

“Green Mountain Chronicles”
Oral History Transcriptions, 1981-1989 (bulk: 1987-1988)
MSA 199 & 200

Introduction

This transcription is one of approximately 42 transcriptions of interviews with individuals conducted primarily in 1987 and 1988 in preparation for a radio program sponsored by the Vermont Historical Society entitled “Green Mountain Chronicles.”

Scope and Content

The transcriptions in this collection represent interviews of approximately 42 individuals conducted primarily in 1987 and 1988 by Mark Greenberg, Mary Kasamatsu, Eleanor Ott, and Tom Davis in preparation for a radio series entitled “Green Mountain Chronicles.” The series of 52 five-minute programs was broadcast by commercial and public radio stations throughout the state in late 1988 and early 1989. The earliest interview in the collection was conducted in 1981; the latest was in 1989.

The interviewers spoke with well known Vermonters such as Governors Philip Hoff, Deane Davis, and Madeleine Kunin; lesser known personalities such as Catherine Robbins Clifford, one of the first women to hike the entire length of the Long Trail; and historians such as Weston Cate. The following inventory of the collection highlights the major theme(s) of each interview. The following list of program tapes gives the title of each radio program.

The goal of the radio series was to tell the history of Vermont in the twentieth century using archival sound recordings and recent interviews. The project was undertaken by the VHS in celebration of its 150th anniversary in 1988 and was funded by a \$14,000 grant from the Vermont Council on the Humanities and Public Issues with additional support from New England Telephone Company.

MSA 199, Folder 0 contains background information on the project. The VHS website at www.vermonthistory.org/gmchronicles contains a list of the Green Mountain Chronicles radio broadcasts and audio files of those broadcasts.

Julie Cox
March 29, 1988

Mary Kasamatsu
Interviewer

MK Coming up next is an interview with Julie Cox continuing on the subject of the OWL's, the Order of Women Legislators.

JC In 1987, in the first half of this biennial '87-'88 there was one.

MK Now I'm going to ask you to start that over.

JC Okay. At the beginning of last year, 1987, there was one. [a caucus] A group of women legislators met and identified issues that they wanted to follow through the bienium and there had been some questions on the part of both old and new legislators as to whether or not it was something that was needed and I think the concensus was yes, let's have a caucus, let's try it for this session and see how things work. So as far as I know there is one.

MK Prior to their last session, or the beginning of this biennium, prior to that, had there been something?

JC There had been a very informal one and again I think it was just used to discuss issues but I don't know what kind of programs or agendas they came up with and it's again how the dialogue changes. Now there setting up agendas and programs instead of just having just general discussions. But when I spoke to their group in 1986, they actually had a male secretary who I think was Andrew Christianson from Plainfield. So he would also know if they were active, that's why I didn't think of. And he could give you a whole prospective on women in the General Assembly.

MK That should be interesting.

JC Yea, yea, that's what I thought. That's what I thought.

MK How would you....

JC Oh, I'm sure.

MK I totally don't understand how the legislature functions on most of the things that it does, but it's curious to me that they had a male secretary. Was that...

JC I'm sure that it was some joke that one woman said to Andrew or Andrew heard that they were caucusing and said that's not fair you're excluding men and I'm sure he walked in and they said fine if you want to participate, we need a secretary and putting him in this purposely. I'm sure what they thought demeaning position that, he's

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probably thrilled to be in, as long as he is a committee clerk and taking records somewhere else. But, I did get a kick out of it. I think all the women did, so.

MK I'm sure.

JC But again, I don't know how active they really are. There had been some talk of a reunion as I said of having a big women's dinner that wasn't to be a political thing, but again a very social thing that was to be used as an effort to really document women's history in the State House.

MK That's something I do want to pick up on too. Um, the almost political, as I understand it, nature of the OWL's compared to perhaps, maybe compared to what is going on now.

JC Well by nature, a caucus is a political unit. I don't know exactly what the definition is but the overtones of it are certainly more political than an order, an order of women legislators. And as Lillian said, their primary goal was to educate women to promote women working together and women working together on issues. Their constitution really set out what the function of the organization was and it was broad based enough so that they could have lots of different activities. But purposefully enough I think so it really did serve women's needs and particularly legislators needs to understand issues and get to know each other and things like that.

MK And it was not just to function on women's issues?

