Interview with Jeri Frederick

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, February 13, 2013. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I am in the library with Jeri Frederick. Good afternoon, Jeri.

Frederick: Good afternoon.

DePue: And we're going to be talking to Jeri about growing up in Springfield, but it's all to get to the very interesting story of your involvement with the Equal Rights Amendment fight, here in Springfield. Of all places, this was one of the main battlegrounds for the ERA fight. I know you got to the fight a little bit late, about 1980, but the last two years were lively years.

Frederick: Yes they were.

DePue: We're looking forward to that. What I'd like to start with, though, is to ask an impolite question and ask you when and where you were born.

Frederick: I was born at Memorial Medical Center in 1956, April 5, 1956, in Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: Did you grow up in Springfield?

Frederick: I grew up in Southern View, which is a village attached to Springfield. We always considered it Springfield.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about Southern View, especially in the days you were growing up. How would you describe the town?

Frederick: Well, it was a lovely little neighborhood where, you know, kids played ball in the streets. My parents' house was two doors down from the schoolyard, so I could walk to school. My grandmother and grandfather, my mother's parents, lived right next door. My mother worked outside of the home, before I was born, and then took time off.

Once I started kindergarten, she went back to work. At that time, you went to kindergarten half a day. Then I stayed with my grandmother until my father came home. He got home earliest, because he was a plumber. So he went to work early and got off about 3:30 or 3:00, something like that.

DePue: Do you know how the family ended up in Springfield in the first place? How many generations back do you have to go?

Frederick: I don't, but I would say at least three, because my father's family is buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery. There's a plot, and it's my great grandparents and my grandparents. And now my parents are buried there. Then, my mother's side, my great grandmother, who was alive…I mean I knew her when I was a little girl.

I don't know about my grandfather. I mean my mother's father. They lived in Bath. He grew up in Bath, Illinois. His father left his mother, like when he was born, before he was born. So, his mother raised him, and then she eventually met someone, and they got married. I don't know when he moved to Springfield. Basically, as far as I know, everybody else was in Springfield.

DePue: So your roots in Springfield go quite a ways back, more than most people, I would guess.

Frederick: Pretty far back.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about your father.

Frederick: Well, he grew up at 1200 South Eighth Street.

DePue: See? (both laugh)

Frederick: And he was one of five children. He was the middle child. The oldest was his sister, and then he had an older brother and then two younger sisters. His father worked for the railroad, and my grandmother was a stay-at-home mom. [They were] poor as church mice, but great growing up.

Paternal grandparents, Ace and Minnie Frederick, circa 1946.

DePue: Well, I assume he would have been growing up during the depression. He wasn't alone in that respect.

Frederick: He was born in 1914, on Valentine's Day (laughs), 2/14/1914.

DePue: Well then you came along rather late in his life.

Frederick: He was forty-two years old when I was born.

DePue: Do you have some other siblings?

Frederick: Yes, I have three older sisters. My oldest sister, Shirley, is twenty-one years older than I am. Then, my sister Janet, who is sixteen years older and then, my sister, Suellen, who is twelve years older. They were born in '35, '40 and '44. So my sister, Suellen, was actually a war baby. She was free, because my dad got drafted and sent to the war when he was like thirty-five, in his thirties.

DePue: Yeah, I was doing the math already. He was quite old to be drafted, but then, that's not unusual.

Frederick: Yeah. So my mother had two children and was pregnant with her third. You know, it was just horrible. So my mother and sisters, I believe, lived with my grandparents, my mother's parents, at that time. But, in any event, that was—

DePue: Do you know what unit your dad served with?

Frederick: He was in the Golden Arrow Infantry Unit.

DePue: Which is the 8th Infantry Division.

Frederick: Correct.

DePue: And they were in northern Europe. So, quite a bit of action in northern Europe.

Frederick: Yes.

DePue: Did he ever talk about that, when you were growing up?

Frederick: He did not talk about it, growing up. I mean, he would tell little stories about, you know, buddies in the Army. I remember him telling me one time about [how] they went through some village, and they kicked all the villagers out, so that they could have a place to stay. You know, he felt really horrible about that, to send families off, so they would have a place to stay.

But I didn't know until I was, oh gosh, in my thirties that his unit liberated a concentration camp in Germany. He never talked about that at all. There was…On this one occasion, we happened to be at dinner with someone who had an interest in World War II and started asking him questions. That was the first time I'd ever heard of that.

DePue: Did it surprise you, when you heard that?

Frederick: Oh yeah, it really did. And it made me think too, because a man of that age, growing up in little Springfield, had this good little life, and then what he saw over there, I think was probably…You know, I just wondered how it changed his life, you know.

DePue: Did you see any evidence that it affected him in a bad way?

Frederick: Well see, I didn't know him before that, so I have no idea. My mother wouldn't talk about those kind of things. I asked her. I said, "Do you think Daddy changed? Was he different when he came back?" She didn't like to think about anything that was icky, so she wouldn't even have that conversation.

DePue: We already mentioned, you came along rather late in their marriage. Were you somewhat of a surprise?

Frederick: I was very much a surprise. As a matter of fact, my mother said something to her best friend, and her best friend suggested that I was probably a tumor. (both laugh) [I] turned out not to be a tumor. I think I was the menopause baby.

DePue: Well, would it be true that your older sisters suggested that maybe you were a little bit spoiled?

Frederick: Oh, very much so, because my parents, of course, got married, and their first daughter was born within the year. My dad had a gas station. My dad and

my uncle owned a gas station, a Texaco station, over on…I think it was MacArthur and Edwards. We've got the cutest picture of them in their little Texaco outfits. That's back when they wore uniforms, and they pumped gas, and it was so cute.

But, you know, they were struggling financially. They didn't have a lot of money. I don't know how many children they had at that time, but I know, when my sisters were little, there wasn't a lot of money. So, they shared clothing and such. But, of course, by the time I came, there wasn't anything to share anymore.

DePue: I'm trying to do some quick math. Your older sister is twenty-one years older than you, so she was born in '35?

Frederick: Correct.

DePue: Yeah, and this is in the tough part of the depression that the family was being started.

Frederick: Right. And then, my dad worked for Coca-Cola, right before the war. I think he got called away during that time, but he worked for Coca-Cola. At the time, he was a route salesman. People were so poor that he would go to businesses, and he would drop off a case of Coke in the morning and go back and pick it up in the evening. They would pay him for what they'd sold, because they couldn't even afford to buy anything in advance.

DePue: Well, by the time you came along, life in these United States was quite different; wasn't it?

Frederick: It was very different. At that time, my dad had a trade. He was a journeyman plumber. It didn't mean anything to me. We were just a middle class family. But we took vacations every year, and we camped. I mean, we didn't stay in fancy hotels or go to Europe or anything. We camped and usually traveled back and forth to Albuquerque, because my two oldest sisters, by that time, had moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. So, every other year we would go to Albuquerque.

Maternal grandparents, Louise and Melvin Engel, in their Springfield home at Christmastime.

Then, on the odd years, a lot of times we would either take just a vacation, Mom and Dad,

myself, and maybe I got to take a friend with me. Or they had a group of friends that they camped with regularly, throughout Illinois and Missouri, and sometimes the friends would come. So, there would be a caravan group. I can remember we went to Cape Hatteras with some friends.

DePue: Your dad had the kind of profession, and it was the time frame in American history… I imagine he didn't lack for work. I mean, all the World War II vets came home and started families and built homes and—

Frederick: Yep. Well, as it turned out, my grandparents, my mother's parents, had bought some property in Southern View. There was an old home there, which is actually still my family home. My grandparents bought the home, and my parents and all the kids, we all moved into that house—well, I wasn't born yet—and my grandparents built a house next door. They wanted my mom and dad to be their neighbors, because my grandfather said, "When we get older, we want to have somebody close by, to take care of us." So they built a brick home next door to my mom and dad's house.

So I grew up, you know…It was a large size property. Actually, my grandfather owned a plumbing company, where my dad worked, at the beginning of his career. My grandfather had bought quite a bit of property in that area, in Southern View and eventually sold part of it to the school district for Southern View School.

There was a family called the Jansen's, Eddie and Freda Jansen, J-a-n-s-e-n, I believe. They bought some of the property, and they built a little grocery store. They ended up being at the back of our lot. Then they built a house, like kitty-corner across the street. So, you know, I grew up knowing the Jansen's too.

DePue: Were most of those homes, out in Southern View, post-World War II construction?

Frederick: Uh-hmm.

DePue: So it was a fairly new home, when you were living there.

Frederick: Yeah. That home, I don't know how old it was at the time, but I know, growing up, my parents told me it was around 100 years old. It had been there. I think the village grew around it. That's why there is so much unsettled property. There weren't many homes in Southern View at that time. Now there are a few homes in Southern View that are Sears homes, you know, the ones you bought in a box and put together (laughs) or however they did that.

DePue: To satisfy that huge building boom after World War II, then.

Frederick: Uh-hmm.

DePue: We've been talking quite a bit about your father. One more question, were you something of a daddy's girl, then?

Frederick: Oh, yeah.

Al Frederick holds his daughter Jeri, in 1956.

DePue: You roll your eyes when you say that.

Frederick: So much. I mean, I was totally my dad's girl. When I was little…Of course, he got home from work first. He and my grandfather had a huge garden in the back, so he would come home and work in the garden. Or, if the weather was bad, he was in the basement building something. And I just followed him around everywhere. Everything he did was just amazing, and he would let me help him. Of course, my mom was not as likely to do that. But my dad, he would go out, and he'd show me planting seeds. He was kind of philosophizer, and he would say, "Now, look at this one little tomato and how many seeds and how many people could be fed from one little tomato?" I mean, he was just that kind of a…

But he had kind of a crazy parent himself. His mother was just…One of the stories he told was, when he was a kid, he and his siblings would just say, "I don't want to go to school today," and Grandma would say, "Okay, you don't have to go to school." One day, they stayed home from school, and Grandma said, "I want you to tear down this front porch." She didn't want it. She wanted a new front porch, and Grandpa wouldn't let her have it. So she had the boys tear down the front porch, while Grandpa was gone to work. I guess he came home and just had a fit about it.

DePue: Those are the kind of stories you hear around the Thanksgiving table or places like that.

Frederick: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I mean, like you were talking…It was so impoverished when my parents got married, my dad, I think, was working in the gas station. They would save their money, and on Friday nights, they'd go out for chili and a milkshake. It was, like, twenty five cents for the two of them or something. Just something crazy. But that was their big night out. They would go to movies. When my dad was growing up, they would walk downtown and go to movies, instead of going to school (laughs). But my dad was very, very smart. He just was…and so was my grandfather.

DePue: Well, we've talked a lot about your dad. How about your mom? How would you describe her?

Frederick: She was…She and I struggled a lot. I mean, she was a very strong woman. My dad was more emotional and lovey, you know. My mom was strong and stern. But she was the oldest of two children, and her sibling was a boy. My grandfather did not value women, at all. And so—

Jeri, age three, sits in her mother's lap on Christmas Eve, 1959.

DePue: Which side? Your maternal grandfather?

Frederick: My maternal grandfather. My grandmother had an eighth grade education, and she was just a little homemaker. My grandfather would come in, after work and, "Woman, where's my dinner?" He was that kind of gruff guy.

He didn't value my mother as much as he did her brother. And so, I think, she just had kind of built a shell around herself. She was fun. She loved to have fun, and she had friends. She always did good things in her life, but she was not…With me…I don't think with any of us girls, she was never the warm, fuzzy kind. Daddy was the one that was…We all call him Daddy. That just tells you one thing right there?

DePue: And you called your mother—

Frederick: Mom, mother (both laugh). It was just two polar opposites. Like some people will have fathers that are more the stern, withdrawn type, and that was more our mother. But, as soon as she raised her first three girls, she went out and got a job. She worked for Thrifty Drug Company, here in Springfield. Ben Victor owned the company. She worked her way up, and she had become the secretary, the executive secretary for Mr. Victor.

Well, see then, when she got pregnant with me, she had to leave that position. I think that was hard for her. I think she was kind of resentful about that situation. Then she was gone for several years. So, of course, someone else took that position. But Mr. Victor hired her back, when she was ready to come back. She was the credit manager. But I think she always envied the woman that had that position.

However, that woman was eventually my mom's very best friend. I grew up with the Backers and the Fredericks. The Backers have a daughter who is a couple years older than me. We were always together, you know. They lived in Cantrell, but my mom and Dorothy were best friends. As a

matter of fact, my mother died in March of 2011, and Dorothy died in May of 2011, very interesting.

DePue: [We] didn't find the names of your parents. What was your father's first name?

Frederick: My dad's name is John Alfred Frederick, but he was always called Al.

DePue: And your mom's maiden name?

Frederick: Engel, E-n-g-e-l, Melba Elsie Adeline. She was named after both of her grandmothers.

DePue: Melba.

Frederick: Elsie Adeline.

DePue: Engel. German name?

Frederick: Yep. My sister, Janet, she is the genealogy person. She has just reams. She has gone back and done all this research. She knows where we came from, and who was married to who. (laughs) We have some interesting stories in our history, but—

DePue: Which one of the parents did you take after?

Frederick: Both, I think. I think I got my strength from my mom. My dad was not likely to confront anybody for any reason. He just…He's very humble and just tried to just get along. My mother wasn't so much like that. Not that she was confrontational, but she would speak up.

DePue: So, if she is the kind that would speak up, and then, as a young lady, maybe even growing, you were speaking up.

Frederick: Oh yeah, so we fought like cats and dogs. (laughs) We just banged heads our whole life. It was just always a struggle for us.

DePue: Do you remember early on what you guys were bumping heads about?

Frederick: My very first memory of that must have been around high school or something. Pantyhose came out, so I liked to put my pantyhose on, under my pants. She didn't want me to wear pantyhose under pants, because she said that tore the pantyhose. So, it was always me, sneaking the pantyhose under the pants, and then her finding out, and then we get into this big fight about it.

And then, [there were] silly things, like not putting the soap back in the right place. I mean, she just was picky. She had her way about doing things,

and I didn't care. I was a teenager, and she just would have a fit about it. Now, my father never hit me, but my mother would slap me on occasion.

DePue: Slap you across the face?

Frederick: Or usually on the behind. Just kind of a swat. When I was older, I can remember one time, she came at me to swat me, and I lifted my hand like, "You hit me, and I'll hit you back." (laughing) But, it was never like horrible abuse or anything. It was just that type of anger. She would just get frustrated, I think.

DePue: Well, she probably wanted your dad to help out.

Frederick: Oh yeah, and my dad would never, never… She would call him and say, "Al, Jeri doesn't do…" And he'd say, "Now honey, do what your mother asked you to." He just wasn't that kind of person that he was going to fight me. (laughs)

DePue: Well, very interesting. Did you have a nickname growing up?

Frederick: Not really. In middle school, I had a girlfriend that called me Fred. But that was really the only thing that anybody ever called me. But I was embarrassed when I was in grade school. Of course, my name is Jeri, so that's the first thing. "Well, how come you got a boy's name?" So I **hated** my name growing up, and I always said, "When I am eighteen, I'm changing my name." And then, oddly enough, by the time I was eighteen, I liked having a name that was different than other people, because there were like a million Debbies and Sherrys.

DePue: Jeri. Was that your given name or was it short for something else?

Frederick: Nope. Jeri, J-e-r-i, not Geraldine, although people tend to write my name G-e-r-i, thinking it's short. But no, Jeri Louise, my middle name…My mother's mother was Louise. So, I've got the name Jeri Louise.

DePue: How did they end up with Jeri?

Frederick: Well, I was due in April, so they were going to name me either April or Robin. And they saw some type of a…I don't know if it was a talent show or a beauty contest or something on television. One of the contestants was named Jerilyn. But they liked the Jeri and decided that they would steal that and drop the Lyn and throw Louise in, Jeri Louise. (laughs) Of course, that was what I always got called, when I was in trouble, by my mother, "Jeri Louise."

DePue: But born in 1956. Our generation—because I am about the same age as you are—we look back, and a lot of us think, "Boy, growing up in the late '50s

and ‘60s, those are the halcyon days of American childhood. This was a great time to grow up.” What was your experience?

Frederick: Well, my favorite time was when my sister lived with us. She lived with us until I was ten, and then she got married, the third sister that was born in ‘44. Suellen is her name. Of course, she was eighteen, and I was six.

She had a car. I mean, she didn’t have her own car, but especially like in the summer, she would take my mom to work, drop her off, and then she would have the Impala. We had a Chevy Impala, white Chevy Impala, and she would get the car. A lot of times we would go to the beach house, out at the lake, she and her friends and me, because, of course, she was stuck watching me (laughs).

DePue: The tagalong.

Frederick: She hated me, and her friends just loved me. As a matter of fact, Suellen, when I was born, and they brought me home from the hospital, that’s the one time she, that my dad got mad. My sister said, “You take her back.” My dad got really mad about that.

Oh yeah, she hated having to be responsible for me. I thought…The sun rose and set on my sister. She was tall and beautiful. She’s much taller than me, tall, skinny, beautiful, had friends and boyfriends. I was six years old. I just thought…She would sit in front of the mirror and do her makeup or paint her nails, and I’d just sit and watch her. I just…I loved her. I just wanted to be like my big sister.

DePue: Was Southern View a pretty good place to be growing up then?

Frederick: Oh yeah, it was great. Ride my bike, you know, I would ride my bike over to everybody’s house. As a matter of fact, at the end of the street at that time, there was the Dairy Queen Cozy Dog drive-in. So you know, that was like—

DePue: Well, it doesn’t get any better than that.

Frederick: No, not at all. It was like so exciting to me, when I finally got old enough that my mom and dad let me ride my bike down. It was only three blocks, but they had to make sure I was going to be safe and everything to drive down to that Dairy Queen. Oh, we loved that. And then, further down—but I could never ride my bike down that far—was the McDonald’s. We had it all going on in the neighborhood.

But, when I was in grade school, it was the Dairy Queen Cozy Dog. They would have ballgames at the school, and then, of course, all the kids would get to go down and get something from Dairy Queen. We would follow on our bikes and go over.

It was a very small school, so I had very good friends, and we would always spend the night over at each other's house. We all hung out together. As a matter of fact, a couple of those friends, I'm still friends with. One of them lives in Denver. But, it's crazy.

DePue: Where did you go to grade school?

Frederick: Southern View Elementary School and then Jefferson Junior High School. Then that was a whole new experience, because now there was—

DePue: Well, Southern View is right in the neighborhood, I would guess.

Frederick: Two doors down from my house.

DePue: How many first grade classes would they have? Just the one?

Frederick: Yep. Well, no, I think they might have two. I think they might have had two, because they had two kindergarten classes. We had a morning and an afternoon kindergarten. I hated my kindergarten teacher. Then—

DePue: How could you hate your kindergarten teacher?

Frederick: Well—

DePue: Most people can't even remember their kindergarten teacher.

Frederick: Ms. Hatfield. I'll tell you why. Of course, it was a very good lesson for me, but it was humiliating. What happened was, we used to have show and tell. This one boy, Bobby DeFrates, had brought these little miniature toys. I don't know what they were, people or animals. We were all passing them around in the circle, and I slipped one in my pocket.

Well, I don't know if the teacher saw me or if they had counted them at the end, but they determined that one was missing. So they said, "Well, there is a piece missing." Well you know, I fessed up, because I was scared to death. (laughs) So I gave it back. But what she did was, then she took me in the front of the class. Of course, that's back in the day when girls wore dresses. You could never wear pants to school. She lifted my dress and spanked my bottom, over her knee, in front of the whole class. That was just the most humiliating thing, probably to this day, the most humiliating thing anybody has ever done to me. I hated her for that. So, that was war with Ms. Hatfield, oddly enough. (laughs)

DePue: Well, good thing the name wasn't McCoy.

