties now, so--[laughter]. So I mean, I think all of us feel lucky--lucky to have had this group of people that have been friends. It's a few people and then there are people beyond that, that have also been supportive and that you know shared a lot with you. And it's from doing a variety of different work in this area for a lot of years that has made it happen and last. One other thing that did come out was the Highlander Children's Camp, which, for two summers, we gathered and had a few days of camping together. One year, or maybe both years, was at Fran's mother's place, and we planned activities for the kids and did things together. It was fun and then we thought *we should do more than this*. Oh, somebody I haven't mentioned that was certainly involved in all these things was Polly Murphy. So then, there was really Polly and Fran and I that talked to Highlander about doing a camp at Highlander, so that started. I got the job as the director for that, and Polly helped a lot of

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years and Fran helped some, but Brenda did not get involved in that. I think she felt she couldn't help because of whatever she was doing at that time.

JW: So was the camp for--?

LH: The camp was for our children and others, to provide them with a good experience of being exposed to what we thought they should be exposed to, which they might not have been in their schools here, and try to get a diverse group of kids and counselors and stuff. It was for a week, and it's still going on.

JW: Oh, I didn't realize that.

LH: It is. It is. Linda Anderson has been the director for--. I did it for six years and she's done it since then. I went over a couple of years ago to help them make applesauce and it was fun. I mean, she says it's going real well, but now all the people that work at the camp had been campers, so they know exactly how it works. You know, it's a perpetuating machine now. I think it has been important in some lives.

JW: What kinds of programs do you have there?

LH: Oh, we had themes, like, one year it was "You Can Make a Difference." Once, it was about a disability in some way, an inclusion kind of thing. So, we'd have some content relevant to the theme, and we were able to get quite good musicians to come, because people knew them and they were--. The thing I remember, at one point, the director of Highlander was Hubert Sapp and his wife was Jean Sapp--they're African-American people, and she was a piano player and a singer. She led us all in the song that goes, [sings] "Lucy is so beautiful, Lucy is so beautiful, Lucy is so beautiful, and it's so beautiful, beautiful to be Lucy," and so you sing this all around the room, so there certainly are many affirming experiences like that. Then there are a lot of fun things, like

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swimming and a water slide down the hill at Highlander. Those things have continued, and now I understand that they've added a few things like playing tricks on each other at night.

JW: [Laughter]

LH: We would never do that [laughter]. It would be fun to talk to the young people who went to it. Well, there was a little deal at Highlander last year because it was its twenty-fifth year and Beth spoke about how it was important to her, so that was nice.

JW: Yeah, I hear she's an activist.

LH: Right! She is; she is.

JW: So is it your impression that a lot of the kids involved then became more active as they came of age? I mean, was that one of the goals?

LH: Well, certainly it was a goal to open people to all these issues and things. I don't know about being an activist. There were some offspring of activists there, some of the civil rights people's offspring. That was neat. No, it was a goal to expose kids, definitely, to that kind of thinking, and I think it still is. Although, I think that some of those experiences are more available other places now than they were in 1982 or whenever it was happening.

JW: So did that happen in conjunction with Highlander becoming more kin-friendly in general?

LH: Probably, probably, yeah, because some people, they're starting to have some children, and I had worked there doing child care and the idea--I had this idea that we should offer child care there that had some relevance to what was going on in the adult's meetings.

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JW: And that's come up a lot with other interviewees as an important point in Highlander's history.

LH: Well, yeah, that was--.

JW: So what was your--can you talk about your involvement in that?

LH: Well--.

JW: About how it happened, because I know it wasn't exactly easy.

LH: Well, I think it must have been when John Gaventa was the director. You know, he certainly was open to things, and I guess I was needing work. It was easier to work on weekends; I could take the children if I needed to. You know, basically, I would try to find out what issues they were talking about in there. You know, what group was meeting and all, and then try to think of ways to help the kids think about some of those same things. You know, sometimes we could make something or make something to present or something related, and that would be the best. It was hard to do in that you never knew what children you were going to have, what ages you were going to have, all that. It was a little bit unpredictable, so it wasn't perfect. But it was a good idea, and they certainly were open to it at that point. At that point, we were meeting still--where I first started, anyway, there was a trailer behind the old house which was the office and that was where the child care was.

JW: So did the idea of bringing child care to Highlander stem from the mothers' meetings?

LH: I don't know. I have no idea. It would be interesting to--somebody knows how that started. So you think they didn't even offer child care before then?

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JW: From what everyone else says: no, and Bingham Graves thought that once child care was offered, more women started coming to the meetings.

LH: Wow.

JW: Because now, like Susan Williams, when she talks about the workshops, she talks about how it's mostly women.

LH: I see.

JW: So I asked Bingham if that had always been the case and she said, "No, I think the child care was crucial."

LH: Wow. Well, that would make every sense in the world.

JW: Yeah, so--.

LH: Yeah.

JW: Yeah, so you didn't even know, but [laughter]--.

LH: I didn't know. I didn't know how important it was. That's neat.

JW: I really imagine it had a big impact on the kids, given that you were talking to them about important things, and not just baby-sitting, it sounds like.

LH: Right, right. I'd have to ask somebody if they had it before I went there. I'll tell you something that is frustrating is that you can't remember as much as you want to.