JC No, it was just that women in this case in the legislature, even now are unique. You know, they certainly aren't a majority. They're still in the minority and it, just for that reason alone, they have something of interest with each other I guess. Um, but it wasn't just women's issues. I know that. But you know, it was social issues as well as some political issues that they were involved with. I have no idea what the order did in regards to the equal rights amendment in the early 1970's or the International Year of the Woman. But I get the impression that they didn't participate in that sort of thing at all. As a matter of fact, there was a conscious backing off of those things that were related directly to a particular woman's issue. You know, I can't see the OWL's coming in as a group in favor or against abortion, things like that. I may be wrong, I don't how Lillian related to that but.

MK She strict, she seemed to strictly feel that it was, that for her its value *was* in the ability of the other members in the organization to distill the other legislation that was before the various committees and help the women have a better understanding of that, being sort of more on the inside track, and offer a safe environment to ask questions that *she'd* be afraid to ask in other places.

JC Uh huh. That's certainly the impression that I get. Now they did meet, they had a formal meeting in the summer in between sessions. And I know in 1976, their speaker was Madeline Kunin who at that point was on the appropriations committee who came to talk to them about State revenues and budgeting and things like that. So they always had sort of a keynote speaker even in the special little meetings that they had who can help them further understand the issues that were in front of them.

MK Was their networking *and* orientation to the legislature's functions handled informally — ? now, sort of a day to day *process*. they helped each other through, through *un* familiar territory.

JC Yes, definitely. And that you know maybe the most formal thing was their first meeting in a session where they could sit down and say hello to the new members and elect their officers and discuss how they were going to run the rest of the year as a group. But that was as formal as it would get. And then other times, you know whenever they were going to meet at another time of the year, you know that would be formal, but other than that, I don't think there was anything. Now the most formal thing that, the most formal time that they have that we haven't talked about yet is the National Order. The National Order was very, very active. And here were you know up to 500 other women just like this group in Vermont doing the same thing in their own states and um, so the National Order would send out newsletters that the State Order was getting all the time. And then there was a National Convention. There was a National Convention held in Montpelier in the 1940's. There's a picture of like, you know, 200 women standing on the steps of the State House. Um, it's so wrinkled and cracked, that you can barely see it anymore. We have another picture of a convention from the 1950's in North Conway, New Hampshire. They are standing in front of the flume and it's, all these women in gray hats stading in front of this flume in North Conway. They would meet for these big sessions and discuss National policy and also the function of legislatures in each of the different states. So they would offer sessions

on lobbying. They would offer sessions on what was perceived as being sort of women's issues then. Or, or sessions on issues that women would find themselves voting on in a General Assembly. The only times they didn't meet were between 1941 and 1945 because so many of the women were busy with war efforts. Um, but the National Group was really the most formal contact the Vermont group had with what you and I would tend to think as being sort of formal political or, formal meeting schedules and things like that.

MK Now the National Order is still functioning?

JC Yup, it's still very active. They just wrote a history and the biggest problem they had in writing their history was the fact that so many of the women who were involved in the early years are gone, passed away and nobody kept records. Record keeping for most people is just not a big thing. And in fact when I started writing, I road all around New England looking for information on the Order of Women Legislators. Because there were so few women in Vermont that knew anything about it. And I got a long, long letter from a woman in New Hampshire saying oh, thank you for writing to us. This is so exciting. The National Order is still very active. I'm in my 80's and I'm a member and I participate as often as I can, but I don't get around like I used to, so I can't make all the meetings and here's the history of the National Organization. That basically just consisted of biographies of women members who had been Presidents of the National Order. The papers then, in fact there, it turned out that there were a group of records of the National Order of Women Legislators that after I wrote this woman in New Hampshire were given to the Smith College Archives which was the only, only the second group of papers relating to any of these Order of Women Legislators that had been discovered so that was sort of exciting. Very exciting and I know Smith was thrilled to get these papers. They really were. So there is still a lot of older women in other New England States certainly that are active in this. And that was sort of fun. It was a lot of fun to get these, start getting letters from women that I hadn't met and who were in their 80's and 90's saying oh, this is so exciting, but, not to have that same response here at home. (LAUGH) Oh yes, those, but again, when there are, you know, it's always very hard to look back on our past when we can't find anything out about it. So in this case it was especially fun to find out something about how other orders had worked.

MK That's interesting.

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JC Uh,

MK Was that your son?