Frederick: Yes. (laughing)

DePue: Do you remember your first grade teacher's name, having no humiliating experiences, perhaps, in first grade?

Frederick: I think Miss Gillis was my first grade. I remember most of my teachers from Southern View School. I loved Southern View School.

DePue: You could walk to school, I take it.

Frederick: Yeah, you could walk to school, and then we would play in the playground, Miss Gillis. Then, I think it was either third or fourth grade, my dad painted, as a hobby. He started in the early '60s. And so, of course, everything my dad did, I did. So I painted. He painted with oils, and so I had—

DePue: Oh, we're not talking about house painting?

Frederick: No. We're talking about pictures. As a matter of fact, Dave Bakke[1] did an article on him, not too long ago.

DePue: I remember seeing that, because Janet made sure I saw it.

Frederick: Yeah. I have pictures that I painted at the time, just on paper with oil paints. It's amazing they lasted. As I said, we used to go camping a lot. My mom and dad had this big group of friends. Well, somehow in that group, they made a connection with Waymen Presley.

Now Waymen Presley had Presley Tours, but I don't really know what his job was, other than this tour company they had. But it was down in southern Illinois. I can't think of the name. But he wanted to build a cross, which is called Bald Knob Cross, and he eventually built it. But my parents—we used to travel down there and go camping down there—they all contributed money to the cross. As a matter of fact, I think there's a marker or something with my parents' name on it. So, what was I talking about?

DePue: The Bald Knob Cross.

Frederick: The Bald Knob Cross, but—

DePue: And Waymen Presley.

Frederick: Oh, and then my mom ended up, actually later in years when I was in high school, she was a tour guide for Waymen Presley Tours. She would go to the East Coast with that.

DePue: But this all started with a discussion about your dad as painting.

[1] Illinois *State Journal-Register* columnist, who retired in May, 2016, after writing more than 1,700 columns that shared unique slices of life about central Illinois. (https://storify.com/SJRbreaking/dave-bakke-retires-from-the-state-journal-register

Frederick: Oh, the painting. Okay, so that was it. So Mrs. Redding [not sure of this name], I think, she was my fourth grade teacher, and I loved her. Most of the teachers were nice, but I just loved her so much. So I painted—my first time on canvas—painted a picture of the Bald Knob Cross for her. I would love to see it today. Who knows what it looked like? But I was so proud of it. I don't know if she was religious or anything, (laughs) but for whatever reason, that was important to me. I loved her, and I wanted to give her something special.

DePue: My guess is she gave you some good, positive feedback on it, as well.

Frederick: Oh yes, no doubt, she did, 'cause she was just that kind of a teacher. She was **so** sweet.

DePue: Well then you pack off and head off to Jefferson Middle School which, I believe, is in Springfield, the big city of Springfield, which is right next door.

Frederick: It is. It's in what they called the cabbage patch. They still do. They did back in the day, and they still do. I don't know why. I don't know that history. But, it was a big deal because…Of course now, other schools were integrated, Hazel Dell School and Laketown Elementary School. So, there were all these other kids. It was all new. Oh, that was just very much fun.

I really kind of broke with most of my Southern View friends, at that time then, because I met new friends, and most of my new friends lived in Laketown. My very best friend actually lived in Laketown. I mean, I hooked up with this girl named Vicky, and we were very best friends.

DePue: Now, Laketown is part of Springfield proper? It's the neighborhood name.

Frederick: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It is just—

DePue: Well, you said, they integrated various schools at that time. What was the ethnic mix?

Frederick: Well, that was the first time I had ever gone to school with black kids. That was another one of my very best friends, and she just passed in the last few years, Kim Fraiser.

At that time, I loved to run. There was this movie. Patty Duke was in this movie, *Billie*, and she would get this rhythm in her head, and she would take off running. She was just like the award winning track runner at her school. I loved that movie, and I loved to run. So I would run, run, run, run, run. So, Kim Fraiser was faster than the wind. She was so fast, and so I decided I was going to be as fast as her. So she and I would race each other. She always beat me. But we got to be just good friends, because she loved to

run too. We had a track. We didn't have a track in grade school, so we had a track at Jefferson.

DePue: Were you on a girls' track team?

Frederick: No, I never wanted to compete. She did, and she won all kinds of awards, through middle school and high school. But I was always afraid of competition. I could do it one on one, but—

DePue: Well, that sounds more like your dad's side of the family.

Frederick: Yeah. (laughs) That's when I kind of stood back and like, "No, I don't want to do that."

DePue: But it sounds like you had fun in middle school.

Frederick: I did. I loved middle school. Then I went to Springfield Southeast High School, and it was a brand new school. The big deal was it didn't have any windows, because they had built it without windows because…well, for several reasons. And, of course, it had air conditioning, because it didn't have windows. So it was a brand new school, had air conditioning. It was just like state of the art school at that time.

DePue: Did they have the pool already there, as well?

Frederick: They had the pool there. I think it opened in like '68 or '69, and I started there in '70. So it hadn't been open very long. Of course, compared to middle school, it was huge, one of those scary things you think you're never going to find your way around.

DePue: For both Jefferson and especially for Southeast, were you busing there now?

Frederick: No. Jefferson, I think I always walked, or maybe somebody's parent would take me, because my mom had already gone to work. She had to be at work at 8:00, and I don't think we were at school that early.

DePue: So at least you're, maybe, crossing some railroad tracks and a couple of busy streets to get there; aren't you?

Frederick: Yeah. It's just, I would go straight up Stevenson Drive; so it wasn't bad. It was probably a mile, but I didn't mind it. I kind of enjoyed it. And then Southeast—

DePue: It's more like a couple of miles now.

Frederick: Um-hmm, yeah. I don't know. Well, I know, because see, Southeast there was so many kids, they split it up. So if you were freshman, sophomore, you

went in the afternoon. So I didn't have to be at school until noon. You went from noon to 4:00 or whatever, 4:00 or 5:00.

If you were a junior or senior, you started at 7:00 in the morning, because they thought that juniors and seniors then could get out of school and then go have a job in the afternoon. So that's why they got the morning. But freshman [and] sophomore, we got afternoon. So you didn't have to be at school until noon. Who knows how I got there? I don't remember, but I never took a school bus, never in my life.

DePue: You did that system all four years? I have never heard of that before.

Frederick: It was split system, because there were just too many kids. There were 500 kids in my graduating class. If you figure, there were like 2,000 kids in that school, around.

DePue: I want to go back to your high school years, but just a couple of quick questions about whether or not your family was religious and whether or not you were being taken to church.

Frederick: Oh yes. I attended church from day one. We went to First Christian Church on the corner of Sixth and Cook, from the day I was born. I think my parents were already attending church there, with the Backers, my mom and dad's best friend.

DePue: The Backers?

Frederick: Um-hmm, Jack and Dorothy Backer. Dorothy Backer was the one that took my mom's job, when my mom had to come home and have me. (laughs) But they knew each other before I was born. She was the one that told my mom she thought I was just a tumor and not to worry about it. (both laugh)

But they had met square dancing, I believe. I am not sure how, but they all ended up going to First Christian Church. So they were going there when I was born. At that time, Reverend Kinser started the same year that I was born, Reverend Beryl S. Kinser. He had this great deep voice. His wife's name was Ann Kinser, and she had a southern accent. She was just adorable.

DePue: You thought that was exotic back then, I suspect.

Frederick: Oh, absolutely. I loved hearing her talk. Dr. Kinser used to always say, "Oh, you and I came to this church at the same time." He was darling. He was there for a long time. I think I was in high school before he left, retired. It was, you know, just this fancy church.

One of the things I remember most about it was…That was in the period where women had to wear hats to church. My mom had all these

really neat hats that she would wear to church. Of course, it was the time of the Kennedys, and so I always thought she kind of looked like Jackie Kennedy. She was a very attractive woman and her hats. She always dressed nice, because she worked downtown, so she shopped at all the downtown stores. It was a great church, growing up.

Interesting, two things, actually…That was actually the first black people I ever knew was the janitors for the church, Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, H-o-l-m-e-s. I loved them, and they were just sweet people. They were always there on Sundays. She was [a] heavy woman, like the Aunt Jemima type looking woman. Oh, they were just so sweet. That was like my first exposure to black people. So I knew that they were out there, (laughs) even though you didn't ever see them in Southern View. I was never around black people. I don't ever remember seeing them at Sears or anything. It was…Of course, this town is still pretty segregated, but it was more so back then.

Then, the other thing was—I didn't find this out until years later—one of my Sunday School teachers, she was just always prim and proper, sharp little suits and cute little haircuts. She just stood out, because she just was just so sharp and neat. And my parents said, "Well, she had been in the Navy or something." She had come from the military. I didn't find out, until I was probably forty, but the other thing was that she, I think, was a lesbian. But I don't think she was openly gay, of course, or she would never…I mean, who knows?

DePue: In that timeframe, that wasn't done.

Frederick: Oh, gosh no. But she never was married, never had a husband. She was just committed to being a Sunday school teacher, and she was wonderful, and I just loved her. I don't know if my mom made that up, because she didn't ever get married or whatever, but somehow my mom then later told me, "Oh yeah," Well, she thought she was a lesbian. But it was like, oh my gosh.

DePue: But that happened a long time after you left the house, it sounds like.

Frederick: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

DePue: Let's get you back to high school.

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: I'll start with this, what were your strong academic interests?

Frederick: Art. [I] always wanted to be an artist. I took every art class. I had done every art class, so then I got to just go to art class and do what I wanted to do. Mr. Linderman was my very favorite art teacher, ever. He taught me so much. And then Mr. Webb, Wendell Webb, and Mr. Dunn was the other one. But I

never had Mr. Dunn. Mr. Webb and Mr. Linderman were my two main teachers. It's funny, because all through my whole life, I was in love with my grade school art teacher. I can't think of his name, but I was in love with him.

DePue: You mean like an adolescent crush?

Frederick: Yes. He was it; I always wanted to marry him. When I was in elementary school, I used to go to the Springfield Art Association for art lessons. I was in love with my art teacher there too. I can't think of his name now either, but oh, he was kind of an older gentleman, compared to my elementary school teacher. Oh, I just thought he was wonderful.

He taught me about ginkgo trees and ginkgo leaves. He loved ginkgo leaves, and I just always loved ginkgo leaves after that. (laughs)

DePue: The shape of them?

Frederick: Yeah. It's just fascinating. And then, in middle school, Mr. Dornan was my art teacher, Bill Dornan. He was involved in theatre too, and he was very theatrical. I really loved him because, of course, by now, I am fourteen or thirteen. So, now—

DePue: This was serious love.

Frederick: Oh, total. Well, I found out, after high school, that he was gay (both laugh). So, he probably wasn't interested in me. And then, I loved my art teachers in high school too, but they were married. I didn't have that same crush. Still, Mr. Dornan was by far my biggest crush ever.

DePue: Did you have aspirations to make a living being an artist?

Frederick: Oh yeah.

DePue: What did your folks think of that?

Frederick: Oh, I don't know. See, my parents didn't go to college. So college was never ever talked about in my house, never. It wasn't until my sister, Janet, who,—I think it was after her divorce— she started taking college classes, and she went to college. That was the first time I really even had an interest in college. So, there wasn't any talk about careers. I don't remember ever talking…I wanted to be an art teacher. I think I wanted to just teach in art school.

DePue: So if you had a career in mind, that was it.

Frederick: Yeah. It was going to be in art though.

DePue: But obviously, if you want to teach, you are going to have to go to college.

Frederick: (whispers) I know. There was no dots connecting. I never asked my parents for money, and they never offered it. Some of the kids I went to school with, went away to college, but they were the rich kids, you know. Most of the kids that I went to high school with didn't go to college.

DePue: Were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

Frederick: Yes. Actually I was involved in the theatre group. Here's [something] interesting too, because you had talked to me before about the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War. Well, my sister Janetshe was the trouble maker but, of course, she was older and—

DePue: You said thirteen years older?

Frederick: Sixteen.

DePue: Sixteen years.

Frederick: So, when I was thirteen, she was married to her second husband, Leon, another big crush. I loved Leon, loved Leon. They lived in California. They lived in this little community and raised goats. He had his PhD in English. She met him in Albuquerque at the University of New Mexico.

DePue: What was his last name?

Frederick: Coburn, C-o-b-u-r-n, Leon Coburn. That was a big thing. I was still young. We went out there on vacation. My oldest sister had told my mom that my sister Janet was dating this…At the time he was a doctorate student, and he rode a motorcycle, and oh, you know, it was just radical. (laughs) So, Janet was kind of the radical one, because she was around university people. At that time she wasn't going to school. She was just working as a secretary or something.

DePue: Was this the late '60s, maybe?

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: So it fit the times.

Frederick: Um-hmm. And he was getting his doctorate degree in English literature, I believe. My oldest sister was married and had three kids, and when my parents came out on vacation, I think she told my mother, "Oh my gosh, this scandalous relationship is going on," and everything. So that was just this whole big thing. My mom and my sisters fought the whole time we were on vacation. I just remember crying for Janet, because everybody was yelling at Janet. So she was kind of the radical one.

The next thing I can remember is they moved to northern California. There's a college there, a university, there. It's like an agricultural university. I guess he was teaching there. They just had this crummy little house, and like I said, they had goats and chickens and whatever. We went out there to visit. At that time, my sister Janet bought me—think Janet bought it for me—a leather, floppy hat. That was just the whole hippy era.

So, at that time, I was in middle school. I remember this now, because my best friend Vicky and I, we were going to be hippies. Now that was my new thing. We were just going to be hippies. We were going to move to California. I mean, we didn't know anything about drugs or anything.

DePue: Well, I was going to ask about that.

Frederick: No, no. You know, when people would say, "Well, what about the drugs?" Oh, no.

DePue: This was just a fashion statement for you at the time.

Frederick: Oh yeah. And, of course, the guys with the long hair. Oh, we were just totally into all that. So, that's what we were going to do. But what went astray there was that Vicky's parents moved her away. She moved to Kankakee. So that was it. I went to see her on the train one time, but that was kind of the end of our relationship.

DePue: Well, Jeri, I am a bit confused, because I think we started on this whole discussion, because I asked you about extracurricular activities.

Frederick: Well, I know what I was going to say. So, high school for me…The early years were real radical. I was a hippy, and of course, I used to go to New Mexico all the time. So that was my new thing. I was going to move to Taos, New Mexico and be a hippy.

Well, and then I decided, no, I was going to teach on an Indian reservation. So I joined the American Indian movement at that time. I used to get their newsletters. They had a newspaper that came out, and, oh, the movie *Billie Jack*, oh, my gosh. Well, that was my movie, you know. I mean, I just cloaked myself in this whole thing.

Here I was at Southeast High School. I had real long hair. I used to wear it in braids. I bought those Indian…the beaded things that they wear in their braids. That's how I went to high school. My hair braided, and I had the necklace, and I was just, yeah.

DePue: Do you have a picture of that?

Frederick: I don't know if I do or not. Probably, somewhere, I don't know. But, yeah, I was just totally into that. I was trying to get people at Southeast to join the American Indian movement, (laughing) and they were just like—

DePue: Now, you started there in 1970.

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: Well, this is in the height of all of that stuff in the first place.

Frederick: Oh yeah.

DePue: How about the music scene. Were you paying attention to the music?

Frederick: Not so much. I mean, Led Zeppelin, you know. Well, earlier, it was *The Monkees*. Of course, they had that show, so I had to watch that show, but that was, I think, in middle school. I loved *The Monkees* and *Paul Revere and the Raiders*. *Paul Revere and the Raiders* actually came to Springfield and performed at the Armory building.

DePue: Downtown, across from the capitol?

Frederick: Um-hmm. And, oh gosh, I loved them. And I loved Bobby Sherman; that was another one. (laughs)

DePue: And yet, none of these are what we would classify as extracurricular activities.

Frederick: No. (laughing) But I don't think…other than … I am just trying to think… The theatre group, but I wouldn't go on stage; I did makeup. I did their makeup. I did artwork, a lot of artwork, for the school. Mr. Linderman would get me involved.

Also, I volunteered at Hope School at the time. It was not as advanced as it is now.

DePue: Well, tell us about what Hope School was because some people might not be familiar with it.

Frederick: Okay. Well, Hope School was for disabled children. What I would say now is where they put the kids that nobody wanted to deal with. And my best friend, one of my best friends in high school, Kay, she…I don't know if she worked there. I think she went to work there. She wanted to be a social worker. She always wanted to be a helper, and I think she got a job there.

Well, so she and I would go there all the time. Really they were young adults. They were older than us, but they were like children. I've got pictures of them too. There was this one boy, Ricky. He was the first autistic

person I'd ever met, Ricky. He was like Scandinavian. He was like six foot tall, big guy, and he would just walk around in circles, "Nrrrrrr, Ricky, nrrrrrr," just odd behaviors.

But what's amazing about this is, Kay and I used to take groups of these kids on field trips. We would take them to Washington Park and go have pizza. Nowadays they would never let two teenage girls take four developmentally disabled adults out on field trips. (laughs) But, it wasn't anything, then. They loved it, especially Washington Park. Of course, we hung out at Washington Park in high school. We'd hang out on the hill with our hippy friends. I drew; I have sketch books from when I would go out there and draw. But we would take the kids out there.

DePue: Even Washington Park on the hill with your hippy friends, there weren't some of the things that we otherwise would associate with hippies going on?

Frederick: No, we would have never exposed those kids. I mean, we were very responsible about our role, and we would take them to the Lake Park and stuff. But yeah, no, we would never have exposed them to anything like that.

DePue: Well, I am going to take a step back here.

Frederick: Okay.

DePue: In your early childhood, you're growing up in this ideal kind of experience in the United States. In your later childhood and your early youth, you are growing up in a time when there's just a lot going on in the United States. If you take from '68 to '74, when you graduated, there's a lot that was going on politically, socially, music scene, artistic scene, everything.

So, I am going to ask you just a couple of questions to see if you have any memories about some of this at all. You would have been fairly young, but JFK was assassinated in November, 1963. Do you remember that?

Frederick: The only thing I remember about that was watching the funeral on TV. I think Caroline Kennedy was about my age, maybe, but John was younger. I just remember thinking how sad that was for them, being a little girl. It was like, I reacted because everybody else reacted. It wasn't really meaningful to me, except to see these little children, whose dad had been killed. But I can only say that it impacted me because I could see how it was a big, deal by the adults.

DePue: The next one is about the Civil Rights Movement that went through something of a metamorphosis during the timeframe you were growing up. Do you remember your views about any of that, at the time?

Frederick: No, I don't. Of course, I was a white girl, but it didn't touch me in the way that maybe it touched black families. There was a time, though, in high school. This is a picture of some of my friends and I in high school. Of course, my high school is about half black.

Jeri Frederick, with some friends at Southeast High School. Front: Jeri Frederick, Karla Springer, Jannie Winkler, Danielle Zellars, Micki Logsdon, Jeri, Pam Scott, Back:Dennis Chavours, Fran Tally, Marty Scanlan, Stephen Archie, in Springfield, in 1974.

DePue: Are you in this picture here?

Frederick: Yeah. I believe I am.

DePue: Because I was looking for the Indian girl. I didn't see her in there.

Frederick: Yeah. I am in the front with the white…I had real long hair.

DePue: See, now you are wearing slacks.