JW: Well, if we get enough stories, we can piece them together and work it out.

LH: Right.

JW: Let's see. [Pause] Well, I guess, earlier, before we started recording, you had mentioned how feminism with the women's movement was particularly important for the way you've raised your children and more personal things like that, when we were

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talking about the difference between people's professional lives and personal lives. Do you want to say a little bit more about what exactly that meant for you?

LH: Oh, well, I mean, partly, it was the [pause]--. Growing up here--so you grew up in Knoxville, and what part of Knoxville did you grow up in?

JW: I grew up in Corryton.

LH: Well, it's probably real similar to Seymour, I bet, in that the general culture is pretty basic Tennessee. In many respects, we had to provide, or felt it was good to provide alternate models for our children to what they encountered at school. But at the same time, I think they both feel, and I feel that it was good for them to go to the schools here and learn to know different kinds of people. I mean, in a way, they both went on to college, to Swarthmore and Oberlin, and where they met people, some of whom had gone to exclusive schools where they didn't meet the rank-and-file kind of person. Of course, we wanted them to value the people here and to see what is good, but at the same time, we wanted them to know there were other ways of being, and which we provided through the Highlander Camp or we provided through movies we went to or books we read or whatever. Then, when Susanna was a teenager, she chose to go to the Unitarian youth group because it was good for her to have another reference group, so all those things helped. So, basically that is how I would think it affected their lives. It certainly was partly through what we provided them that way. Now, when they were in the second grade, Rachel had a teacher who did the "free to be you and me" curriculum, so some things happened there, which was neat.

JW: So you sent them to the public school here?

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LH: Yeah, they went to the public school here. Now, I mean, that's what I did. You know, I went to a little public school, and I had a little resentment, I think, at not knowing--I felt I didn't know how much I didn't know when I went to Oberlin. It was a shock to me. So, I resented a little bit my parents not recognizing that that was a little bit of a lack. When the schools here--they were better and they had some AP classes, and they both went to Governor's Schools, so there were other influences that helped them.

JW: Were there ever conflicts with educators?

LH: I don't think so. Not that we went and harangued people about--.

JW: What are your daughters doing now?

LH: Well, Rachel is--she became a teacher. She went to Bank Street. She is not teaching now. She has two children and she lives in Washington, D.C. Her husband works for National Public Radio. She's good; she's doing well. Susanna lives in the British Virgin Islands. She saw an ad upon graduating from college to work on a paper. She had worked on the Oberlin paper, and although she hadn't studied journalism, she'd worked on it a lot and was interested in it, so she went to this job and then she--so that's been ten years now. She ended up marrying somebody there, so we're stuck with her being there. She worked for a couple of papers, finally being the editor of a paper, but then got a job with the government and then got a job with a law firm. She's being a communications person. She seems okay but she seems far away. It would be interesting for you to ask those two people a couple of questions.

JW: I know. I know; I keep thinking that. I met one of Bingham's daughters the other night. Marsha mentioned that I should talk to her daughter too, and I think it's a good idea to get a different perspective. So I guess my last question--and then I'll see if

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there's anything you want to add--is a broad question about this research project we're working on, and that is: how would you describe Southern feminism or do you think that's a useful term or phrase for us to be using?

LH: So this is opposed to other kinds of feminism in some way?

JW: Yeah, and I think part of it--no, a large part of it comes from that feminism has often been defined from people in northeastern cities or places like Chicago, where there were consciousness-raising groups and people began to define second-wave feminism or the women's movement in their particular ways, and we have this feeling that it doesn't really work here [laughter]. So we're trying to get a handle on what it is or what ideas people had about it. So that's why I ask.

LH: Well, I don't know. I think it's a good idea; I think it's true. I think it, in some ways, could be thought of as more practical and less philosophical. A lot of people have done work that is with real people, and they're more complicated than someone's theory. So I think it's very useful to be practical, but it may not write the big book, you know? I don't know.

JW: Can you think of an example when you felt like there were feminist impulses driving some of the things you were doing but it was based on practical outcomes rather than being a part of the women's liberation movement?

LH: There's being a Girl Scout leader, which I was for some years, and there's trying in some way to make kids feel strong, young girls feel strong, which is a simple but important thing to do. I mean, maybe it's doing things where you are in a smaller way, but it still is significant but it's not [pause] a real big thing to do.

JW: What was the work you've been doing for the past few years?

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LH: I worked for TIPS, which is Tennessee Infant Parent Services. I would be a parent advisor and go to a home where a child--a child that mostly had some disability or some language problem, or they can have a hearing or a speech impairment, although I wasn't qualified to do that. So, I did this for, maybe, five, four years after I worked for an agency that was a drug counseling agency for about ten years. So this was similar to that job I did early on, where I visited people in their homes. I tried to empower them and help them be better parents. I'll have to say it was hard. It was interesting to do, but hard to do it, like you were really doing that, really accomplishing that, mainly because, number one, they had so many reasons they couldn't be doing a good job. Or some of them were doing a good job without you, and that's good, or they turned it over to you, basically, to entertain their child for an hour. That's the most frustrating, but Polly, if you should talk to Polly, she does this job now still.

JW: Well, is there anything else you would like to add?

LH: Well, it's been a good life and it's been nice for me to think about it, so thanks.

JW: Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW

Mike Hamrick, August 22, 2010

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