JC Yea, I think so. Josh, is that you?

MK Now let us, try and figure out.

JC Close the door.

MKdo that.

JC Joshua close the door.

MK Well okay, let's talk a little bit about,..I want to get into this whole thing about the transition and uh, the other ~~thing~~ is that ~~it's~~ harder..... To me, again I keep coming back in my head to the fact that if, if I were a new legislator it would be so valuable for me to have some kind of predictable regular network other than just —

JC (CHILD TALKING) Josh, you're suppose to knock. (KNOCK, KNOCK) Yes you may. Okay, no more don't come back. (OKAY) (...KNOCK) No. Go ahead. I think he's done.

MK Just the whole idea of an orientation. You know, how, legislature is so, to me as an outsider, so complex. And I suppose, as Lillian said yesterday, well if you didn't have a history of some sort of public service in some way you'd never get there. In the first place — perhaps, if I had that kind of history behind me, I wouldn't find it as complex as I find it as a total outsider, but I would still think that, that just sort of an initiation somehow into the traditions, the way things are done, the protocols, the things that I guess are not written down that you somehow have to figure out.

JC I think the OWL's was an easy introduction to that and sort of an easy hello in a social way that people could understand. I think that now the individual party caucuses probably serve that function. Or, perhaps the Sergeant At Arms fills some of that function. I don't know if there is a newcomers night at the beginning of every session for new legislators but there is no question that the OWL's served as that introduction and I would agree, I mean especially in this day in age. It is very difficult to just walk into the General Assembly and understand how committee assignments, committee record keeping, pages, caucusing works and without mechanisms there to say welcome to the State House, I don't know how

you get to know what goes on. You ask other legislators, but again, I think Lillian was right in saying that a social group or even a social quasai-political group like the OWL's could give that introduction without letting you feel out in the cold. And again, I don't know today. I would hope it's not the caucuses that serve as your introduction. You know you don't, it's nice to be able to sit back from an outsiders point of view and say isn't that nice that they have organizations that are in place like the OWL's where legislators and other people, women, can come in and feel comfortable in their meetings. That was I think was another function of the group that we haven't really talked about yet. But their, their role is also an organization that any woman who was the wife of a legislator or maybe the governor's wife could also be a part of. Or even if you were visiting the State House, I think you could feel a little more comfortable knowing that this group was in place and you could go up to to a member and say Hi, my name is and my representative told me I could come in and see you. Today, there's nothing like that. I mean, you go in cold to your representative or just as a member of the public, you know you would get a tour guide to take you around. But I think it was a nice way that outsiders could come in and actually be a part, maybe of the day to day action in the State House. Today, there are all sorts of groups that actually cover that function of the outsider being able to come in. I know that the State Medical Society sponsors doctor for a day. You know they have doctors all over the state that come in for a day and I spoke with one who said it's impossible. I mean you walk in, you're introduced to the floor of the House as the doctor for the day. You are sent to a committee. You sit there and you listen to legislation that you know nothing about and at the end of the day you go home. A lot of people have shook your hand and you have learned wonderful things about whatever section of the bill they were working on the day that you were there, but you have no impact. You have no short-term or long-term impact unless someone gets sick while you're right there and you can help them. So an organized group like the OWL's really gave women, both members of legislature and other women a way to keep up with things all the time. And keep in touch with what was going on all the time if they wanted.

MK

^{There} you get onto what Lillian said a little bit about the fact that she trusted the committee recommendation on a piece of legislation because she just didn't have time. It would seem as though you look at the list of

bills that are, that have been announced that they are going to be put up in the beginning of the session, there get to be more and more of them, not less and less.

JC That's right and it's more and more difficult for everybody to follow. The men or women and again I don't, you can look at the minutes of the OWL's meetings from 1929 I think when they were formally meeting all the way up through the 19, the early 1980's and where there are records of a meeting, the records articulate the fact that someone always was available to come in and speak to them on an issue and that in fact it was the women themselves who were coming together and saying here's the issue that we'd like to discuss this week and choosing an appropriate speaker to come in. They would take minutes of that meeting. The women could ask questions of the speaker and it was a wonderful way I think to be able to be kept up on what was going on around legislation. And again that also gave each of the women on separate committees an opportunity to let the other women on other committees know what was happening to a particular bill. So if you were on the Aeronautics Committee and you were interested in actually a library bill, you could, you had a way to find out what was happening and be kept up on it. Today again, I think that function is filled by lobbyists. That's why there are so many of them. Now I think that's another big reason. You know, they've jumped from being 100 to being 300. The issues are so much more complex. And in some ways perhaps the way that legislators are dealing with them now are so much more political that their lobbyists fill the gap that once maybe a more social group used to do and it's the lobbyists that will take you out for dinner instead of your womens order that will take you out to dinner or buy you lunch or sit down and say if you have questions I'll speak with a group of you. Whether it be your committee or yourself and other concerned people.