Frederick: Yes. Well, see, this was the year I graduated. As I got older, I got less hippyish. As a matter of fact, that year I was the vice president of the senior class.

DePue: Well, there is extracurricular activities.

Frederick: There you go.

DePue: You've been holding out on us.

Frederick: Yeah, I was. I was the vice president of the senior class. But I was never in any sports, and really there wasn't that much else. I wish I could have been involved in like, woodshop class or something like that, but we weren't allowed to do that. So we had to take home economics and sewing and—

DePue: And you are showing me this picture because there are a couple of African Americans in the picture.

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: Do you know what your parents' views were on the subject? Was that something that was ever talked about at home?

Jeri Frederick, in the center, with high school friends Suzi White and Pricilla McClain in 1974.

Frederick: Well, obviously, my parents knew that the high school was half black. I went to sporting events all the time and everything. You know, there was no conversation. This was Suzie White; she was the president of the senior class. She and I got to be good friends. I don't know when, in high school.

But, anyway, she lived over on the east side of town. Her father owned a bar in town, and they had money. She had a little brother, Jimmy. Her mother had passed, but their grandmother lived with them. They had a swimming pool, a built-in swimming pool, in the backyard. They were rich by my standards. Suzie always had nice clothes and everything.

Once I got to drive, you can do whatever you want; you don't have to ride that bicycle. So, after high school, after school, we'd go over and then, during the summer, and hang out at Suzie's. She would invite me over to swim. So one time, I said something about going swimming at Suzie's house. My mom said, "Well, there aren't any boys that go swimming with you, are there?" And I said, "Well yeah, there are other people that come." And she said, "I do not want you in that swimming pool with black boys."

Of course, I just came unglued. I said, well…I won't tell you what I said. But I mean, what do you think is going to happen? She just…"I told you." That was how my mother was. It didn't have to make sense. It's just, "I said it, and that's what you're going to do." Well, of course, that's not who I was. I was like, "You're not going to tell me what to do." So, who knows what she thought?

Well, so then, my mom and dad bought me a car, a 1959 Studebaker Lark 4. They actually bought it from this woman that went to their church. It really was one of those cars that she just drove on Sundays. It was in mint condition. She had the horn taped. She had the ashtray taped shut. (laughing) You couldn't use the horn or the ashtray. It was baby blue.

So, of course, once I had my own car, it was…My girlfriends and I were always on the move.

Well, then in high school, I started dating—well, dating I guess you'd call it, going steady, dating, eventually—a black guy, Tom McBride. Actually, Tom McBride is just retired from the school district. He was a coach. But he was the big basketball player. I don't know how we hooked up; I forgot. (phone ring tone interrupts) So we hooked up, and we started dating.

DePue: You can learn about people, just by listening to their ring tone.

Frederick: (laughing) Of course, basically dating was…He was, like I said, a big basketball player. So we would go, after basketball games, out with other people to go do whatever.

DePue: I assume this was after this little incident involving the swimming pool and Suzie and your mom.

Frederick: Well, I think it was all kind of simultaneously. I can't remember.

DePue: Didn't your mom know you were dating this guy?

Frederick: Oh, no. I mean, as far as my mom knew…My best friend was Becky and Kay. People called us the three musketeers. We just didn't go anywhere without one another. So whenever I was out, it was just assumed that it was Becky, Kay, and I doing something together. Of course, Becky and Kay knew Tom and loved Tom. I mean everybody in high school loved Tom. He was just this big, gentle giant. But, of course, that didn't mean they loved me dating him. My God, that was horrible.

DePue: They, being both of your parents or especially your mom?

Frederick: No. My parents never knew I was dating him, until, I think, my senior year. But I mean the kids at school, especially white boys, treated me terribly. There were only two white girls that I can recall in my class, myself and Marilyn Wood. Oh, and then there was another girl a year older than me that dated black boys. So, I mean, you know.

DePue: Who was your prom date for the junior year?

Frederick: I didn't go to prom until my senior year.

DePue: With?

Frederick: I went with my boyfriend from grade school. Not grade school, middle school. He and I were boyfriend-girlfriend for a couple of years around middle school, maybe the first part of high school. He knew I couldn't go

with Tom, and he [my old boyfriend] said he would take me to the prom. So, Tom went with a black woman. Actually, I think he went with Kim Fraiser, my best friend from junior high. I mean, my best black girlfriend from junior high.

DePue: Let me see if I got this right. You couldn't go to the prom with him because your parents would so strongly object to it?

Frederick: Oh yeah.

DePue: Or you didn't want them to know that you were dating this guy?

Frederick: Both. Yeah, they would never…Oh, it would have been horrid. Well, it was horrible, when they finally found out.

DePue: What happened prom night, once you got there? Did you kind of switch dates afterwards?

Frederick: No, no. Actually it was kind of like…We kind of used that, because that was towards the end of our senior year. I was going to move to Albuquerque, when I graduated from high school, and of course, Tom wasn't. So, by this time, I had decided I was going to go to college at the University of New Mexico and take art classes out there. So, my plan was to move to Albuquerque. Tom actually, he got a scholarship, because he was such an athlete. So, he got a scholarship. So, he was getting shipped off to some school outside of Illinois to go to college.

DePue: Next question here, about Vietnam.

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: Sixty-eight to '72, especially. It started a little earlier than that, but that's when all of the protests and the violence and the student activity and that whole thing was going on. Were you paying any attention to any of that?

Frederick: Only because I had friends whose brothers were drafted. The biggest memory about that was my friend Dee Russell's brother, Ted, was drafted, but he was a conscientious objector. So, he basically got a job typing somewhere. But we wrote letters to him and other guys.

There was another guy. I can't think of who…oh, I know, Rich Garst. My friend Debbie ended up marrying him. Connie Garst went to school with us, and her brother, Rich, was drafted. He was actually active duty. My friend, Debbie, started writing letters to him in high school. When he came back, they got married. They're not married anymore. (laughs) But they did, and they were married for a while.

Just in terms of knowing people that were over there, I really. . .Other than seeing it on TV…Had I had the opportunity to go march, I am sure I would have, because that's the kind of person I am. I always march, if there is a cause.

DePue: Well, it's 1968. This would have been pretty early for you. But the Democratic convention in Chicago, were you paying attention to that at all?

Frederick: The only thing…I have memory of Martin Luther King, when he was killed and Bobby Kennedy, when he was killed.

DePue: What were those memories?

Frederick: By then, I wasn't just a kid reacting to the adult shock. I was shocked. I mean, I was sickened. This was like, for me it kind of about the time where you start going, There's really horrible things going on in the world, because I am living in little Springfield, and there's not horrible things going on. I didn't know that people abused children or wives or people killed each other. I wasn't in that world. I had a happy little world.

Some time in high school, I found out that one of the girls that went to school with us, her dad used to beat her. I mean, I couldn't believe that could happen. How can that happen? I mean, the police would come and take your father away or something. I didn't know there were things like that going on in people's houses. I just had no—

DePue: That's interesting, because earlier you were talking about what your dad had seen at the end of World War II, something he never talked about.

Frederick: Right. And I didn't find out about that until I was in my thirties.

DePue: Kent State, May of 1970. Do you remember that?

Frederick: Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young wrote a song about it. Well, you were talking about music earlier, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, that's…Yeah, I remember getting excited about politics, around their songs.

DePue: And that's right at the beginning of your high school years, it sounds like.

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: Now, this is going to come up later, so I will ask you here in a couple of questions. The Equal Rights Amendment passed Congress in 1972, and it was sent out to the states for ratification. Of course, they needed to have thirty-eight states ratify it. In 1972 or '73, was that even on the radar screen?

Frederick: Not even. I would have been in the American Indian Movement about that time. (both laugh) You know, I don't remember ever even thinking about

women's issues or women's rights or inequality. I guess I just didn't realize anything like that.

DePue: One other question, then. Rowe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision, came down January 22, 1973.

Frederick: Not a thing. I remember, in high school one of my friends—actually she was on the track team, Effie Acres—got pregnant. Here she was, coming to school, and she had a basketball in her tummy. But in the school, but that was the only…We didn't know anything about condoms; we didn't know anything. Nobody talked about anything like that, when I was growing up. I think we did have a sex education class when I was in high school, but it was…Boys and girls were separate, and never the twain shall meet. I wasn't sexual, at that time. I mean, I was just—

DePue: Just having some fun.

Frederick: I was just having fun, (laughs) just fighting the fight and having fun with my friends. So, yeah.

DePue: You mentioned already what you did after you graduated. Did you really want to go to college afterwards, or was it just something that the family supported or—

Frederick: No. I didn't ever really think about it, until, like I said, kind of the end of high school, and people were going to college. Well, I wanted to move to Albuquerque. I had decided that—

DePue: This was all part of the American Indian thing?

Frederick: Yes. Actually, I think, about that time my friend Vicky and I, in middle school…First we were going to go to California Then, I think there was even a lot like, not *Life*, but like [a] *Parade* magazine cover, and they showed the hippies in Taos, New Mexico. So then, it was like, "Oh, we can go to Taos, New Mexico." But I wanted to go to New Mexico. I just believed that I belonged in New Mexico, really. From the time I really started thinking about what I would do when I got out of high school, I believed I wanted to go to New Mexico. So then, at that time, that was the plan. As soon as I got out of high school, I would go to New Mexico, and I did, actually.

DePue: Going there is one thing. What were you going to do, once you got there?

Frederick: I was going to go to school there, but my parents…There was no money for college. I mean, they never suggested that there was. I don't know how I thought I was going to pay for it. It just wasn't a thought, but—

DePue: How much did going to New Mexico have to do with your sister living there?

Frederick: Now, by then Janet, wasn't there anymore. It was just my oldest sister was there, and she was divorced, and she—

DePue: What was her name?

Frederick: Shirley. Her two oldest sons were in college. Of course, she was so poor that they got college paid for, because her husband left, and he didn't have any money. So she just had one son at home. So the immediate plan was she was…She was like, "Oh, come move in with me." So, I was just going to go move in with her and then get a job and then start school. That's what I did. I took a couple of classes at UNM [University of New Mexico].

DePue: Art classes?

Frederick: One art class, one. You know, you have to start out with your gen ed [general education], so I took English 101 or something. Like you say, talk about the times, my English teacher walked in, and he had long blond hair. I didn't know he was the teacher. I thought he was a student. He just looked like a hippy kid. But I liked him. But I took that class.

DePue: Well, up to this point, there were an awful lot of art teachers and teachers, period, that you had crushes on or were greatly infatuated with. Was that not the case with this guy?

Frederick: Well, that was my English teacher. No, I didn't have a crush on him, but I took the art class, and there were 300 people or more in this art class. So the way they handled that is that they divided the class into sections. The section I was in was being taught by a graduate student. I was not fond of this guy, at all.

He started out with saying…He was like a, you know, abstract art lover. He didn't really see any value in good art, what I would call good art. One of the first things he said in class was, "You don't need to learn about perspective. It's not important." I mean, could you draw that, without knowing about how to do perspective? Right there, I wrote him off. I thought he is an idiot.

There were just such talented people in my class. This one woman, she was like a poster artist. She could draw just the most beautiful poster, just sit down and draw a beautiful poster. There's no value in that. I mean, he just was horrible. I hated him. I got so turned off by that, that I decided, well, I can't learn anything here.

So, I finished those two classes at UNM, and then I decided…Well, I don't know why. I guess I had lost interest in being in

New Mexico, and I'd been there for a couple of years, so I moved back to Illinois, thinking I am going to go to the Art Institute in Chicago.

DePue: This was 1976?

Frederick: Um-hmm. Yeah. I decided they're going to have serious artists there, and I can claim Illinois residency. I'll go to school there. But then, that didn't happen. (laughs)

DePue: That didn't work either?

Frederick: No, I came back to Springfield.

DePue: Why didn't that work? Or shouldn't I be asking that?

Frederick: Well, I came back to Springfield and got a job, and I actually hooked up with…I've had a weird life. I ran into this guy who had been an English teacher at my high school. Because I finished all my high school credits before I could graduate…I could have graduated early, but I didn't want to leave high school. I loved high school. I cried at my graduation. I was so miserable. I did not want to leave high school. It was just the best place ever, I thought, which is interesting, because so many kids say they hated high school. But oh, it was just wonderful.

Well, he was an English teacher, and he taught black…not black history, but black literature class. I was the only white student in that class, and I loved that class. But then, I also used to grade papers for him for other classes, because I was kind of in a high track English, and he taught the lower track English. So I would grade papers for him. I had a crush on him too, but he was married. Well, after high school, he wasn't married. (DePue laughs) He had gotten divorced. Now, I am older. This is—

DePue: Now it's legal.

Frederick: Yeah, he's divorced, and I am older, so we dated. We dated for a while, and then…I think I was actually living in Champaign by then, maybe. My sister Suellen now, she had gotten a divorce. She lived in Champaign. Of course, she was still young. So I would drive over to Champaign—I worked for Coca-Cola then—I would drive over to Champaign on Friday night and go spend, basically, the weekend with her, and she has a daughter. We'd go out, bar hopping and whatever and run around and do things all weekend.

Then, I decided to move to Champaign. I think that may be when I ran into this guy again or something. I just cannot remember. So, I lived in Champaign for a couple of years. Again, I was distracted by life and just wasn't doing anything in terms of schooling.

DePue: When you came back to Springfield, were you back living with your parents, during that time frame?

Frederick: Let's see; I moved back to Springfield, maybe for a short period of time. Where did I live then? [to herself] I am trying to think what I even did. Oh, I think it might have been…There was a period of time, I lived in [with] my grandmother, 1200 South Eighth. She had an upstairs apartment, and there was some period of time…I think it was during that time that I lived in the apartment upstairs from her.

DePue: And when you moved to Champaign, were you living with Suellen or on your own?

Frederick: I did. I lived with Suellen, at that time. I didn't ever get my own place in Champaign.

DePue: And were you working over there?

Frederick: I worked for Coca Cola. (laughs)

DePue: Both in Springfield and Champaign?

Frederick: Uh-huh, I basically transferred to Coca-Cola, from Springfield to Champaign Coca Cola. Then, while I was working for Coca Cola in Champaign, there was one woman who managed the office at the Decatur plant. She had some surgical procedure, and she was going to be gone for like six to eight weeks, so I commuted from Champaign to Decatur every day to do her job, while she was out.

Then, when I came back to Champaign, then I got a job, a different job. I worked for an insurance broker. That was the first time that I ever…There was these two older guys, and I was pretty young. They expected to come in, and the coffee would be made and everything. I was usually about the first one there, and they were like, "Have you made the coffee?" And I said, "Well, I don't drink coffee." "Well, you can make the coffee." I said, "Well, if you're drinking the coffee, you make your own coffee." (laughing) You know, I just couldn't even get over that they expected me to make the coffee. Well, it's like, I don't drink coffee. But that was…Yeah, that was after the big thing at Coca Cola Springfield.

DePue: What timeframe are you talking about for this incident that you're going to talk about?

Frederick: For the coffee?

DePue: No, for the Coca Cola incident.

Frederick: Coca Cola Springfield, okay. That was in '76. That's what I had done. I had moved back from Springfield. Yes, and I was living in my grandma's apartment, and I got a job at Coca Cola. I rectified books. The Coke drivers would go out, and they'd bring their receipts back and their money back, and you have to—

DePue: Reconcile?

Frederick: Reconcile the books, all their bookkeeping. So that's what I did all day. It was the most boring job in the world. There were just three women that worked there. My dad had worked for Coca Cola, and we had always drank Coca Cola, and I just…Of course, you know, back in the '70s that's when there was the Coca Cola ad, "I'd like to teach the world to sing." That was kind of a hippy thing. [It] just all fit in with me. So I was going to go work for Coca Cola. I was there.

I wanted to do sales and marketing. I just thought that would be great. I don't want to sit in an office and do a calculator all day. Tom Jackson was the assistant president or vice president or whatever. Norb somebody was the president, and Tom Jackson was the vice president. He was just this short, fat guy and kind of a jerk. I went to him one day and I said, "You know, I really want to work in the sales department." And he basically laughed at me and said, "Well, I can't let you do that." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, what would my wife say?" And I said, "I don't know. What would she say?" He said, "Well, if I had meetings, and there was a woman in the meeting." It just made no sense to me. I just could not understand. I just didn't realize how, you know, sexist …You know, my Dad wasn't like that.

So I didn't understand that kind of behavior. It was like, "What do you mean? What does this got to do with anything?" I want to sell Coca Cola. I don't want to…I couldn't understand that. So, I was really mad. I really wish…See, had I been not my father's daughter…If I would have been more out there, I probably would have sued them, and I would be a rich person now. But instead I just walked away. You know, I just said, "If you're not going to let me do what I want to do, then I'm…" That's when I went to work in Champaign.

DePue: Was he one of the people who expected you to be making the coffee in the morning?

Frederick: No. If they drank coffee at Coca Cola, I didn't know it, because we always drank Coca Cola. (laughs) They had a cooler out in the big office, where we worked. You were supposed to pay, but Virginia, who was the office manager, she knew how we could get the bottles out…We would get the little bottle. She knew how we could get the bottles out, without paying. (laughs)

DePue: So you can get your caffeine fix without anything to do with coffee.

Frederick: That's right. I didn't drink coffee until I was in my late twenties.

DePue: After that experience, did you begin to think about the wider world of women's rights and the Equal Rights Amendment and what was going on in Springfield, every year you were living there?

Frederick: I started realizing that women weren't really taken seriously. And that really made me mad.

DePue: Now. This is '76, '77, '78 timeframe, right?

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: Did you know that, at that time, every single year in the state legislature, they were fighting it out?

Frederick: Nope. I don't even think I read the newspaper. I just didn't know local politics or anything, which is pathetic. Here I grew up in the state capital. What does that say about your educational system? I knew everything about Abraham Lincoln, because you went to all the Lincoln sites when you were in Girl Scouts, when you were in Brownies, when you were in high school, when everything was about Abraham Lincoln. I probably visited Lincoln's tomb twenty times, but I don't think ever, once, did we go to the state capitol. I never had a political science class in high school. We had government class.

DePue: Well, that's required by the state.

Frederick: Yeah, and that was just all about learning whatever it was we had to learn.

DePue: Probably about how Congress works, maybe a little bit about how state government works.

Frederick: But you had to be able to pass the Illinois Constitution test or something. That's really…It's kind of like what they complain about now. I mean, that's what you were taught, to pass the test. (laughs) That, I will say, wasn't true, across the board, because there was a teacher at Southeast named Mr. Kyes, and people that had Mr. Kyes…He would dress up in costume, and he really made it interactive and fun. Everybody loved Mr. Kyes, but I didn't have Mr. Kyes. So we would watch.

You know, honestly—I realized this when I got to college—we didn't talk about World War II. I mean, maybe a little. We didn't talk about any wars after World War II; let's put it that way. We talked about the Revolutionary War, and then we maybe talked a little bit about World War II. The Vietnam War was going on. Did we ever talk about that in class?

Never, never. We didn't talk about what was going on in the world at the time. We learned the same thing that we had learned over and over and over my whole life. It was just the same history repeated.

Frederick: Well, you would have been in your senior year, which is often times the timeframe when you get your civics or political science class. Nineteen seventy-four, about the time you were graduating, that was the height of the Watergate era.

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: Did that even register?

Frederick: I remember that. Well, see, interestingly enough—

DePue: That would have been a great lesson for you.

Frederick: Interestingly enough, when I talk about this politics thing, maybe this was why I wasn't interested. My parents and their friends…My parents were Republicans. My grandparents were Republicans, and their friends were all Republicans, except one guy, one couple. I mean really the guy, because the men were the only ones that really paid attention to politics.

But every election, you know, presidential election, this group would get together, and they would have an election party. It was just another excuse to have a party. But they would have an election party. They would get in to these heated arguments, because this one poor guy was a Democrat. Of course, he was a union member. He worked at Allis Chalmers. So he was union; he was a Democrat, and the other ones were Republicans. Now, my dad didn't get into fights, because my dad wasn't that kind. But others did. They'd fight about many things. You'd give them something, and they would love to have an argument. Anyway, as kids growing up, I just remember it was fun, because there was a party going on, so the kids all got to get together. But, it was just always this big fight and everything.

Well, it wasn't until I got involved in the Equal Rights Amendment and got my dad involved, and you know what? After that—I don't know how soon; I would say probably by Clinton—my dad started voting Democratic. (laughs) He saw the error of his ways. But my mother wouldn't. I don't think my mother ever voted Democratic. Maybe she did, but I don't think so.

DePue: Well, that's quite a bit ahead of our history, (Frederick laughs) but we're getting much closer to suddenly you becoming much more aware of what's going on politically in the world or at least in your world. In '78 you went back to Champaign?

Frederick: Went to Champaign, and then, I guess I had probably decided now I was going to go back to school again.

DePue: I take it, about this timeframe, you talked about this English teacher?

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: You were dating him, but that never developed in to anything serious?

Frederick: No. Then I dated another guy and got pretty serious, but he broke my heart. So that's probably why I left Champaign and decided to come back to Springfield.

DePue: That was 1980 then?

Frederick: Yeah. Maybe late '79. Right around there.

DePue: What was your intention then, coming back to Springfield? You had been out of high school six years by this time.

Frederick: Yeah. Well, I don't know that I knew what my intentions were. Maybe I thought I was going to go to college. I don't know. Springfield was just always my bounce back place, because Mom and Dad are there. There's always a place to be.

DePue: But would you come back and live with Grandma again or—

Frederick: No, no. By this time, my grandmother had passed. She had passed when I had moved away. And my mom's dad, Mel, had passed. Now Grandpa Frederick—Poppy Ace, they called him—he died when I was like four. So I didn't really grow up much with him, just my grandma. So, by the time I moved back to Springfield this time…Well actually, I think, '87 and '89 were when these two grandparents died, him and her.

DePue: From different sides of the family?

Frederick: Yeah. These people are gone, so I just have Grandma Louise.

DePue: And she's on—

Frederick: She's my mom's mom, and she lives next door to Mom and Dad. But I didn't live with her. Oh, you couldn't live with her; she snored so loud you could hardly stand to be in the house at night. (laughs)

DePue: Did you move back in with your folks, then?

Frederick: Probably initially, because I would have had to have a place to go to. I just don't recall exactly, but I must have. That's when I started really…because now I was back in Springfield. Everybody I went to high school with was

married and had kids. They weren't available, and one of my best friends had moved away. So there wasn't really anybody to hang out with. And I had changed so much, because I had moved away from Springfield and lived in New Mexico and Champaign. I had been all over, and these people had basically left high school, got a job at the state, got married, had kids. You know, their circle is pretty small.

DePue: That's a linear progression, yours wasn't.

Frederick: No. I was "boom," up and down and all over. Now, I don't know exactly why, but I'm pretty sure it was at the Illinois State Fair—so that's why I'm thinking it was like late '79, like August of '79—they had an ERA booth that you could volunteer to work for the ERA. I really didn't know much about it, but it sounded like something I could get into. So I volunteered. They would call you up, and you had to go make phone calls or—

DePue: Who are they?

Frederick: I think it was the Illinois NOW or Springfield NOW, probably, Springfield National Organization for Women. So, that's what I remember; it started out with making phone calls. You would call people and ask them if they supported the Equal Rights Amendment. That was a horrible job, but it was grassroots.

DePue: Was it a paid position?

Frederick: No.

DePue: Volunteer?

Frederick: Yeah, volunteer. But I met people there, so that was good. These were like feminists, which I don't think I even knew the word "feminist." But I liked these women. They were strong women; they had a goal, and they were going for it. They were smart.

So, through that…It was kind of like a small community of women activists. They were also involved in domestic violence issues and sexual assault issues. It was just kind of that feminist outgrowth, where it was kind of the same group of women were—

DePue: But this is all the stuff you didn't even know existed in high school.

Frederick: No.

DePue: What would say was their goal? You mentioned they had a goal. What was that goal?

Frederick: Just, I think, bottom line, it would say to fight for women's rights, women's right to be safe, women's right to be paid well and treated right. I mean, paid equally and have equal opportunity. I would say equal opportunity, and to be safe.

DePue: Would it be fair to say the thing that resonated for you was this experience at Coca Cola?

Frederick: I think that was a part of [it]. I think that's how life goes. There's like little pieces build and build and build. I really think equality…I would say is the big word for me. I think that was the American Indian Movement. Anything that I saw as a cause was because I felt like people weren't being treated fairly or equally, or they didn't have the same opportunities. I just think that's horrible. I think that's a sin. I think everybody should have the opportunity for equal treatment or equal rights, equal pay, equal whatever.

DePue: Which came first then? Working out at that booth at the state fair or enrolling at the college?

Frederick: No, and I didn't work at the booth at the state fair. I just signed a volunteer card there.

DePue: Okay.

Frederick: And they called. Actually, at the same time, I signed a card to volunteer at Sojourn Women's Center. You know, it's for battered women and children. And they called me. You know, you could sign a card, they're going to call. So, oh, I was so excited, because it gave me something to do. At the time, I was working for a temp agency here in town. [I] couldn't tell you what one. But I thought, Well, I don't have a job, and I don't know what I'm doing yet. But I got a job at a temp agency, and they kept me busy. So I had work.

DePue: You never considered going back to Coca Cola?

Frederick: No. No, I never did. Interestingly enough, I was looking in the paper the other day, and there's a position open at Coca Cola for marketing supervisor or something. Isn't that funny? I don't want to do it anymore. (both laugh) At the time, they missed their golden opportunity.

So, once you get involved in those groups and you're around the women that have the knowledge and have seen…They have different experiences. And now you are getting to see more and more things. So then, volunteering at Sojourn Women's Center was just, whoa! That was the first time I really learned what goes on in other people's homes and how people can be treated horribly.

DePue: What were you doing there?

Frederick: Well, I started out…There was this woman who came there on Thursday nights, and she did crafts with the mothers. They would take the kids out—they had just built a child's center—and they would take the kids out and keep them busy, and they would have the women do crafts.

DePue: Was this a residence home at that time?

Frederick: Yes, it was a house over on North Sixth Street. This woman didn't drive. So, I was asked if I would pick her up and take her and participate in the craft activities and help out and then take her home. Sure, I was happy to do that. Then, once I got there, I got more involved. I started meeting the staff, and actually one of the staff members, Vicki Magee, who's one of my very best friends to this day, supervised the counselors. She's actually the person that suggested I go to college.

By that time I thought I was old and stupid and couldn't go to college. You know, I kind of thought I had missed my time. And she said, "You're one of the smartest people here. If these people can get a bachelor or master's degree, you can. You are as smart as any of them." So she really encouraged me.

It was the following year that I took my first college class at Sangamon State University; it was then. It was in the old Leland Hotel, which they called the Capitol Campus, downtown on Capitol [Avenue]. It was in 1980. It was the summer class, and I took it from Nancy Ford. She had been a family law attorney, years ago. [She] moved here from Philadelphia. I loved that class. Now, really, really getting more here because family law, you know, this is *Kramer vs. Kramer*[2].

DePue: This is like the third movie that you've mentioned.

Frederick: Well, and actually there was a case that happened in Champaign that was kind of like that. This guy was a doctor or dentist. He divorced his wife and just left her and the kids to fend for themselves. This was before there were legal protections or anything. She [Nancy Ford] was out protesting and found this dentist's office to get support. (laughs) But, there was a lot of like *Kramer vs. Kramer,* but it was real life stuff in these family law classes, about women who had sued, because they lacked equal opportunity for a job or—

DePue: I want to ask just a couple of questions and maybe do a little bit of explaining about what Sangamon State was at the time. The University was founded in 1970, so it's still a pretty young university. It was started as a very different kind of a college environment. One of the things I am curious about, at least in the early days, it was strictly juniors and seniors.

[2] A 1979 American drama film, adapted from the novel by Avery Corman.

Frederick: Um-hmm.

DePue: You were expected to have a couple of years of college, maybe at a community college someplace, and Lincoln Land College is just down the road. Was that not the case in 1980 when you started there?

Frederick: Yes. I had taken a couple of classes at Lincoln Land, but I had not done my undergraduate work. I think I took the family law class. I think you could take a class because, of course, like you say, the rules were a little looser there. So—

DePue: Well, the whole idea of the place was, it's an alternative place. They were reaching out to the nontraditional student, even in those days.

Frederick: Right. So then I decided, after that class, that I loved college, and I could do this. I got an A in that class, and it was not easy. But I loved it.

So I studied for the CLEP test, which is the College Level Examination Program, and I CLEPed out of my first two years of college. So, like that, I got sixty credit hours by taking this horrible test, this grueling, horrible test. But I got through it, and so I was admitted to the university as a junior.

DePue: I think this is a fairly logical place to stop for today.

Frederick: Okay.

DePue: Now we can spend the next session really concentrated on what's going on in the equal rights fight, here in Springfield.

Frederick: Right.

DePue: Okay.

Frederick: Okay. Sounds good.

DePue: Well, I have learned a lot this afternoon.

Frederick: (laughing) I've got a colorful life, don't I?

[end of transcript #1]

Interview with Jeri Frederick

ISE-A-L-2013-004

Interview: March 1, 2013

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue

Illinois Statecraft - ERA Oral History project

DePue: Today is Friday, March 1, 2013. This is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I am in the library this afternoon with Jeri Frederick. Good afternoon Jeri.

Frederick: Good afternoon. It's nice to be back.

DePue: We had quite a lively session the last time. It was a couple of weeks ago, but now we get to the really interesting part of your life, and that's much more direct involvement and your conversation about the Equal Rights Amendment fight, here in Springfield from about 1980 to 1982. That's going to be the focus of what we talk about. But I know you want to, at least, flesh out the record with a couple of comments about things that happened before that time, as well.

Frederick: Right. Well, I couldn't jog my memory about how I really got kind of activated, but as I recalled, actually watching a documentary on the women's fight. It was mostly focused on the '70s, and it really helped me remember that that's when *Ms. Magazine* started being published. My older sister, who was really living through the anti-war movement and such, a little bit more mature, she sent me an annual subscription to *Ms. Magazine* that really helped raise my consciousness. That was one of the terms that they used back then, "raising your consciousness." That was really…Kind of a part of being involved was really learning about what was going on in the world, because living in little Springfield, Illinois, you could be sheltered from kind of the bigger picture, especially from a middle class family.

DePue: But you'd moved around a little bit.

Frederick: But I did move around, and I was moving around in the '70s. Maybe that was a part of…I was busy moving back and forth from New Mexico, (laughing) and I didn't have time to get more involved. Then, in the later '70s, specifically in 1978, I dated someone who was …I guess I was starting to analyze the world a little bit more, and he was a teacher, actually a college graduate. I think he went on to get his PhD in English.

So he was real interesting, and we would have good dialogue. He bought me a book called *The Women's Room*. It was quite radical, I thought. That was part of the other thing that watching that history reminded me, because, I think, looking back, I remember the beginning of the women's liberation movement and "You've come a long way baby," you know, the cigarette ad that they put out. And I remember the Billie Jean King tennis match. So I remember thinking, Billie Jean will beat this guy, but I wasn't ever really committed to being involved. So I was out there thinking about these things, and *The Women's Room*…I couldn't tell you exactly today what it was about, but I just remembered it made quite a difference in the way I started thinking about things.

DePue: Had you read *The Feminist [Feminine] Mystique*?[3]

Frederick: I have never read *The Feminist Mystique*, no.

DePue: To this day you haven't?

Frederick: No, no, I didn't, didn't and haven't. Well, and then, that was kind of the other thing, not that people couldn't have gone back and read it, but Betty Friedan was kind of behind me, at that point. I think Bella Abzug was pretty involved, still, and I'm sure Betty Friedan was, in her way, but—

DePue: When you say, behind you; what do you mean?

Frederick: Like not as involved at the time that I got started getting involved. By then, Gloria Steinem had taken over where Betty Friedan had left off. And so, Gloria Steinem was…and Letty—

DePue: Lilly Ledbetter?

Frederick: No, Letty Cottin Pogrebin. I don't know, she was the other person that was involved in starting *Ms. Magazine*. So, those were like names that I knew more, not that I could pronounce them. (laughs) Also, I can remember when

[3] A 1963 book by Betty Friedan, which is widely credited with sparking the beginning of second-wave feminism in the United States. (https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=The+Feminist+Mystique%3F)

Marlo Thomas did the series *Free to Be You and Me.*[4] That was a children's book and video or something.

I knew that those things were going on, and oh, isn't that good? But, other than little incidents that occur in daily life, like I can remember having a conversation with this guy I'd met. Some of us women had gone out after work to have a drink, and some guy comes over and, "Hey, what are you doing?" We weren't really interested. It was like he couldn't understand that. He was like, "You can't tell me you're not here to find a man." And I said, "Well, yes we can. We're not here to find a man. We're here to visit amongst ourselves." It was just those kind of things just add to it. So, there was just this real…Maybe I kind of had to get involved, because of things like that that kept happening that I just couldn't forgive. But I didn't understand how people could be so—

DePue: You couldn't accept those kind of things as just part of human nature?

Frederick: Yeah. I didn't understand. Well, and I felt like degraded, like, why are you treating us differently, because we're women? I can remember too, I worked at community action for a while, and there was a guy there that…I can't think of his name now. This was in the late '70s, and I can remember that he said some…I think it was in the late '70s. I said something about women's rights or whatever, and he had this horrible response like, "Women don't deserve to have rights." I couldn't understand how you could go through the Civil Rights Movement and then turn around and not think that women also should have equal rights.

But in this documentary that they were showing, it was interesting, because they talked about women getting really active, especially at college campuses, in the anti-war movement, but then realizing that the men were disrespectful of them and what they were doing.

DePue: When you say the men, the men, even in the anti-war movement?

Frederick: Yes, yes. So the culture—

DePue: And I've heard similar comments, coming out of the Civil Rights Movement, among some of the black groups.

Frederick: Right, I'm sure that's true, because women were really involved in the Civil Rights Movement too. Women were always there, standing side by side with men, fighting these battles. Well, just like in World War II, the women were home taking care of everything. But the men came back, (hand clap) "Get

[4] A children's entertainment project, conceived, created and executive-produced by actress and author Marlo Thomas. Produced in collaboration with the Ms Foundation for Women. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free to Be...You and Me)

back in the home." These women that had had jobs and were enjoying working outside of the home.

DePue: I think that's—if I can interject—that's an important event. People don't realize how social patterns change, when you have an event like World War II, and women have to become much more active and involved in every aspect of society.

Frederick: Absolutely. And that was maybe the beginning of the renewed look at what are women's roles, because, again, my sisters all got married right out of high school. That was just what you did. You didn't have to worry about what you were going to do, because you were going to have a husband that was going to take care of you or support the family. But, what if you wanted to do something?

I think that was when women started saying, "Well, then I don't want to just sit at home with the kids all day. I want to go out and do something." They started realizing that the opportunities weren't there. Or, if the opportunities were there, they weren't going to get paid the same as the men that were standing next to them.

DePue: In the late '70s, would you have considered yourself a feminist, at that point in time?

Frederick: No. I probably would have not considered myself a women's libber—that was the terminology that I remember—because I thought I didn't identify with the people that I saw on the television screen.

DePue: How were they different from you? How would you define a women's libber?

Frederick: Well, it makes me think it's that whole pendulum theory, that what happened is something and maybe stemmed from the anti-war movement. There was already this momentum, and then, when those women were realizing that they weren't being treated respectfully and equally with the men they were fighting alongside that they became angry and then just kind of decided, "Well, we don't need them. We can do this. We don't need to be a part of that group that is degrading us." So, I think, initially, what I saw was just kind of this angry…I don't know.

One of the interviews that they showed on this documentary was about these women, and they were saying, "Oh, we're treated like slaves" and blah, blah, blah. I don't think I was there yet. You know, I was young. I was just starting in the work world on my own. I was dating, looking for a man. I wasn't ready to throw all the men out with the bathwater (laughs), and that's kind of how I saw that. I actually think I even wrote myself a note about that.

I didn't realize, of course, all the big cases and things that were going on. One of the things that they talked about was… And they interviewed this woman named Loretta Weeks, who worked for Southern Bell Telephone Company. She was raising her children on her own, and there was a position that opened as a switch**man**, as they called it. She wanted that position, and they said, "Well, we can't give you that position, because, even though we know you, and you're a good worker, and we appreciate your interest, if we give you that position, then we would have to give other women the opportunity for that same type of work."

That might be part of it. I wasn't aware of the economic issue involved, because I wasn't in a position to be exposed to that, I guess, until later. I mean, that did come, but not at that time in my life. I didn't understand equal pay for equal work. I wasn't raising children. It wasn't important to me. It wasn't on my radar screen, so to speak.

DePue: One of the other things, when you talk about so much turmoil in the late '60s and early '70s. You've got Vietnam; you've got the tail end of the Civil Rights Movement; you've got the emergence of the women's rights movement; you've got a lot more availability of drugs and the youth thinking a lot more differently about drugs, but you also have this thing called the sexual revolution. Maybe that's not the greatest title for what was going on, but I am wondering if you can reflect on that, how that fit into this whole process, for you personally.

Frederick: Yeah, and I don't think I was onboard with that yet, either. Probably Madonna (laughing) was when that started for me. But I was, of course, exposed to…It's interesting, because all of my sisters got divorced from the first husbands and second husbands sometimes and third husbands. But I think that was kind of one of the things, like *The Graduate* was out, and that was like, oh, just shocking. I don't think I could see it when it came out. I think it was rated as such that I probably wasn't able to even go see it. But I was still a good girl, you know, from Springfield, Illinois. I didn't; I wasn't—

DePue: Well, this is the same timeframe, though, that birth control measures became much more prevalent. And then, in '73, you had the important Roe v. Wade decision.[5]

Frederick: Right. I didn't have really a strong opinion about birth control or women's right to reproductive rights. But in 1975, when I first moved to Albuquerque, the first job I got was at a Catholic hospital, and I wasn't

[5] A landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court on the issue of abortion, which decided that a right to privacy under the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment extended to a woman's decision to have an abortion, but that this right must be balanced against the state's interests in regulating abortions: protecting women's health and protecting the potentiality of human life. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roe v.Wade)

raised Catholic. But most of the people around me were Catholic, actually, except for one Jewish woman. (laughs) And these women took me under their wing, because I was eighteen years old. We'd go have lunch together and, of course, all kinds of conversations. But, of course, [there was] the birth control conversation, reproductive rights conversation. Oh, they just thought that was all horrible. Women take these birth control pills, and they're going to die, how bad that was for them and everything.

But there was one woman, too, in this group, and she was younger than the other women. She was probably—if I was eighteen—I am going to say she was twenty-eight. But she was Hispanic, and she was raised in the very strict Hispanic environment. I could remember that she just had these weird rituals, during the time that she would have her period. I can't remember exactly what it all was now, but it was kind of like you didn't do certain things while you were having your period. Maybe it was that she didn't go out with men or whatever. It was like, I didn't understand that kind of superstition, because I wasn't raised like that. I can remember talking to my older sister about it, and saying, "You know, Hazel does this and doesn't do that or whatever." I just thought that was so odd.