MK And that's part of the whole transition?

JC I think so between the legislature of a generation ago and the legislature of today. I know when you look at things in terms of history, you always have sort of the 30 year generation gap and how thing change during that 30 year period and how you can really begin to see changes at the end of a 30 year period and I think right now the General Assembly is in, has come, is maybe in the infancy of its next generation. I think the difference is between the General Assembly today and ten years ago, twenty years ago, thirty years ago, are tremendous and beyond the physical changes, the physical changes are tremendous.

The new traffic patterns. The way committees rooms are set-up. Where people meet and greet each other have all changed. And you also have the way the committees function. The staff support functions. The way constituents function. The way lobbyists have functioned have all changed so there's a big change. The average age of the House member I don't think has lowered too much, but more and more when you're reading analyses of the way the legislature has changed, you are looking at a changing from a group of people who used to be farmers to a group of people who have many more diverse occupations. Many more backgrounds come from many different places and have varying levels of expertise or knowledge in different fields. I don't know what it means. You know there are just tremendous changes and in fact...legislators who don't want to have a mock session, who cares about Maple Sugar week, to having groups like the Friends of the State House saying it's incredibly important that we restore the Governor's Chamber. And having people more than willing to have that change take place. You know, let's restore it the way it used to be. Let's keep the House and the Senate Chambers historical. It's very important to the administration, to legislators and to the general public to be able to walk into that State House and have that very strong feeling of this is our State House. We're very proud of it and that's the very physical response that you have. And in the meantime you have legislative traditions, legislative folktales that are being handed down sort of generation to generation and the events themselves have disappeared and we only get snippets of them from other peoples memories.

MK Let's talk about somebody, you mentioned some of them. What was Maple Sugar Week for instance?

JC Maple Sugar Week was celebrated in the spring (LAUGHING) of every session. And the description that I have is from the wife of Vermont's Lieutenant Governor, Mrs. Wills in 1937. It just says it's "another observance with a Vermont tang. In some convenient hall, legislators and their families forgathered to do honor to a sap. There is great enthusiasm evidence at the start for the good old maple syrup, yum, yum." And it just, I think it served as a way for everybody to get together. It was a social event of the session. I'm not sure what those are today. You've got the Governor's Inaugural and that really is about it and Farmers Night still remains. Now that's supposedly a tradition of a 150 years. It was called alternately "Farmers Night" or the "Farmers Club", has always met on a Wednesday night and that serves as a social thing. Now I think it's as much of a social evening for residents of

Montpelier as it is for legislators and a chance for people who are visiting town to see members perhaps enjoying an evenings entertainment. But that's really the only one I can think of. In 1937, I have a great list from Mrs. Wills of all the social events of the session which were Thursday evenings the women's legislators meeting. I don't know if that's social, but, we'll just call it an event. The Governor's wife had a reception. The Women's Club had a receiptpion. There was Ladies Week which was full of activities geared towards the women legislators as well as legislators' wives and other women who would come to Montpelier for the week and enjoy what was going on in the State House which of course we don't what it was. (LAUGH) There were county delegation dinners, 14 dinners honoring each of the counties. That was a chance for politions to mingle with smaller groups so you didn't have to deal with the 260 odd members at any time. Maple Sugar Week, the Farmers Club which was meeting every Wednesday evening, The Mock Session which was held for one evening out of every session up until the 1950's.

MK What did they do with Mock Session?