So, anyway, I can remember being around this culture of women that had different beliefs, but I didn't have any…I wasn't on birth control. I didn't have any strong beliefs either, so I just kept my mouth shut and listened. (laughs)

DePue: I guess the essence of everything we have been talking about, at this point, when 1980 came along, when you start going to college, and you get involved with the National Organization for Women, it isn't totally out of the blue for you. You've had lots of experiences, personally, that kind of were slowly building up to this.

Frederick: Exactly. That's what I think, as I reflect back. I think there were just little bits and pieces, here and there, that were building up to that. And that was one of the things that Gloria Steinem said, that she had like an awakening. I think that was then what eventually happened.

So in 1980, my first thing that I did was take this family law class at the university, which…There were things going on in households that I had no clue about.

DePue: You mean abusive men?

Frederick: Not…well, abuse, but not so much that but about…This was probably, too, because of the kind of divorce explosion, that men were leaving their wives and not providing any support for the family. [Men were] leaving their wives and children to go marry somebody else and not providing any support for the family. So now, this woman who has been told, you need to

stay at home and take care of the kids and the home, now their husbands are walking out on them to marry somebody else, and they have no skills, other than being a homemaker. They're left high and dry. So that was a big awakening for me, because my parents were married seventy-one years—

DePue: In this law class, was that because the laws and the courts worked in such a way that they let the men off the hook? Or was it because the men violated the terms of the divorces, the divorce proceedings?

Frederick: Probably a little bit of both. I think, at the time, it was the way the law was, that there weren't laws in place that required men to provide any kind of support. And being the wage earner, being the person that had the money, the man could hire an attorney to fight the divorce, where the women had no means. Their money was tied up with their husbands and—

DePue: But if they won the lawsuit, and they got custody, wouldn't the courts award them pay for those legal expenses?

Frederick: Not necessarily, and there weren't laws to force men to pay then, either. You know, now—

DePue: That the state wouldn't step in?

Frederick: Yeah, the state would step in and say, "You can't." One of the cases that we read about was a dentist in Champaign, Illinois, who had done this, left his wife and family and was providing no visible means of support. The wife and kids picketed his dental office. (laughing) So I thought that was pretty good.

Wilma Scott Heide, a feminist with the Women's Studies program at Sangamon State University in Springfield, Illinois, attended an ERA rally in June, 1981.

DePue: Well, this is probably a great way to transition into the whole discussion. Was this course the one that was taught by Wilma Scott Heide? Did I get that name right?

Frederick: You got the name right, but no. She was the head of the Women's Studies Center. I don't believe I ever had a class with her, but I worked in her office. She was quite a character. She had been the national…She was the president of national NOW, at one time. So she knew Bella Abzug, and she knew Betty Friedan. As a matter of fact, in this documentary, they had a shot of her. She was sitting at the table with these people.

DePue: Of Heide?

Frederick: Wilma Scott Heide was sitting at that table. No, the woman that taught the class that I was in, was named Nancy Ford. She just came to the university about that time, late ‘70s, early ‘80s. She had come from Philadelphia, where she had been an attorney. So she had some really good experiences, in addition to her personal experiences.

DePue: You’re talking about the professor for the class on family law?

Frederick: Right.

DePue: Would either of these women, either Ford or Heide, have considered themselves feminists?

Frederick: Oh, absolutely.

DePue: And they made no bones about that, in terms of the class?

Frederick: Not at all. Not at all. No. No, as a matter of fact, I would say that, at that time in the legal studies department at the university, there were very strong, outspoken women in that department. I can remember hearing some of the guys in the class complain that one of the professors there hated men. So they felt like she didn’t give the men the same attention and—

DePue: Grades?

Frederick: Grades and such.

DePue: Which professor was that?

Frederick: Her name is Pat Langley, and she is an emeritus professor from UIS [University of Illinois Springfield]. So it was Nancy Ford. They both retired a couple of years ago.

DePue: Do you think the men who were complaining had some justification to complain?

Frederick: Possibly. Pat Langley, she is what I would still call a very radical feminist activist. She’s lesbian, and so she’s very outspoken about gay rights and women’s rights and worker’s rights. She’s just one of those people; she’s involved in all the causes and has very strong opinions. I could see that. I could see that you would feel that way as a man. I don’t, you know—

DePue: What was the class that she was teaching?

Frederick: She taught legal research and writing.

DePue: And you took that class?

Frederick: And I took that class.

DePue: What was your perception of what was being taught in that class?

Frederick: I was just trying to pass that class. (both laugh) It was the hardest class I took, really. She was a perfectionist. When you cited a case, there better be every dot and every abbreviation had to be absolutely perfect. You would have to read cases, and then you would have to write what the legal issue was about the case. Well, you better have covered everything that was in there. It was a hard, hard class. I would never want to go through it again. Now, actually, since then, they have divided it into two separate classes, legal research and legal writing. But it was all one class, and it was a bear. So I wasn't really thinking about what anybody else was thinking about. (laughing) I was just trying to get through it.

DePue: Keep your head above water?

Frederick: That's right, because it's not easy to read a case law and understand what the heck they're talking about. It was a whole new language for me.

DePue: You're now in school. You're taking these classes.

Frederick: So I took my first class, and that same year is when I started volunteering for Sojourn Women's Center, which is a shelter for battered women. I started volunteering there. Well, actually, that was how I got into school was because one of the women there talked me into taking this class. Then I took this class; then I was just, "Oh, my gosh, I loved that." So then I enrolled in school full-time that fall. Well, I went to school that fall; I don't know if it was full-time.

An ERA bumper sticker, dating from the early 1980s.

But then, they hired me to work at Sojourn Women's Center. So I was there. Yeah, I worked the overnight shift, which was perfect, because I could go to school, and then I could go there and work the overnight shift. That was, again, another awakening, because I had never witnessed the kind of violence that some of those women came in, the stories. That was really a big part of the women's movement, at that time, too. It wasn't just about economics; it was about violence against women. So that was kind of all wrapped in there together.

DePue: Were your own career aspirations evolving at this time?

Frederick: Yes. As a matter of fact, at this juncture, I decided that what I'd like to do is pursue a degree in social work so that I could work with battered women or on women's issues. But also, the reason I started in legal studies was because I wanted an understanding of the law and women's rights, so I

could be more of an advocate for them. So, yes, that was also coming, about at that time.

DePue: What I'd like to do here, if I can find my own papers, is give a little background in what's going on in the ERA fight, up to this point in time. Here's my own timeline here. We've talked about this briefly, but I think this is a good time to inject some of these facts, if we will, into the discussion. So we've mentioned what was going on in Vietnam, with all these other movements, that the women's movement was very much a part of the protest movements of the late '60s or early '70s.

In 1972, Congress passes the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. March 22, the Equal Rights Amendment passed Congress as a federal constitutional amendment, obviously, and is sent to the states with a time clock of seven years. So that means that it's got to be ratified by 1979. Hawaii was the first state, and there is a flurry of states that accepted to approve the amendment very quickly.

It got to the Illinois Senate—it went before both the House and Senate—and it had a majority vote of thirty to twenty-one. Unfortunately, it needed thirty-six votes at that time, because of the ruling that any amendment that had to be passed in Illinois needed three-fifths.

Frederick: Right, which they had just changed.

DePue: They, being the people who got together in 1970 and rewrote, completely rewrote, the Illinois State Constitution. I think I can pretty assuredly say that this was not something that they anticipated when they said, in order to accept amendments, it must be a three-fifths vote. I think they were thinking of amendments to the State Constitution when they had established this three-fifths vote. But it was established thereafter, and it was never overturned; although, that was always part of the fight.

I know from '72, all the way up through 1980—we're getting to about '81 and '82—that it was discussed. There were lively discussions, and it might pass in one house one year and another house in the next year, but it never successfully got through both houses of the legislature and, obviously, never was adopted in the State of Illinois.

Frederick: Right. During that time, and after the flurry of the initial states passing the Equal Rights Amendment, that's when Phyllis Schlafly came on the scene.

DePue: Roughly about 1973 when she really started to gear it up.

Frederick: You've got to give her that. She waged an incredible war on a grassroots campaign. She went out and recruited women. I think [she] probably started out recruiting Republican women but then grew. She recruited evangelical, you know, kind of tea party, church people with her message that you

aren't…They're making, basically, the way she kind of got people involved, in my understanding, or my experience was that she said, "Well"…It looked like the women who were for the amendment were trying to put the homemakers out of business.

Actually, there was that faction. That's kind of my radical feminist thing. There were those pockets of women that basically made fun of women that wanted to stay home and take care of their children. It was like, if you're not going to get out and get a job, then you have no meaning in the world. I still don't approve of that. I think that's a choice. Everyone should have choices. That may have been kind of my early, not buying in earlier, and those kinds of arguments.

But Phyllis then really took home on those arguments. Then, of course, the whole thing that she said that women would be drafted, and women would be in combat, and the famous one, that there would be unisex restrooms, and women and men would have to use the same restrooms and— (laughing)

DePue: What I'd like to do here is to set the stage a little bit more, and then I'm going to, basically, take some information out of the article that she wrote, I think, in 1972 and go down **her** issues with the Equal Rights Amendment and let you respond in each case. But, before we do that, I think it might be good to actually read the language of the Equal Rights Amendment into the record here.

Frederick: Alright. DePue: Of course, again, this is what came out of Congress in 1972, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." We'll come back to that language in a little bit. (Frederick laughs)

Point two, "The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." That's pretty standard, boilerplate language.

Number three, "The amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification."

So the first paragraph is really the crucial one. In 1972 in February…I should say that I've had the opportunity to interview Mrs. Schlafly, so we've talked about this in great depth. If somebody wants to check that out, I would certainly encourage them to do that. She's a woman of strong opinions, and that's no news to you.

Frederick: No, it's not. (laughs)

DePue: She wrote an article entitled "What's Wrong with Equal Rights for Women?" and that came out in the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, again in 1972.

Here's the first one. It gave more power to a centralized federal government. Now she comes from a very conservative perspective, conservative in the sense that we want to keep government limited. Do you have any problem with that particular part of what she said? And this is just one element of a very detailed argument she had, that it would centralize more power in the federal government.

Frederick: Well, no.

DePue: Do you disagree with that?

Frederick: I disagree with that.

DePue: Well, I think we'll probably have more discussion over this next one. You've already kind of alluded to this. She argued that it would undermine traditional families.

Frederick: Right. And that was her fire stick. She would go around and say, "They're going to make women leave the home and get jobs." Going back to what I just said, they think women don't have value unless you're out working and that having someone else raise your…Oh, then that was kind of another piece of that was that these other people are going to raise your children, and God knows what's going to happen when you're not home. And they don't value mothers. And, oh, people won't open the doors for you. Men won't open doors for women anymore. Just—

DePue: But there is part of the radical feminists that would say that's what they don't want to have happen.

Frederick: Again, that's so silly.

DePue: You weren't there.

Frederick: No, I wasn't there. I say anybody that wants to open the door for anybody, isn't that a nice humanly thing to do? It's just civility. It shouldn't be tied to gender. I wouldn't stand and wait for somebody to open the door for me, but just to make that like this threat that, "Oh my gosh, men are going to stop opening the door." So what does that mean? You can't enter the building? But, it just really took hold with these women.

Well, and I think that I could understand that if I was…I've never worked outside the home. I was proud of the home I had made. I was proud of the children I was raising. I was proud of my husband's position and our position in the community. Then somebody came and said, "No, you're an embarrassment to the women's race." I think I would have fought back against that.

She just kind of flipped the table and made these people feel bad about…or tried to say that they should feel bad, that the feminists were saying you're not as valuable, because what you do isn't valued, which, no, they didn't get to pay for what they did. But then, of course, we'll get to that later. But then that became a part of the NOW's statement, [which] was women should completely feel valued for what they do. Look at what they do. They raise the children, manage the budget. They buy the groceries; they cook the meals; they clean the house; they do the laundry. Yes, you should feel very good about yourselves. That is an amazing accomplishment.

But, at the time, it was, she…I don't know. I can see that the early radical noise, music, whatever you want to call it, words were hanging in the air. And then here comes Phyllis and then exploits that in a way that these other women, they're fighting for their rights too.

DePue: That resonates with more traditional women.

Frederick: Right.

DePue: What was so interesting was hearing you discuss, earlier, about these legal classes you were taking at Sangamon State. If I understand the essence of what Mrs. Schlafly was arguing at that time and continues to argue today, that in American law, women actually have a privileged position, in many respects. And that was especially in terms of family law and divorce case. Now you're presenting a completely different picture. But she said divorce law will treat women more preferably, that it was the women who always got custody. It was the men who always had to pay alimony or child support.

Frederick: Right. And it was always the women that got custody, because it goes back to women are the mothers; they raise the children and such. But it wasn't a privileged position, because women didn't walk away from that situation with what…I mean, maybe, if you were a woman who had…if there was money in the family. But how many women come from households that there's a ton of money sitting there?

So, even if they fought the fought, I mean, if they got the alimony, which I would say that wasn't…I don't know what the percentage would have been. But it wasn't enough to maintain your life. And now you have to go out and get a job, and you haven't worked outside the home in twenty years. You can take care of children. You can manage your household budget or cook meals, but you haven't typed since you took that typing class in high school, you know, whatever, those type of things. So you're not in a position to go out and really support yourself.

DePue: And I think, to a certain extent, Mrs. Schlafly would have agreed with the analogy that you just made and said, "But if we pass the Equal Rights

Amendment, by law, the courts would have to treat men and women equally in these scenarios."

Frederick: But see, that's where…Who knows what would have happened in the courts? I would say that you cannot predict that. But that was what she always did, though. She would always say, "Well then," because this was about…You know, that's like just taking it to the extreme. That is what she always did. She took it to the extreme. And the courts don't move that way.

In my opinion, courts kind of inch their way along. They're usually behind the times at figuring things out. They're not going to be the first people out of the gate making these decisions. They're going to have laws go through. They're going to watch the social climate and go with that.

It's like when Roe versus Wade was passed. There wasn't a big pro-life movement. There were people concerned about how many women were dying, because of back alley abortions. That was the issue, and that's what they addressed. You know, that movement has been stirred up again, but it's for different reasons now.

DePue: Were there lots of pro-life women involved with the Equal Rights Amendment fight?

Frederick: Not that I know of. I don't know that…I think not, because really–at least at the time I was involved–reproductive rights was kind of hand in hand with that.

DePue: Hand in hand with?

Frederick: The equal rights movement.

DePue: Okay.

Frederick: Because women felt that they should have choices about their decision to have children or not have children.

DePue: And that goes back to our discussion about the sexual revolution developing.

Frederick: Right, right, exactly. And that was born from that, but I think…Well, it comes up all the time. It's still a big issue, because it's a very emotional issue.

DePue: I know Mrs. Schlafly came from a very strong Catholic background. She's proud that she is Catholic, and I think it would be very fair to say that she was and is appalled by the whole notion of abortion, that that is the destruction of human life. What was your feeling about that argument? I'm

sure that came up over and over and over again in the discussion about ERA.

Frederick: Oh, it did. And, again, it's such an emotional issue, the moral, emotional issue. I think one of the arguments that I heard was that, if you allowed women the opportunity to abort the child, then that's how they're going to use that as birth control, that they're not going to use pills or any other means of protection. They're just going to go out and get an abortion every time they get pregnant. That just doesn't fit for me.

I don't know the research or the statistics, but I don't believe that most people would do that. I think it's the exact opposite. I think any woman that's ever made that decision doesn't want to have to ever go through that again, because it's a part of your body. You know, it is you. It's a part of you you're destroying then. So women didn't take it lightly, and they didn't recover from it easily. I think a lot of women went through a lot of grief and wondering and maybe will always wonder if there was something else that they could have done or whatever or questioned their decision.

DePue: I think this probably is relevant for now as it was then. Was there any middle ground, any compromised position between those who were pro-life and pro-choice?

Frederick: Not much, not much. Of course, I'm on the pro-choice side, but I always felt like— and I still feel like, actually—the pro-life people won't hear anything (laughs) outside of what they believe. One of the things that came up back then was, well, these are the same people that are involved in sending troops over into these wars that we're fighting.

On the one hand, you have no…not no regard, but you don't hold back when you're drafting people and sending them off to this crazy war in Vietnam. But now, all of a sudden, this fetus is…You have to protect that.

Then also, again, this is the same group that they're going to bitch and moan about welfare and entitlement programs. Well, what's going to happen to that child? If that child is born into a household where it's not wanted, it may be abused. It may be put up in foster care, or if it's in a family that doesn't have the means to support that child, then the state is going to support that child. And you're the same person that's going to say, "I don't want to support these children."

So there has…We have to find an answer. Either you have to agree that we need to use birth control or that we need to give women an alternative, or you need to kind of move your opinions on some of these other things. You can't have it all. Somewhere it just doesn't all fit together.

DePue: I am sure, in their case, they thought that the pro-choice side was equally as adamant and unwilling to bend in the whole arguments. Did you have an understanding at that time about the pro-life argument?

Frederick: No. I mean, I'll give them that. I was raised as a Christian, and I don't think anybody's life should be taken. But I also think that, if a woman's life is…Even down to the very bottom line. What if the woman's life is at risk? What if the child is like that one woman, the "romper room woman," who, she had taken thamaldehyde [thalidomide], and she was going to have this deformed, disfigured child? So she wanted an abortion. I mean, she lost her job. They were tearing her family apart over this. There are circumstances where, I don't think, a woman should be forced to have a child. In the case of rape, those type of issues,

I need to be able to say, no. This isn't happening. I'm not going to carry my rapist's child. I'm not going to risk my life at childbirth. I'm not going to have a severely deformed child that I just have to watch die" or…Those kinds of things, that's where I have to say, no. I have a right to make that choice. If God's against me, then I'll go straight to hell. But it's not **your** choice. It's **my** choice, and I live with the consequences.

DePue: I think the courts, in 1973, thought that they were taking this whole issue out of the political arena.

Frederick: I know it. (laughs) And it just doesn't go away.

DePue: It hasn't worked that way.

Frederick: No.

DePue: You've mentioned a couple of these others, but I want to continue on here with the arguments that Mrs. Schlafly and her side, the Stop ERA force. That was the official name, Stop ERA—

Frederick: Right, the little red stop sign.

DePue: Yeah. Women would be subject to the draft, if we were to have this.

Frederick: Right. And I believe that was true. I do believe that was true. I don't think women would have been forced into combat. However, (laughs) again, that's one of those "Who knows?" But, here we are. They're just now allowing women, who have already volunteered to serve in the military, to become involved in combat. And like Tammy Duckworth[6] said…Here she lost both of her legs. And that was one of the things that the nurses said,

[6] An American politician, member of the Democratic Party and Iraq War veteran, who served as a U.S. Army helicopter pilot and suffered severe combat wounds. She was the first female double amputee from the war. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tammy_Duckworth)

back in the day. They said, "We're already in combat, but we don't have the means to protect ourselves." So that wasn't a good argument either, because there were women there. They just didn't have the means to protect themselves.

DePue: Well, I've got to confess, having been in the military, it wasn't just about being in combat but having the opportunity to serve in front line combat units like the infantry, armored cavalry units, field artillery units, aviation units, where you're actually the front line troops fighting. Was that a position that most feminists were advocating for, because that certainly could have been an extension of the passage of ERA. They would have had the right to do that.

Frederick: Yes. It's my understanding and experience that women who wanted to make those choices, that again, it's my body; it's my decision. If I want to do this, it's not up to you to make that decision for me.

DePue: And you were supportive of that position?

Frederick: Absolutely.

DePue: Going back to the language of the Equal Rights Amendment, in the first place, "Equality of rights under the law should not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." And Mrs. Schlafly found that last word most peculiar.

Frederick: I do too.

DePue: She thought it shouldn't be "on account of sex."

Frederick: That should be "gender."

DePue: "Gender."

Frederick: I agree. (laughing) I don't know. I mean, I wasn't around when it was written, so I have no idea what—

DePue: But apparently you remember that part of the discussion?

Frederick: No. I don't remember her part of that discussion.

DePue: Okay.

Frederick: No, that's just my own personal view. It's just kind of my thing is using the word "sex" when you mean the word "gender." To me they're two different connotations (laughing) so let's just go with the one that we're talking about.

DePue: Well, I am sure you have some opinions about this next part of it. Part of that equation then, if you use the word "sex" and not "gender," then you open up the whole issue about treatment in American society and American law on gays and lesbians and homosexuals.

Frederick: Oh, that was a huge issue. Yeah, that was another one of her issues, that you're going to have homosexuals in the schools. You're going to have to have…What was it she said? Homosexuals are going to have equal rights, and they're going to be in the schools teaching your children and just all this. Well, you know, kind of, so what? But, (laughing) I mean, that was just the thing. She just kept "pie in the skying" everything. It was like…How can you say that? You have no idea that that's going to happen.

But the whole, really lesbian issue, for the women's movement was huge. This goes back to before the '80s. But even, I think, all the way through, up until these days. There were discussions or disagreements because, as I understood it, some people believed that, to give lesbians as much latitude as they had to be involved in NOW and other groups, that what would happen was exactly what happened, that Phyllis would take that and make it into a big deal, that it was a lesbian issue.

DePue: That the movement was led by lesbians? Is that what you mean?

Frederick: Well, that it was a fight for lesbian rights. It wasn't about women anymore; it was about lesbians. That was one of the comebacks that you would get is that feminists don't like men. They hate men. They are unhappy in their lives. You know, they're lesbians; they're just a bunch of lesbians. That was how they dismissed the things that were happening.

Yeah, there were lesbians involved in the movement, and from what I saw in this documentary, initially, there was this whole break of the lesbians and the women's libbers, because of something Betty Friedan said. She didn't like lesbians.

DePue: So she started off her life as a frumpy old housewife.

Frederick: And here she was then confronted with that, which was about the time Gloria Steinem got put in charge, and they transferred over. Yeah, there was this group—it was in the '70s—called the Lavender Menace.

DePue: The Lavender…

Frederick: Menace. Betty Friedan called the lesbians a menace. So they formed a group. Rita May Brown, who was a famous author, lesbian woman. She was in this group, and they had t-shirts, "The Lavender Menace." So they kind of formed their own group and stepped away from the women's liberation movement. So there was this big split.

The other thing that I remember during my time, because this was still a little bit of an issue, but not as much. I mean, NOW was really marketing their support for the lesbians. They learned their lesson. "We've got to include these lesbians, and we've got to fight alongside of them." So there was that inclusion. But also, at the same time, there was this thing with African-American women, because, I think, earlier or sometime during this whole thing…And I could see that, during my involvement too. The women that were running it were white women with money. It wasn't the women home all day with three kids, even if she was a feminist. She wasn't out there doing this, although, there were those women that were involved that brought their kids to everything, but, for the most part, then they had money. There weren't poor women out fighting that fight. So it was not only the lesbians, but it was a lot of African-American women were saying, "This isn't about us. This is because—

DePue: They felt alienated from it?

Frederick: They felt like…As they saw it, the fight was about a women's right to be in the boardroom. And for them, it was more about economics. That was the charge, fifty-nine cents to every dollar. I mean, that was one of the things that hooked me in and a lot of women in.

But, yet, the issue that some people saw was that this was about women who wanted to be the CEO of the company or to break the glass ceiling. And, yeah, that was part of it for some of those women. But, it had and still has…there's so many layers, because it would benefit, hopefully, you at whatever level that you need. But I still think economics is really that and the violence against women. Those were, to me, the biggest parts, the biggest pieces that needed to happen.

DePue: Springfield has a sizeable percentage, African-American population. For the local chapter, were there lots of black women involved?

Frederick: No, not at all.

DePue: Because of this sense that it wasn't about their needs?

Frederick: I don't know. I don't know what their sense was, but that was the feedback that I remember hearing is that NOW had a difficult time recruiting African-American women, because they didn't see it as something that was to their benefit.

DePue: Well, I don't want to mischaracterize this, so I'm going to ask you a question, in terms of your perception. I know that there were elements of the African-American community, especially in the Chicago area, where you could find politicians who weren't necessarily enthusiastic about equal rights. Some black legislators voting against it.

Frederick: Oh, yeah.

DePue: And today you can see elements of the black culture that are less receptive for homosexuals. And that's been born out in some votes that we've had in various states, California, in particular. Was part of their resistance also because they are more tied to the traditional family values?

Frederick: Well, I think that's an interesting conversation in itself, is the whole African-American male versus female culture. I mean, I think that's one of the things that African-American women struggle with, with African-American men is because, culturally, there's a divide. You know, the stereotype, the men like their power and their control, and the women aren't as likely to be controlled.

I know, just personally, that African-American women I know, they struggle with finding a mate because of this power struggle, that they see with so many African-American men. And then, I notice this in the Hispanic community, too, when I lived in the Southwest. It's such an interesting situation, because they are so…Oh, what's the word? It's not going to come to me. The mothers are so important in those families. I mean, it's the mothers—

DePue: That their cultures value the mother's role?

Frederick: Because, especially in the poorer families, there isn't a father, or there's not a father around, or there's three children and three fathers, and none of them are involved in the children's lives. That's true with Hispanics too. The mothers are the…matriarchal, that was the word I was trying…

One of the things that just really brought that home to me was, I worked at the Public Defender's Office, and so I worked with a lot…There was a huge Hispanic population that's incarcerated in New Mexico, like there is African-Americans in Illinois. The mother, the grandmother, the wife or girlfriend, they'd be at that jail every day. They have windows, and they had a sign language that they would use and talk to their jailed male, through the windows, the whole family. They'd bring the kids and park outside the jail and have these …But, these were the same households where there was domestic abuse, just a huge problem.

DePue: I suspect that a young girl from Southern View had a hard time wrapping her brain around that?

Frederick: (laughing) Absolutely! I mean, I just would want to go shake those women. It's like, if he gets out of jail, he's either going to be involved in drugs or robbing houses or whatever. They never took care of these women. (laughs) All these women were on state aid, but they idolized their young men. I think Hispanics, probably more so than the African-American community [did this]. But still, even in the African-American community, I think—and

well, it's growing in the white community too, now—but the mothers, they're… Single parent families are the norm.

DePue: Well, you were just saying earlier that, because of this split, NOW actively pursued, trying to embrace again, the lesbians who had perhaps left the movement—

Frederick: Right.

DePue: Which opened up the opportunity for Mrs. Schlafly and her forces to look and say, "See, it is about homosexual rights."

Frederick: Oh yeah, oh, yeah.

DePue: So one other question in here, in terms of another argument that she was advancing. It was, again, about the radical elements of the feminist movement. It was about this notion that there really isn't any inherent difference between men and women. It's all something that was imposed by culture and social values, that there's nothing genetically that would separate men and women.

Frederick: Did she say that?

DePue: Yeah, that was part of her argument. She didn't say that. She would say there are inherent differences, and we need to embrace those differences.

Frederick: Right, right.

DePue: But she was saying the radical feminist would diminish that, as much as possible, that the only thing that's limiting women from serving in combat is socialization issues. The only reason they can't advance in the corporate world is socialization issues.

Frederick: Well, and I do think that the whole similarity and difference in socialization was a major discussion at that time. A matter of fact, in college I took a class called "Sociology of Gender," and for my project for that class I—

DePue: Was this something taught by the Women's Studies' Program?

Frederick: Yeah.

DePue: Go ahead.

Frederick: And so, for my project for that class, I went to an elementary school, and I interviewed, I'm going to say six-year olds, like first graders. You know, just simple questions like, "What's your favorite toy?" "What's your favorite activity?" Those type of things to see that, if by the time you're in

first grade, had you already become kind of socialized into your gender, role, whatever?

Oh, absolutely. I mean, it was just clearly right down thing. Girls liked dolls; they liked pink; they wanted to be a nurse. Boys liked trucks, and they wanted to be firefighters or police officers. There wasn't any crossover at all, whatsoever. I don't know if that proved it, except that I just wondered how, by the time you're in school, has that already happened? I don't know that I was really surprised that it had happened, but you know, I think it's changed now.

I think that's changed now. Not to say that every little girl's (laughs)…99.9% of little girls, their favorite color is pink. It's just inherent. My niece swore she would not let anybody buy her daughter pink blankets, pink anything, from the day she was born. I'm like, the kid couldn't tell pink from purple at this age. She would not let pink anywhere in the house. She was just adamant about it. Her daughter, six years old, and her favorite color is pink.

DePue: (laughs)

Frederick: I said, you know, there are things you can't control, because even if you can control it in your home, unless she is kept locked in a room, she's going to do what other little girls do. You know, pink princesses and pink tutus and—

DePue: I'm curious, then. In the course that you're taking, or this subject that you're pursuing, was this kind of cultural difference presented as something good or bad or just the way life is?

Frederick: It was really just the way life is. Of course, this kind of went clear back to hunting and gathering days and early America, and that's kind of —

DePue: So that suggests it's genetically based.

Frederick: It is. And yet, the thing is, okay, so maybe the men were out hunting and killing, but it wasn't like the women were home, sitting on their butts with nothing to do. I mean, the women and men worked equally hard.

DePue: Anybody who knows anything about American frontier history (both laughing) knows that.

Frederick: And probably the women worked harder, plus they were having the kids (laughing) in the meantime. What a horrible life they all had. So, I think kind of one of the things you learned from that was how can you say that women can't do what men can do? Of course they can do what men can do.

DePue: Across the board, always, in all cases?

Frederick: Well, it's not going to be true for every individual, because I know from my own father. My father was not like other people's fathers that I knew. I mean, he was a plumber; he worked with his hands; he was hardworking, had a huge garden, could fix anything. But you'd never see him sitting down in the recliner, watching football games. He had no interest in sports and those type of things. So that—

DePue: The discussion now, and I don't know how much it was at that time, it focuses on certain areas, like combat. Can women serve as effectively in combat? Can women serve as effectively as firefighters or as police officers and some of those skills and experiences which are pretty much in the extreme?

Frederick: Right. And yet, I can remember, because, of course, there have been studies done for years, both ways. I personally believe that…I think women are at least as emotionally strong, if not stronger, than men. So, to go out…I'm in combat, and I'm with the people that I love, and I'm defending my country. [Do] you think I'm going to hesitate a minute about killing somebody, if I think they're going to kill me or one of my people? I don't think that's something a woman…I mean, not that you cannot say that about all women; I would never do that. (laughs) I would never volunteer to do that. But, if you put me in that position, you bet. I am going to be like a mama bear, and I'm not going to let you do anything to hurt my people. (laughs)

DePue: In those scenarios, though, the conversation is often about physiological differences, upper body strength, stamina, things like that.

Frederick: Right. And, again, there are weak men, and there are strong men. I mean, I don't think that you can say that. There are some women that are stronger than some men, whether they're lesbian, dike, big women, again, whether they choose to present themselves like that or not. But I would say that, with the same kind of training and opportunities, I don't—

DePue: So those arguments that were advanced by Stop ERA and Mrs. Schlafly didn't resonate with you, much at all?

Frederick: No, not at all.

DePue: Now, we've covered a lot of territory here. Let's go into the chronology of some of these things. I know you became much more involved down the road. It was early on in 1980, I think, you said you basically started working with NOW?

Frederick: Right.

DePue: What was their strategy, at that time, to see the passage in Illinois of ERA?

Frederick: Well, it was...And I don't think anybody ever had any surety, either Phyllis's side or our side, what was going to happen, because we had…The legislature was worthless, to be quite honest.

DePue: Well, that's part of the equation. And by the time you got to the fight in 1980, this had been fought out in several election campaigns.

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: But by 1980, you've got the legislators, who were sitting in office at that time. So, did NOW feel like its argument, its strategy, should focus on those legislators or on the public?

Frederick: I think the legislature. I didn't think that NOW didn't believe that we had the support of the community.

DePue: I'm not sure I understand what you said.

Frederick: I think that we weren't as afraid of the population, not having their support. It's the white men and some black men in the legislature. We had people, like Irv Smith, who was just…He was the kind of guy that would come up to a woman in a bar and say, "Hey, you looking for a date?" He just had no concept of what was going on in the world.

DePue: Was he in the legislature at that time?

Frederick: Yes.

DePue: And for years after that, after he was out of the legislature, he was the chairman of the Republican Party in Sangamon County.

Frederick: Oh yeah, oh yeah. We were dealing with these…threatened men. That's what I would call them. I think that they were threatened. I still think that that's true. I still think that men who don't support women's causes feel personally threatened, that they just don't feel strong enough to be able to compete with women. I think that was part of people like Irv Smith's thing.

The other thing was like Tom Jackson of Coca Cola fame, that [would say], "What would my wife say?" He hadn't come the mile yet. He hadn't figured out that the times they are a changing, and you're not going to be able to hold onto this forever. Although, here we are. (laughing) I'm still just amazed at…absolutely blown away by some of the things that come up in the world, like the guy that, over the last campaign season, was talking about "legitimate rapes." I mean, really. What rock do you live under?

I just cannot comprehend some people. I think that a lot about our representatives. I mean, I still can't believe that Barack Obama got elected, not once, but twice. I mean, I kind of believe it, but then you look at the

people that represent us. We have these old, white men that I think, for the most part, are out of touch with what's going on now. I don't—

DePue: So you see Barack Obama's election as a positive trend?

Frederick: Yes.

DePue: That you didn't think American society had gotten to the point of accepting him in the role of president?

Frederick: No, because if we can get him in the presidency, then why do we have these…Well, of course, Illinois is like the worse state to even talk about, but look at all the horrible, corrupt people that we have serving in Illinois. How come we can't get rid of these people? How come we can't get rid of people like Michael Madigan? He like runs the State of Illinois. He controls the legislature. That is just outrageous to me.

DePue: And he pretty much has, since right after the ERA fight.

Frederick: Why can't we get rid of him? I mean, why do we have people like him?

DePue: But Jeri, let's get back to ERA in 1980.

Frederick: (laughs) But well, I think our representatives were—

DePue: The question was, was that the focus of NOW's efforts, to try to change votes in the legislature?

Frederick: Yes, absolutely. My very first job at NOW was, we would have phone banks, and we would come in, and we would make phone calls, "Do you support the ERA. Do you support the ERA"? That was—

DePue: To who?

Frederick: To the phone book. We would go through everybody—

DePue: That sounds like your focus was on the general public and not on the legislature?

Frederick: Well, because it was trying to know if we had the support and then to get money and to get volunteers. I mean, it was to build the base. And we would do mailings, send out notifications about—

DePue: To the public?

Frederick: To the people who were on our mailing list, who we identified through the phonebook.

DePue: What did you want them to do, once you've identified them?

Frederick: Volunteer or money. Money, money, money of course is always the issue to raise…I don't know—

DePue: I'm missing the link though, because you said the focus was on the legislators, but everything you're talking about, the focus seems to be on the public.

Frederick: Well, there had to be a presence, because you can't just go in and say to your legislator, "Women want this" or "Springfield wants this," or "Illinois wants this" and have five people show up for a rally. You had to be able to [say], "Look, these are who we've identified. These are people supporting this. These are people putting money behind the cause," which, of course, then the money would go to the legislators that were helping us, to help their campaigns, to get those people re-elected.

DePue: Yes. So part of the equation before you even got there was, in these campaigns in '76, '78, 1980, that money is being raised and given to candidates that you wanted to get to the legislature?

Frederick: Right.

DePue: How much was involved with lobbying activities, rallying, once they were in session in Springfield?

Frederick: We all got lessons. Just like Phyllis taught her gals how to go in there and talk, we did the same thing.

DePue: Flesh that out for me. What kind of lessons? What kind of activities were going on?

Frederick: Well, we would go to meetings, and they would [tell us], "[This is] what you say. This is what you don't say. This is how the system works, how a bill becomes law."

DePue: So you'd be sitting in the gallery in the legislature?

Frederick: We did for important votes, but no, we didn't spend our time in the gallery. We would make appointments and go visit and write individual letters and then schedule an appointment. I would come see you and say, "This is why it's important."

DePue: So those are the kind of meetings you're talking about?

Frederick: Well, NOW would have meetings to teach us how this all worked, because these were just people off the street. They weren't necessarily involved politically. NOW wanted to make sure that we had a good presence, that when you show up, you dress nice; you speak well. (laughs) "These are the issues that you're going to focus on." Just like—

DePue: So, does this mean that NOW is running, essentially, workshops to train people to go out on the point and fight the fight?

Frederick: Yep.

DePue: Can you tell me more about the kind of things that you were taught, that the people in these workshops would be taught?

Frederick: Well—

DePue: You dress nice. What does that mean?

Frederick: You don't…They preferred that you wore dresses.

DePue: Why?

Frederick: As opposed to slacks, because that's what Phyllis's women did. See Phyllis had her own workshops, and she was doing her own training. So we were doing just what Phyllis was doing, so you couldn't make that differentiation. Those are the man hating lesbians, and these are the lovely homemakers. This is your mom and her apple pie. We can all look alike. We can all talk alike. We can all present the same appearance and presence, but we have very different messages.

DePue: How about the language, the nature of the language you were encouraged, in these workshops, to use?

Frederick: Well, there were just like issue points. Like, if they said, "Well, if we pass the ERA, women are going to be in combat, and women are going to be using men's rooms," and those kinds of things. It was just to let you know that you couldn't just make those kinds of blanket statements. But that wasn't what the Equal Rights Amendment was about. So, let's focus on what those real issues are, which were economic, mostly, issues.

DePue: Were there comments about warning the women to stay away from the strident language, name calling, et cetera.

Frederick: Yeah, I'm sure that there was, name calling especially. But those women, they would get in faces.

DePue: Women who would attend the workshops?

Frederick: The NOW…Yeah, the women that would go. They wouldn't back down from an argument. It wasn't like, "Oh, I'm sorry. I'll go away now." They wanted you to know your story and be prepared, so that you didn't find yourself in a position where you had to back down, like you didn't know what you were talking about.

DePue: How about the Stop ERA forces. Were they as effective and persistent in their message?

Frederick: I'm sure they were, because they won the fight.

DePue: This is a chicken and an egg question.

Frederick: (laughs)

DePue: Which group was the first to start, in a systematic way, training their supporters and running workshops?

A collection of ERA Buttons.

Frederick: I would say the women's movement, because I would classify that under consciousness raising. Consciousness raising was a huge umbrella for a lot of things. I mean, when I got into the women's movement, I learned more about my body, my educational rights, my sports, the Title 9 rights, the economic rights. I didn't know (laughing) I didn't have all these rights, at first. I had glimmers, but once you meet up with these other people, and then you start reading the literature and start educating yourself, [it's] just the awakening. I love that word, because really…It's like, all of a sudden you're like, whoa!