JC The Mock Sessions were wonderful. It was a total parody of the members themselves and of whatever legislation they were dealing with. Each year it took many different forms. Quite often in the 30's, 40's, and 50's, the women would hold a separate Mock Session just geared at mocking all the men and they would dress up like some of the male members and then just parody them as often and as well as they could. The session was usually accompanied with a program. The program outlined what the evenings activites were going tobe as well as usuauilly they would contain the words for the songs that were to be sung and the songs were all sung to Yankee Doodle, and My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean and all dealing with a particular piece of legislation. So it's wonderful to choose a piece like a tax bill in the 1940's and here's this terrific four or five stanza parody of the bill that doesn't sound any different than it does today and they are just wonderful and ^{everybody} loved them. And it was really the opportunity for everybody to sit down and just rib each other as much as they could. No hard feelings and Mrs. Wills writes that it was wonderful to sit down during the day and listen to all the debate on a particular bill during the session. Everybody's nerves were frazzled to the bone for some of these very big issues as they are today and then to be able to that evening just sit down and put on your happy face, make fun. There are again, other than a few programs, there's hardly any documentation of what

occurred during the Mock Session. In fact there are very few members around today that can recall what happened. And they are another one of those little folk tales that have been passed down. In 1937, we also had the bald headed club and we wouldn't have known about that but that Mrs. Will's had a photograph taken of herself seated with a group of about 25 men who are all wearing little knit caps over their supposedly bald heads and then there was a whole song for this particular mock session relating to this bald headed mens club and she writes that it only started out with two members but by the end of the session she had over 20 who were involved in this weekly meeting of these bald headed men and of course we'll never know what they discussed. I can't imagine whether they served as a social or political or a you know, what kind of group they served as. And then there was also a junior senate which is pretty similar to the boys state that's housed today. Where they went in quite young men, again no young women, but young men from all over the state to come in and fill legislative positions. And that was just one session fifty years ago.

MK D. & the sessions run longer?

JC Twelve weeks. And in fact, this was something I found this morning. Sometime, Mrs. Wills writes, sometime during the session which averages about twelve weeks, whatever prophesies are made as they always are that this particular session is to be short and then she goes on to describe an event that was going to happen. Um, and I think again it's one of the things that you see looking at the OWL's, looking at Mock Sessions, looking at these little legislative day to day things that have occurred is how things have stayed the same. That even though the legislative tradition is changing, um, that even though the make-up of the legislature itself is changing that even though the issues that their dealing with are changing there are some things that never really have at all. Like the length of the session. Um, like the wonderful ability to sit down at the end of day and parody themselves. Even though we don't do those things formerly anymore, it's a lot of fun to read through the traditions and see what's there and see how it relates today. And that's one of my biggest problems is I would just love to go to the General Assembly and sit down with them every morning and say let me tell you about this hilarious thing that they did back in 1955, I really got a kick out of it. You guys will love it too. But, ah, you can't do that. At the Vermont State Archives, one of the programs that was instituted in 1988 was an effort to document the State House in the twentieth century through

photo exhibits and um, and that has gone over fairly well. We were hoping that by putting such an exhibit in the State House, maybe people would donate things relating to the State House and to the General Assembly to the Archives. Nothing happened, but I think it gave people in a good way to look at their very recent history. Again, here we are only um, little less than thirty years from the time when Vermont had the largest number of women in the State Legislature. When that was a, you know, Life magazine came and did a feature on the Mock Session, on women in the General Assembly, on the Order of Women Legislators and on Consuelo Bailey who was Vermont's first women Lieutenant Governor and the first woman Lieutenant Governor in the United States. And to find documentation of that particular event today is impossible. The only thing that's left of that event of Life magazine coming, of that entire session, is the Life Magazine article and a few reminences and nothing else and that's a very recent past, very recent past. And again, as I said before, when you ask people about these past events, they are folk tales. You know, they are the wonderful mystery and magic of what the General Assembly is like. So here you and I are outsiders trying to look in and these are all the problems that we bump into. It's difficult, but it's fun.

MK I was thinking of how, how in this thirty year spand I've only lived in Vermont ~~for~~ less than ten years, and I'm wondering how many of these changes in the legislature reflect changes in the population in Vermont.