These weren't just isolated incidents. There's like a whole big world that's going on out there. It wasn't just Tom Jackson. There are ten million Tom Jacksons. Women are being treated like this everywhere. So, I think the women's movement was the ones that started that.

And I think the women that Phyllis recruited…Well, they even show the clip of that on the documentary. This one woman…I wrote this down, because I just loved it. A couple of the women were talking about how they were offended by the way that the feminists were promoting getting out of the home and whatever. And this one woman said, "Mothers and housewives first." That was the motto or whatever. "We're mothers, and we're housewives first." Phyllis said, "I want to thank my husband, Fred, for letting me be here today. I like to say that because it really irritates the feminists."

So, you know, they had their own little cultural language that they were teaching. But no, I think definitely the women's movement started that, and then Phyllis was like, "Okay, I got to…" It's interesting, because

Phyllis, she was doing what we were talking about. She was leaving her kids at home. Somebody else was feeding her husband dinner. She was saying women should be in the home with their children and their husbands, but that's not where she was. She was out fighting this fight. She was so contradictory in her actual behavior.

She loved that. She loved doing what she did, having that power. Well, she'd run for office, I think, prior to that too and didn't make it. So this was her platform. This is her soapbox, and she got a lot of attention. Obviously, she's a bright woman, because she was able to do quite a bit of damage.

DePue: When she actually was running this campaign, at the same time she also went to law school in the middle of the '70s and completed law school.

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: In part, because she got tired of hearing the criticism about that "You're not a lawyer. You're not legally trained. You don't understand."

Frederick: I bet she was fun to have in school. (both laugh)

DePue: What was your feeling at that time about Mrs. Schlafly? If I was to ask you in 1980 or 1981, "What do you think about Mrs. Schlafly?" what would you have said?

Frederick: Well, I thought then, and I still believe it to some extent today, that she's a phony, that this was all about her and her power and her glory. She found her audience, and she fought her fight. It was about taking care of her own personal needs. It was just so asinine. She would have them show up with little loaves of bread for the legislators. It wasn't just in dress suits; it was frilly little stuff. It was just like trying to be the precious little woman, bread maker. It was phony.

Women weren't like that. I mean, you didn't see that going on. Well, at least I didn't in my life, and I did have a mother that worked outside of the home. So maybe I was just in a different place growing up. But even the moms that I knew that stayed home and were homemakers, they didn't act like Phyllis and her team. They weren't like these meek little, goofy women. They were—

DePue: But you didn't describe her as meek, by any means.

Frederick: No, but that's how her group was. I mean, they were "We don't want anything. We just want to be in our homes with our families." It was just this, "Oh, come on." I think, in some ways—and maybe you could say this about the women's movement too—but in some ways it was brain washing.

That's why she had all these crazy things that she would say about how their lives were going to change. It was fear. It was instilling fear about "Your whole world's going to change, if this passes." Here's this little woman in her home, living her day and loving her life. You know, my oldest sister was like that. She was a homemaker. She stayed at home. They played cards all day. They took the kids to do things. I mean, she loved her life, until her husband left her (laughing) with no money.

DePue: To some extent I'm hearing that you question Mrs. Schlafly's sincerity about her cause.

Frederick: Um hmm. I kind of do. I just think she got more out of it personally. It was a power thing for her. I really do think it was a power thing for her. It's like a…contest, and she wanted to win. She was going to do what she had to do. But I don't think Mrs. Schlafly would have been happy being the woman that she… I mean, what happened after she got her kids in school?

Something happened, and she wanted to get out. She wanted to do something, and this was perfect for her. But she wasn't one of those women that she was recruiting. She was no longer that woman. She may have been that woman, but she wasn't there now, and she wasn't for the next ten, fifteen years. She was heavily involved in her movement. She wasn't home taking care of the kids and the husband.

DePue: Did you know her personally?

Frederick: No.

DePue: Another one of the leaders, as I understand it, in her movement in Illinois was Kathleen Sullivan. Do you know Kathleen Sullivan? Does that name ring a bell?

Frederick: Unh uh.

DePue: Let's get into some of the specifics here. I'm going to start with July 14, 1980. I think you might have already been involved with NOW by that time, and that was an event at the National Republican Convention in Detroit.

ERA supporters gathered in Detroit Michigan at the Lewis Convention Center on July 14, 1980, where the Republican National Convention was being held.

Frederick: Right.

DePue: What do you remember about that?

Frederick: Oh, well (laughing). We all loaded ourselves on the bus— I hate those big buses—and rode up to Detroit. [I'd] never been to Detroit in my life. We all unloaded and picketed the Republican National Convention.

DePue: Why?

Frederick: Because…well, ERA was not a Republican issue (laughs); we'll put it that way. That was one thing. There wasn't a lot of support for the Equal Rights Amendment in the Republican Party. But also, I believe it was Ronald Reagan that was running for president then. He was not only not supportive of women's rights, but he was threatening the reproductive rights of women, too. He wanted to reverse Roe versus Wade.

DePue: I know the1976 Republican Convention was the contested convention, between Ford and Reagan. I think, by the time they got to the convention in 1980, Reagan had pretty much defeated the Bush element of the party. I'm not sure where George Bush would have been at that time on abortion, but I would think he would have been pro-ERA.

Frederick: Um hmm. He definitely would have been better, because of his wife.

DePue: She was strongly in support, I know.

Frederick: Yeah, and Nancy Reagan wasn't that type of woman. She wasn't the same.

DePue: Do you think that was effective at all?

Frederick: Oh, I mean, it didn't change things, but you have to make yourself seen and known and have a presence. You can't just let it happen and not be a part of it.

DePue: You've given me several pictures of the pro-ERA rally that happened in Chicago. I think that's also in 1980. I'm not sure when, but I think it was probably after—

Frederick June.

DePue: June? About the same timeframe?

Frederick: Um hmm. Yeah, I think it was right before we went to Detroit, seems like it. It was, my first trip to Chicago (laughs), loaded up in a bus.

DePue: Ever?

Frederick: Ever. I grew up in Illinois and

Jeri Frederick (left) at the ERA rally in Chicago at Soldier's Field, May, 1980. The event was designed to put a spotlight on the Illinois State Legislature's failure to pass ERA.

never went to Chicago. We always went to St. Louis. That was kind of the big city, because, I don't know. I was never was in Chicago until that year. We went to Soldier Field. It was just like this huge place. By the time we pulled in, it was just awesome. There's just like banners everywhere and huge groups, a sea of white and green, mostly white.

It's just like a Mary Kay convention or whatever, Republican convention, Democratic convention. Anytime you're in this huge place with people that are all, you know, have the same beliefs and desires and focus, the energy is just amazing. Then, I think that was where Marlo Thomas and Phil Donahue and Jean Stapleton and Norman Lear and just a huge celebrity group was there, which was awesome. [It] makes you wonder about Oprah, where she was in all that. It's interesting to look back on that. I mean, I had never heard of Oprah but—

DePue: She got her notoriety at first when *The Color Purple*[7] came out, and that was in the early to mid-1980s.

Frederick: Yeah, but she was on a talk show or something—

DePue: No, that was before that.

Frederick: Oh, I thought she was on the talk show earlier.

DePue: No, she had the talk show after *The Color Purple* came out.

Frederick: Oh, okay. Well, I thought she was on a talk show with some guy. But any way—

DePue: Could have been, but she didn't have the national prominence.

Frederick: She didn't have the *Oprah Show*, but she was a reporter or something like that. Anyway—

DePue: What's the significance of white and green?

Frederick: Because the suffragists wore white. I don't really remember why, if I ever knew. I'm sure I—

DePue: So that's connecting back to the 1920's suffrage movement?

Frederick: Yes, um hmm, exactly.

DePue: And green, as well?

[7] A 1985 American period drama, based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the same name, showing the problems African American women faced during the early 20th century. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The Color Purple)

Frederick: I think the green was for money, because it was an economic issue.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Frederick: Yeah. So that's what I understand, but I'm not really sure about the white.

DePue: You mentioned all of these celebrities, was that an important part of the strategy that NOW had?

TV personalities Norman Lear and Phil Donohue (center) were among the many celebrities that attended the Chicago ERA rally in May, 1980.

Frederick: I don't know. I'm really not sure. I think, probably, like so many big events like that, you have celebrities, because it's exciting for the people that attend. It was like, "Oh well, if for no other reason, (laughing) I'm going to go see Marlo Thomas," or something. But I think it was just an added thing. Of course, they had a voice. I don't know when the *Phil Donahue Show* was on, but he was a huge, huge—

DePue: That was during the timeframe that he was very influential.

Frederick: Yeah, he was huge. And, of course, *All in the Family*, and so that was Jean Stapleton and Norman Lear. As a matter of fact, they showed a thing about that in the documentary, too, and Archie Bunker calls Phyllis "Phyllis Shoe Fly." (both laugh) He always got everybody's names wrong. So people were familiar with those, you know. Marlo Thomas, of course, was *That Girl*, and that was kind of taking women a little bit beyond their role. She moved to a city and got a job, all by herself, a single woman. I can remember watching that show when I was a kid. I wasn't old enough to really think about it all yet.

Actress Marlo Thomas talks to another ERA supporter at an ERA rally at Soldier's Field in Chicago in May, 1980.

DePue: Did the Stop ERA forces have any celebrities that came to their rallies?

Frederick: I imagine so. I don't think I ever attended a Stop ERA event. They were just sometimes there.

DePue: And I can't think of any, when I talked to Mrs. Schlafly, where she talked at all about that. It was obvious that it was an important element for the NOW and the pro-ERA force to have celebrities involved.

Frederick: If she did, I'm sure it would have been church-based, like evangelical speakers or something like that, because she tried to make it into like a Christian issue.

Jeri Frederick at the ERA rally held in Springfield, Illinois in June, 1981.

DePue: The legislative cycle for Illinois, typically most of the activity is going on in January through the end of the fiscal year, which is June 30. Most of that stuff really needs to happen by the end of May 30.

Frederick: Right.

DePue: So, getting into 1981. The reason I mention that is because I know there is a big pro-ERA rally June 30, 1981, which would probably have been after it went down to defeat, yet again, in the legislature that year. Do you remember that event?

Frederick: Um hmm. I think that's the one where I got my banner. I was one of the—I never can think of that word—like parade marshals or something. I had a banner and whatever. My whole family came. But, again…

DePue: Describe the event as much as possible. Was there a parade?

Frederick: Yes, I don't think it was a long parade. It was like down Capitol Avenue onto the green or the yard, whatever you call it.

Jeri and her father, Al Frederick, at her father's first ERA rally, July 30, 1981, Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: The lawn at the State Capitol.

Frederick: The lawn at the State Capitol, where we had had some members of NOW—and I couldn't even tell you who they were—but this was like under cover. It wasn't approved by any of the NOW leaders, but some of the women that participated in the NOW activities had gone to the

Old State Capitol lawn, apparently, one night, dressed in black, and planted grass seed in the shape of the letters "ERA" on the side of the Old Capitol lawn. That probably was in '81, because I remember, it was before the last vote.

Oh, it was so funny, because it took a while, but then you could start seeing, because the grass was real thick. Even though they mowed it, it was still thicker in that area, and maybe they had put a special color of grass or something in there. That was just a big, big exciting thing, because we were always trying to be so on the same level as everything and not do anything wild and radical. So that was pretty radical and pretty exciting (laughing) that these women had done that.

June 30, 1981 at an ERA rally in Springfield, Illinois. The Illinois State legislature had only one more year to pass ERA. Seated from left to right are Judy Goldsmith, NOW vice president, actress Esther Rolle, Addie Wyatt of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, and actress Patty Duke Astin.

DePue: So these women who did that probably aren't the mainstream of NOW?

Frederick: No.

DePue: They're on the fringe of NOW or outside of NOW?

Frederick: They were in the group, but it certainly wouldn't have been approved by NOW. Maybe, after the fact, had they said something to Linda or some of the other Illinois leaders that they would have gotten a chuckle out of it. They wouldn't have thought it was a horrible thing. But anyway, so June, there was a short parade and then a rally. I have pictures of that too.

Jane Byrne was the mayor of Chicago then, and she was here. I think that was where we had Patty Duke Astin, but it was Patty Duke at the time, I think and Betty Ford and Esther Role, she was the African-American woman that was on *Good Times* or one of those shows, again, [a] popular show at the time. So it was well attended.

Betty Ford spoke at the ERA rally held in Springfield, Illinois on June 30. 1981.

DePue: Was there a counter-rally for that one?

Frederick: Not that I remember.

DePue: Okay.

Frederick: I don't remember them ever like showing up and yelling at us and neither did we do that to them.

DePue: The question I have then is, you're doing this June 30, and I just said that's at the very end of the fiscal year. So, again, this has to be focused on public opinion and not the legislature. They're probably out of town at that time. I could be wrong, but in a normal legislative cycle, they would have been gone.

Frederick: Yeah. Well, and that may be. I'm sure that part of what their strategy was too is to educate people so that they would write to their representatives or legislators or even go lobby. We would have lobby days, where we'd set aside a day. That was usually when we would have the little workshops ahead of time. This is how you should dress, and this is what you should say, and these are the points, and—

DePue: In the peak of the legislative session.

Frederick: Um hmm, yeah.

DePue: And blitz the legislative offices?

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: Was the primary focus on those who were opposed to ERA?

Frederick: Focused on the representatives? Yeah, absolutely. And, of course, on those days, that's when you would see the Stop ERA people, because they would be right behind us, delivering loaves of bread. We didn't take one. (laughs)

DePue: What was your sense of the Illinois public on the issue? Was it fairly evenly split?

Frederick: It's interesting. I would say, obviously the Chicago area was going to have more support than we were here, and of course, it diminished as you go further downstate. I would say, around this area, either there was no interest, or there was some support. I would be surprised if there were a lot of people actively fighting against ERA in this community. I don't recall that—

DePue: Let me go back a little bit. We were talking about the Republican Convention in Detroit that year. Ronald Reagan clearly was the Republican candidate and then surprised most pundits, most people, in the November elections, and basically swept the election. As I recall, he would have had

some serious coattails, too. He won in Illinois, and it probably helped a lot of Republicans candidates in Illinois.

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: Perception of the NOW forces, did that hurt your cause?

Frederick: I can tell you, what I remember the most was just these little groups, like Linda, the leaders the Illinois Chair from NOW would come, and all the leaders of the NOW party, across Illinois, would get in little groups and [makes buzzing sounds]. They were going crazy, because you'd have one person in your court one day, and the next day they weren't sure.

Josephine Oblinger, here she was, our representative, a woman, and she'd slide off the fence like that. (snaps her fingers) You could just not count on her, and it was very disappointing for them. Of course, she was a Republican, but it was just very disappointing, because you would feel like you had somebody. I don't know the background. I don't know if they were donating money to her campaign, but I think that was part of it, too.

They would invest in people's campaigns. We were doing that too, which wasn't as intense as the ERA, but if you had somebody that was going to support the ERA, then you were working for their campaign too. So you might go out and get petitions signed or put signs in people's yards, or whatever.

You were also working to support the people that you thought were going to support you. And what I do know is, at the final hour, some of those people didn't support us. And Phyllis says, in that documentary, she says, at the end, "We got two votes out of Chicago that we didn't know we had." And that's how it was. There were just a handful of people—

DePue: In that respect, you're talking about Democrats?

Frederick: Oh, yeah.

DePue: What was your feeling when Reagan wins in a landslide?

Frederick: Well, it's like my feeling anytime somebody that I think is going to ruin the country (laughing) wins. Of course, I thought he was the biggest idiot I've ever come across, at the time. But then, you learn that…I don't know if it was the people behind him or it was him. I still have a hard time believing it was him. But he had a lot power, and he got a lot done.

Of course, then George W. [Bush] came, and he was even (laughter) a bigger idiot than Ronald Reagan. But, I couldn't even believe Ronald Reagan. I almost felt like he was like the cardboard cutout, and somebody was behind him. He didn't seem bright enough to carry out his

position. Not only that, I'm still amazed that people talk about him like he was the second coming of Christ, in terms of a Republican Party leader.

DePue: It was a divided nation, politically then. It's only much more divided now.

Frederick: Yeah.

DePue: Much more strident on both sides.

Frederick: Yeah.

DePue: Let's get back to 1981 again.

Frederick: Okay.

DePue: Or maybe even now we can get into the 1982 timeframe. I did mention that, when it initially passed in 1972, it was a seven year clock.

Frederick: Right.

DePue: And it was supposed to expire in 1979.

Frederick: In 1979, right. It didn't even—

DePue: And in 1978, Congress extended it for three years, which put it up through 1982.

Frederick: Right, because it didn't make it by '79.

DePue: So, 1982 is the ultimate battleground year. For a variety of reasons, Illinois is one of the ultimate battle ground states, in part, I should say, because Phyllis Schlafly is from Alton, Illinois.

Frederick: Right.

DePue: And she is the leader for this national movement to stop the ERA.

Frederick: Right.

DePue: You're flipping through something there. I should hand this back over to you.

Frederick: (laughing) Well, I was just flipping through here to go through my 1982 notes, because I have this huge bag of my collection from that time. So, I'm just kind of going through here to see what I had. Oh, I have a letter from Senator Charles Percy, U. S. Senator Charles Percy, from January of '82.

DePue: I'm going to go through some of these events and hopefully prod your memory. Before we do that, though, let's talk about a couple of the people

who are strong opponents in Illinois government, at the time. Speaker George Ryan, I'm not sure if he was still Speaker…I think he was that last year.

Frederick: Yes, because he…Oh yeah.

DePue: He's a Republican.

Frederick: Yeah and he's part of the reason it was defeated too. (laughing) He was horrible. Actually, there's a photograph or a newspaper clipping in there. I think it was when we…It may have been…I don't know if it was from Springfield or Chicago. My memory is that it was from Chicago, but Thompson and Ryan were together.

DePue: Thompson being Governor Jim Thompson.

Frederick: Governor Jim Thompson and Ryan were together, and they were like coming out of some place, and there was a group of us there. I don't know if there was a meeting, and we knew it or why we were there, but I said something. I couldn't tell you what I said.

DePue: That they were able to hear?

Frederick: Yeah. Well to them, you know, "Why don't you support the ERA?" or whatever I said. And somehow the photograph got snapped, so there's an actual photograph of it in my stuff.

DePue: Well, then we've got to get that picture.

Frederick: Yeah. He was…You know, Thompson was wishy-washy.

DePue: Publicly, he came out in support of ERA, as I understand it.

Frederick: Yeah, but put your money where his mouth is. But George never was.

DePue: So you didn't believe that Thompson really was a supporter?

Frederick: You know, you want to believe that people that say they're going to support you are going to be there, but looking back, I—

DePue: So, you sense that he didn't use any of his political clout to sway the decision?

Frederick: No, I don't. I don't. And George [Ryan], of course, was in a position to maneuver things. I'm sure he took advantage of that, because he was never supportive of the issue, probably none of the issues that the women's movement was involved in.

DePue: So, in terms of who NOW and supporters for ERA in Illinois would be concerned, if you're going to focus your anger at anybody in state politics, it would be George Ryan?

Frederick: Well he's definitely at the top of the list, amongst other people that were in the…other representatives. But there were people…I mean, I guess you could say one thing, is that you didn't have to wonder where he stood. I mean, you knew you didn't have him. You knew there was people that you knew you didn't have.

DePue: So it's the Josephine Oblingers that hear, (laughing) "You're a traitor!"