JC I think, I think a lot of them do. Um, but actually a lot of them don't. We were talking earlier about how we can go to almost any town during the winter, sit down at a dinner table and expect to find a discussion of what's going on in the General Assembly. Um, having people in a community totally aware of who their legislator is, what they're doing and what's happening in the State House. It's certainly, I wouldn't say the same is true of our Congressional delegation. I don't think you could go to any household and sit down and say what do you think about Representative Jeffords or Senator Leahy or Senator Stafford, um, you know people will know generally but, especially on election year, they're not going to know everybody that's running for office nor I think sometimes do they really care. The General Assembly is there way of being involved in Vermont government on a day to day basis. So that hasn't changed. I think the men and women who are serving perhaps have changed. Um, I don't know the statistics on who's from Vermont and how that has changed. How many members are from Vermont now. Let's see, 78 of the 150 town, 150 town representatives are, are

from Vermont or at least were born in Vermont and out of the Senate, I think it's, it's about half. That's not a lot. Um, of course the percentages used to be much higher. I think you're seeing that there are very few Vermonters still in Vermont. Two-thirds of the State now technically is people who are born in Vermont, but nobody takes into account the fact that a lot of that two-thirds are people who moved here ten years ago and have had kids who are Vermonters. They are not picking up the same traditions that, that have been going on for awhile. So I don't know, I think Vermont is changing. I mean I think everybody is saying it's changing if we look at what's, the legislation being debated today and the way it's being debated. Um, I think lets us know how serious some of the changes really are. Um, we have a woman governor. Ah, out of the cabinet, I think the majority of the Cabinet right now um, are women. In fact the majority of the Cabinet right now are Republicans too (LAUGH) which is sort of odd. It's another one of the big changes. The state is swinging politically. Um, changing politically, I don't know if it's swinging politicallty, but between a total dominance by the Republican party too, certainly the majority votes in the General Assembly in the Democrats but not of, you don't see the same make-up in the administration itself which is different too. And that's a whole other sort of topic but, um, and I don't know what that means either.

MK I think that should be...

JC Yea, the change...

MK ...touch on it just for a few minutes.

JC The changes stop, I can't, I mean I can't articulate that, I mean you need to ask a, even a State House watcher. The things that struck me too, I guess one of the reasons that I really got started on this was when, when the OWL's were created, um, the response was so good, um, the newspaper editorial all said, this is wonderful, why should it be unusual ah, you know, um, what a good thing this is. And that was interesting. I mean that made me feel, Okay, Here's an organization that is being created and newspapers all over the State are carrying these stories saying now isn't this interesting. You know, a group of women have come together to look at bills in the General Assembly and what's happening and um, just sort of as a social club and isn't that great. (LAUGH) You know, if it happened today, the response would be totally different. And in fact, it wouldn't happen today. Ah, and I enjoyed doing that.

MK I still come back to the idea of is it the computer age, is it the people are so busy that they just, that they don't have the time or is it now things are so politically oriented that people feel they only want to caucus with their party?

JC Uh huh.

MK Yes, it's all very interesting.

JC Now see, alright, and when the club was formed, in the late '20's, the newspapers say "it is safe to say that a greater percentage of the women's group in the house give more serious thought to the problems of legislation than the male group. (LAUGH) Nearly every legislator has some particular legislation in which he is interested. The women however, as a rule, give the massive legislation the same pains taking scrutiny that they did the measures in which they are individually interested. They invariably meet and talk over important pieces of legislation to better know what each is thinking. Being a smaller group, they can do that to an advantage. It does not always mean however that they can reach common ground in their discussion, but they do have the benefit of the other gals opinion" (LAUGH) and I like that. I mean I like that statement and I like what it says about the difference between these women as a group being able to actually operate and have an effect as a group. I think that's a much more articulate way of saying it than I did before, but today they somehow they don't seem to need that. Not only that, I think you view, not that you view, but I think you can find that women feel very negatively about being associated as a group. Especially about being associated as a social club. That was one of the things I ran into when I first started doing work on this was women's feelings that here it is 1986 and as women we are lessened if we are viewed as a social group. If men don't take us seriously they must take us seriously. Therefore, we will no longer be a order of women legislators. That's not effective. That's not 1980's.

MK Professional

JC Not professional, absolutely. Ah, but then again, the General Assembly is not suppose to be professional. So you know where is that change coming. I think a lot of it is women themselves and women's perceptions that they can't afford to be viewed as being a social group anymore. Although you would hope that what this editorial said in the late 1920's is still as effective as it is today. I mean, you know you still, you still want to say it's true

that women can operate better as a smaller group and be more effective I think as a group. Today they perceive that as being a negative influence which is surprising.

MK Yes, to me, it almost seems it should have been the other way around. You know, the women, when they were brand new to the legislature should have been more concerned with being taken seriously than they are now.

JC And there was one. I mean in 1921 was Edna Beard the first woman from Orange who was allowed to choose the very first seat and the big joke was who was going to sit next to her. And nobody would for over an hour, nobody chose the seat next to hers just because the men knew that they would be ridiculed. And that's the impact of one woman on the House. I can't imagine what it's like when you've got forty or fifty and of course it's not a big deal anymore. Taking your seat is nothing. Um, but you know, I just find it to be amazing how quickly it's changed and how quickly that perception has changed between what women feel like they need to be as a group and what they were.

MK And also as you say it's such recent history and how hard it is to document some of these things. I mean, in a period of twenty or thirty years ^{or so} how many of these things were never documented, how many of the original sources are no longer available to talk to you now.

JC And we find that over and over again with documenting the sort of the second half of the twentieth century. Um, the twentieth century is disappearing before our very eyes. The twentieth century is documented on paper that doesn't last. Photographs have a life span if you keep them out of the light of maybe ten, twenty years. Photographs from the early '20's, '30's and '40's, negatives are done, they are nitrate negatives, so they are soft combustible. Movie tape and film is self combustible nitrate, um, physically it's disappearing. You know, we're, we take down old buildings to put up new buildings. We are now learning how to renovate and ah, restore, but that still doesn't answer this initial need to fill the vacuum that's within our own, ah, within our own relatives' lifetimes.

MK And then with the computers, the fact that you've eliminated everything but the last, the final version of whatever it is, so....

JC Absolutely

MK ? .

Julie Cox
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JC Not at all.

MK _____

JC Not at all. And then for those people who do save papers, the amount of paper generated in the twentieth is ridiculous. For the person who does save, every draft of that great American novel, you've got a collection of forty linear feet of boxes and you've got to say to someone gee, I'm sorry we can't accept all forty feet in the Archives or in the Historical Society because we don't have room. The donor of course gets furious and here you and I are talking about the day to day history of Vermont's General Assembly that we can't document at all other than the legislation that they're passing. In fact the only way to do so is to go through newspapers stories day after day after day. It's really the reporters who um, who are there to let us know what goes on, but they're also just reporting on what's happening, the major legislation and we never know all those little things and the only way to find that is to go through the paper day to day to day through a session and look at the photos, you know, see what real life was like. And that's tough. That's, I guess the biggest thing about the twentieth century. What was real life like? (LAUGH)

MK Has anybody done any kind of oral history with older members of the legislature or...

JC No, um, no the programs have been discussed. I mean they're, hopefully they will happen, but it takes time and money and it's very difficult to go to anybody and say may we have a few thousand dollars to do oral histories. Um, unless they are with you. Unless they're with that particular person. Hopefully with my whole profession, that is archivists and historians, I mean I know that day to day, we're sort of hoping we can be, what other ways we can find to begin to get people consciously thinking about history on a day to day basis without it being dry and dull. In Canada, Canada history is day to day. I mean it's amazing. Every park offers a museum, every park offers a archives. The Canadian Archives have offices all over the world transcribing, taping, microfilming and sending stuff back to Ottawa because the Canadians feel very strongly that they are a universal people and that they ought to document the world around them. Americans are so much different in their feelings about that. You know, we painstakingly do genealogies. My family, my mother's family, every sibling, the day they were born, the hour they were born. All the people, they married their siblings and you know if there's a divorce oh my

gosh, but that's okay, because we'll still document it. If we are adopted, we go to tremendous lengths to prove where we're from, who we were, I mean we'll uncover every stone. But in terms of our own, day to day history, there's just no concept. You know you can go to a politician and say, please save your papers and they'll say of course, because again, I mean a politician already has that ^{ego} that says "save me, save me, (LAUGH) document me." Um, but these other little things, especially groups and so one of our goals now and through this grant and other activities that I do is to get people thinking about these things on a day to day basis. So if you have an organization, what's its statement of purpose. What does it do? Save its program, save its newsletters. You know, for your own family history, don't scotch tape your scrap book, don't put your photographs out in the sun. Think of a newspaper sitting out in the sun for a day and remember that all your family papers are doing that at the same time if you're not caring for them, but, yea there is, you don't know what the answer is.

MK It's all interesting stuff.

JC Uh, uh huh.

MK I'm not sure where I'm going to go with those.

JC Yea, and I don't either, but oh I'm glad you came in.

MK Well thank you.

JC Sure.

MK This has been fun.