Frederick: Exactly, exactly. It's those people that gave lip service but weren't there in the end. I wasn't a part of the debriefing, so I don't know where it all fell down. Now that was the one day we were in the gallery. We were there when they took that vote.

DePue: The last vote in '82?

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: How about in the senate side, Illinois State Senate? Did anybody stand out in that respect, as an opponent?

Frederick: I don't remember. I don't remember.

DePue: I should know. I know that James Pate Phillip was already there.

Frederick: Oh yeah, Pate Phillip. No, he was opposed.

DePue: Was he one of the leaders?

Frederick: Yeah, yeah. I know names. I don't remember what their…It was just, you know, when we would have these like conversations about who was what and where, and who we could count on and who we couldn't, they were always the same names that would come up, you know, George Ryan, Pate Phillip, people like that that you knew they weren't going to do anything to help you.

DePue: Um hmm. So let's start with the series of events that happened in 1982. The first one I've got down here—I don't know if you remember this one—February 4, a retired General, Andrew Gatsis, gives a talk in Springfield arguing against the role of women in combat.

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: Do you remember anything about that one?

Frederick: I just remember that it happened. Again, that's putting the cart before the horse, because (laughing) you don't know that women would be forced into combat. We just—

DePue: Well, I interviewed Dawn Clark Netsch. I asked her issues about this, and she thought that that would be a decision that the courts would determine. In her mind, it would have been just as likely that the courts would say that, "No, tradition in the military is that women were not allowed to serve in combat." She didn't think it was necessarily a decision that would be changed because of this.

Frederick: Um hmm. I don't know, but when I was trained in the legal studies department, that's one of the things that you always hear is, the courts are behind the law. They're the ones that are, for the most part…I mean, you can't say that there's never any certainty, but for the most part, they are more likely to sit back and assess the climate of the country. And they're going to find what they want (laughs) to go with based, out of the case, but based on what they think is the climate.

DePue: That was essentially Senator Netsch's argument, as well. I think it's interesting to take a look at how the different sides of this argument looked at the role of the courts. The liberal view, the Democrat view, of the courts is they would look at the Constitution as a living document, that it should adapt and change and evolve, based on situations that are going on in the United States at that time. Conservatives would look at it and say, that is fundamentally the wrong way to look at it. It gives the courts way too much power, that the courts are obligated to read the letter of the law, to be strict constructionists.

So, Mrs. Schlafly and her forces would be saying, "What choice does the Supreme Court have, but to say that women must serve in the military, because women and men are now viewed by law equally?"

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: So, I'm interjecting some things here. It's just interesting to see the dynamics, that the two sides were approaching this in a very different way, that particular issue.

Frederick: Well, I think just any issue that goes to the court, it's rare that they're going to step way out of line and come out with something that is off the wall. I think that…for Phyllis to say that they're going to…That's not their job, first of all. You know, like you say, it's strict constructionists. It's not their job to make law, and that to me, that would be making law. To say that, "Okay, well now that we have equal rights, women have to serve in the military." I don't think the court would go there.

DePue: Um hmm. It's their job to interpret the laws, based on the existing Constitution.

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: So I probably interjected more than I should in that case. But that's an interesting part of the discussion, and it always has been, to this day.

Frederick: Oh, yeah.

DePue: March 5, I suspect you remember this one better. Springfield NOW pickets Speaker George Ryan's birthday party.

Frederick: Maybe that's when I spoke to him. (both laugh)Maybe it was his birthday party! I'll tell you, I always hated George Ryan. And it's funny, because he's just like this grandpa-looking, white-haired guy that I would have never suspected that I could feel so strongly about. But oh, I just did not trust him. I never trusted him. I was so not surprised to find out that all the corruption that was going on behind the scenes.

DePue: He came out of Kankakee County, which was…We always hear about the Democratic machine in Chicago. Well, Kankakee County has a Republican machine. He came out of that. For people who are listening to this, fifty years from now, it's important to note that George Ryan ended up convicted and sent to jail, after he served his one term as governor.

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: And primarily for corruption that was going on when he was secretary of state, from 1991 to '99. So just for—

Frederick: Yeah. And he did have loyal followers, but I really believe it was all politically based. Like, when I worked for the circuit clerk's office, there were people that would lay down and die for George and Maurine Ryan, and yet—

DePue: Lura Lynn.

Frederick: Lura Lynn or something, yeah. Yet, that's because that was their bread and butter…They all had good jobs because of the Republican Party and the George Ryan "in" of other local people. Of course, there's always that conversation about the fundraising. But they had to buy tickets. You couldn't keep your job unless you were selling tickets to the fundraisers.

DePue: You can't understand Illinois politics, especially old school Illinois politics, unless you recognize that, regardless of what party, it's about patronage.

Frederick: Exactly.

DePue: So, apparently you were one of the people who were picketing outside George Ryan's house.

Frederick: Oh, you bet I was (laughing).

DePue: Holding a sign?

Frederick: No doubt and probably at the top of my lungs. Whatever the chant was, I was chanting it. (both laugh) I had absolutely no respect and no faith in the man.

DePue: Okay, May 18, now the whole issue is getting heated, and it's caught up in the Illinois Legislature, both House and Senate. It probably looked worse in the House than on the Senate side, but May 18, Sonia Johnson begins her thirty-seven day hunger strike.

Frederick: Oh, that was just a tragic, tragic situation. I mean, it was, it was heated; it was tense; it was a house of cards. And who knew what was going to happen? Here come these women who…God bless them; I'm sure thought this was the way to push things over the edge. Well it was, but it was pushing things the wrong way.

DePue: So, she didn't have the blessing of NOW?

Frederick: Not at all. And probably not the League of Women Voters either. No, because, when you think about it, in Illinois politics—I don't know if other states are like this—but these aren't women from Illinois. Sonia Johnson's from Utah, and who knows where these other people are coming from, but they're not us. They're not representative of the Illinois coalition that's working on this.

Granted, the fight was bigger than that, broader than that. But we were fighting our own fight here. (laughs) They came in, and it wasn't pretty. It got uglier and uglier, by the day. They got sick and got hospitalized and almost starved themselves to death. Dick Gregory, who was a strange character, came. He showed up, and it just detracted; it didn't help. It didn't have any strength or credibility.

DePue: Is that because Schlafly and the Stop ERA forces are saying, these are just a bunch of outside agitators that are coming in? I mean the strategy is based on Mahatma Gandhi and the moral authority of somebody who does something like a hunger strike,

Frederick: Right. But I think Illinois NOW people are saying that, that we don't support this. We don't believe that this is the right way to address this issue, certainly not for people to put their health at risk. It was just so dramatic. It was the wrong kind of drama. It was just the wrong kind of drama. I mean,

everybody has their own way of approaching things, but it just wasn't good. And it was a distraction. It wasn't effective.

I don't think they knew what the face of Illinois Legislature looked like and they were barking up the wrong tree. You're talking about Mahatma Gandhi and this kind of…No, these people wouldn't appreciate that. They wouldn't appreciate it today, let alone thirty years ago.

DePue: I wonder…I hadn't thought about asking you this, but from the time you got started in this in 1980 through 1982, were you optimistic that you'd be successful, that the movement would be successful?

Frederick: Oh, absolutely! Absolutely! I was sure, because you're just carried by the momentum. It's like you say, you're surrounded by a group of people that all believe the way that you believe, so you can't imagine that there is a force more significant than that outside of you.

And Phyllis's group didn't look like that. I mean, we had huge rallies and lots of people and great organization. She'd walk in with her little Stop ERAs and her loaves of bread, but it didn't look as big. It didn't have the…I didn't believe her argument. She didn't appear to have the support of people. And I don't know that she did, but she got the legislatures going.

DePue: Next event in these series of events, I think this is the official name for the group, The Grassroots Group of Second Class Citizens. A group of women decided to hold a sit-in in the state capitol and actually chained themselves to the railing outside the Senate chamber.

Frederick: Yeah, I have some memory and probably have pictures of it, (laughs) newspaper clippings of it. But, again, these were just like distractions. They were other people's way of trying to get heard.

DePue: Were these also outsiders?

Frederick: They weren't NOW people.

DePue: And they weren't from Illinois?

Frederick: I don't know that. They may have been. This goes back to kind of that radical feminist, that I'm just not willing to go that far.

DePue: But you're also saying that NOW, the state organization of NOW, wasn't willing to endorse that either?

Frederick: No.

DePue: June six through eight, NOW holds a nationwide march for ERA in the states where it still had not been passed. I assume there was a march or an activity here in Springfield, as well. Do you remember?

Frederick: When was it, June what?

DePue: June six through eighth, and I know Jane Byrne, from what I've read, was present in Springfield.

Frederick: Okay, well that might have the one that I was thinking of in the prior year, because, yeah, I have a picture of Jane Byrne. Yes, I remember that.

DePue: Mayor of Chicago at the time.

Frederick: Right, yeah. Yeah, she was there. If it's the same one, I'm pretty sure that's the one that Betty Ford was at, as well.

DePue: Well, I know Betty Ford would have been at the rally in '81, as well.

Frederick: Um hmm, but I don't know if she was in Springfield. She was only in Springfield once that I recall.

DePue: I think that was probably the 1981 rally.

Frederick: Okay.

DePue: I don't know the specific date. It would have been later in June, that the bill in the Illinois State Senate died in committee. It never even got out of committee, so it never even made a floor vote that year. That, essentially, was the death knell in Illinois for ERA passage. It didn't make it out of the Illinois Senate, because the chairman of that committee—and I can't tell you what committee it was—I know it was Senator Phil Rock.

Frederick: Oh, yeah.

DePue: A Democrat from Chicago.

Frederick: Um hmm, and I think he was on the support list.

DePue: He was definitely on the support list, and it never came out. He made the decision that the votes weren't there to pass it, so it never came out of committee.

Frederick: Yeah.

DePue: And that was kind of on a whimper. It died on a whimper, if you will.

Frederick: Right, right.

DePue: Do you remember that?

Frederick: There were a lot of disappointments along the way. A lot of times where you felt the strength and the momentum, and then a blow would come. But we couldn't let that stop us. We had to just keep on believing that it was going to happen and rallying. I guess I always thought it was just a couple of people. You know, there was just a couple of things that needed to happen. I don't know if we were just being fed the "we really have this" or "we're sure we're going to have it," or if everybody believed that, because we had that impression. I couldn't believe it, when it didn't pass. (laughs) It's going to make me cry. I mean, it just blew me out of the water. It was really horrible. It's like, you worked so hard.

You know, in your heart, that it's the right thing, and then for it to just…It felt like a personal sentence. It really felt personal. It felt like, you know, Irv Smith (laughing) can prevent me from having my rights, whoever. Not just Irv Smith, but he was my favorite to pick on, because he was such a jerk. But it just felt so personal. It felt, you know, no control, just a loss. We thought we had done everything right, and it should have happened. And then just to have it die was devastating. —

DePue: It was right after that—I think, people confused the series of events—but it was right after that, that some of the protestors, the supporters of ERA, took some bottles of pigs' blood and spelled out names of some of their opponents, right in front of the Senate chamber, in pigs' blood.

Frederick: Yeah. You know, I had kind of gone home by then. I mean, when it didn't pass, I just felt…I just had to go home and lick my wounds and just try to accept the reality of it, because I didn't think that that was going to happen. So, I'm sure I heard of the aftermath… I can understand that kind of anger. By then, it's like who gives a shit? I don't care anymore, because I want nothing to do with this anymore. I just had to just back off. It was just too much.

DePue: Well, we've had a great conversation. I've been prying pretty hard. I appreciate your tolerance for me. Can you give me a little thumbnail sketch of your life, after that year?

Frederick: Well, I finished college, and I moved to Northern California (laughing). Get the hell out of Illinois! (laughing) That was interesting too, because California is a liberal state, so I just assumed that it was just like everybody was liberal, But we lived in Santa Rosa. My roommate from Illinois and I moved together. She had always wanted to go to California, and I was going to go there now to do my social work degree. I identified this little area called Rohnert Park.

DePue: Rohnert Park?

Frederick: Rohnert, R-o-h-n-e-r-t, I believe it is. It's north of San Francisco, and there is a university there. I had gone to Sangamon State University. Well, this was Sonoma State University, a little public college up there. It's just a beautiful area, and we were going to move to that area and pursue our goals. We ended up not living in Rohnert Park but in Santa Rosa.

In looking for work, I worked for a temporary agency. I eventually, through that connection, I worked for a winery in a temporary position, and through that connection, I got a position at Korbel Champagne Cellars. I went to work in the traffic department, which is shipping and receiving.

By the end of the first year, they terminated my boss and gave me his job. And I thought, alright. I finally felt like (laughs) I'm not working for these idiot men who don't value women's work or that wouldn't promote women or whatever. I mean, they just…Interestingly enough though, after that initial feeling, I found out, oh my gosh, it was such a sexist organization. (laughs) They had this like little men's club, and the guy that ran the winery, Gary Heck, they had this beautiful pool house, they called it, on the grounds. The pool was shaped like a champagne bottle. Every day, the **men** that were heads of different departments were invited to lunch at the pool house. Lunch was served by the chef and everything.

Well, I was never invited, which it didn't really matter to me. I didn't want to spend time with them anyway, necessarily. But Jack Daniels, actually Brown, Foreman and Company, marketed Korbel. There was a guy who worked for Jack Daniels, because Jack Daniels was a big part of Brown Foreman, and he had come out to the winery. He was an attorney, and I can't remember…Oh I know, he had called me on the phone one day to ask something, and he said something to me, and I didn't understand it or something. Anyway, we had this little bit of a quibble on the phone. Then I found later that here he is this big deal in Jack Daniels, and I thought, oh my gosh. But instead of being upset with me, he appreciated that I stood my ground and stated my case, that I didn't back down to him on the phone.

Well, so when he was coming out to the winery for a visit, he said, "I want to have Jeri up to the pool house for lunch." And they said, "No, we won't let her come up. There're no women allowed." And so he said, "Okay, then I'll just take her out for lunch." He took me out; he took for like two hour lunch. He was like, "The hell with them." So anyway, it was interesting. He was a great guy, and Brown Foreman and Jack Daniels people were wonderful. But yeah, I mean, this was just this jerky little guy that had his little boys' club and his little empire. So I worked for them for a while, until I got bored, and then I moved back to New Mexico (laughing).

DePue: Did you get a job somewhere along the process in—I'm saying this wrong—in social work or—?

Frederick: No, no, because it turned out that kind of my legal studies bachelor's degree was working for me.

DePue: Ah.

Frederick: I really got this traffic job, because I could read the law and understand traffic regulations and that type of thing. So that was kind of how I shooed into that job. Then, when I moved to Albuquerque, I got a job at the New Mexico public defender's office. So, again, it was kind of working for me.

So I didn't get back to the social work thing. I did when I eventually came back to Illinois. I applied for the social work program. It's at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, but you can do it off campus, except for a couple of visits. So I was accepted to that and started work on that, as a single mom; my daughter was a little girl. Because I hadn't done my undergraduate work—

DePue: When was your daughter born?

Frederick: In '92.

DePue: And where were you then?

Frederick: Here, in Springfield.

DePue: Okay.

Frederick: And since my undergraduate work was in a completely different field, there were so many undergraduate courses I was going to have to go back [for] that were prerequisites for the master's, that I was going to have to be in school like three nights out of the week. I just couldn't do that. My daughter was little, and I needed to be with her. It was like one night a week, but not three nights a week.

So I dropped out of the social work course, and I didn't then pursue that. I just have worked at the university. Well, then I got a job with the university, and I finally decided to go into communications. And so that's where I eventually got my master's degree, in communications.

DePue: Are you still working?

Frederick: Still working at the university.

DePue: Very good. Now, since 1982, a lot has happened and changed in American society. The ERA still has not passed. What are your views about…Do we need to pass the ERA now?

Frederick: You know, it's such a different world now. I mean, so much has changed. It's interesting, because young women today really don't seem to have that interest or that fight. They have grown up in a different culture. When I grew up, in grade school, you couldn't wear pants to school. I don't think it was until junior high or high school that girls could even wear pants. It was just a whole different culture.

Now, young women have such a good sense of themselves. They don't need a movement, to speak up for themselves. They pretty much speak up for themselves really well (laughs) I think, at least in America.

DePue: Have the barriers been removed, so they can be successful? Certainly law school and medical school, they're—

Another collection of ERA buttons.

Frederick: Yes, they have a lot more opportunity. We still don't…Now the new statistic, it's seventy cents, seventy-seven cents for every dollar. So we went from fifty-nine cents in the '70s to…In 2013, it's seventy-seven cents for every dollar a man earns. So there's still not economic equality. I still think—

DePue: Is that strictly because of existing barriers and prejudices against women?

Frederick: I would say that yes, that's part of it, because we just -—you brought her name up earlier—because we just passed this Lilly Ledbetter Act[8] last year, for a woman who is working side-by-side, doing the same work as her male counterparts, and she's not making the same salary. That happens all the time. As a matter of fact, it happens at the university. I don't mind saying it. I mean, there are many of us that are upset about it, but you know—

DePue: But there's been a law on the books since the '60s that, if you're in the same job, you deserve the same pay. I think Lilly Ledbetter dealt with making it easier for lawsuits to be brought forward.

Frederick: Right, right. But there're so many ways to get around that. For example, in the situation in my office, there was a woman in this position. She was there for ten years. She was an excellent worker, did a great job. I mean, there was no performance issues. She started there as a student worker, finished her undergraduate work, got her master's degree and had just never been given significant pay increases. After a couple of years, with the master's and

[8] The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, a federal statute that was signed into law on January 29, 2009, amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by stating that the 180-day statute of limitations for filing an equal-pay lawsuit regarding pay discrimination resets with each new paycheck, affected by that discriminatory action. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilly_Ledbetter_Fair_Pay_Act_of_2009)

doing stuff, she asked for a pay increase. I think she got a little bit of a pay increase, probably to appease her. She eventually left our unit. They hired in a white male (laughs) to take her position. He started, making $12,000 more a year than what she left at.

> It's the same thing that just happened with our foundation development person. I don't know what they call [it]. There was a woman in that position for years. She retired, and now they hired a man, and they're paying him more than her. It's that kind of thing. No, there wasn't anybody else there doing what she was doing, but when she left, they paid the man more. It's just those kinds of things that…It's just hard to…How do you address those kinds of issues?

DePue: So, from your perspective, there's still work to be done?

Frederick: Oh, absolutely.

DePue: Would it be good if ERA was passed and accepted as an amendment?

Frederick: You know, I don't know that that's…I mean, I think it would be good. I don't know that that's really the answer. I don't know that we have the same needs, specifically. There are those needs, but I think there are things that could be done differently and probably would be better solutions to what the issues are now.

Interestingly though, this young women that did a paper on all my ERA stuff, she actually did research on that. By the time she had completed her project, she was gung ho, "We've got to reintroduce the ERA." She just really wants to do it. It was interesting, because another woman that was standing there, an older woman, said, "Oh, it won't happen now. It's not going to happen under Barack Obama." I guess this is where I don't…I always say, I hate politics (laughs), because that's just the real problem with the world, (laughs) is politics.

It's seems like there's just always these blockades. There's always these special interests, and you know, like you said earlier, it doesn't matter; it's on both sides. It's about patronage; there's just too much junk. There's just too much junk. It's just not pure representation of the citizenry; it's junk.

DePue: We're going to rise above the junk, here—

Frederick: (laughing)

DePue: We've been at this for a while. I suspect we've been at it longer than you are aware. But I wanted just to ask a couple of general questions to finish up. Let's start with, looking back in your life and the things we've been talking

about today. What do you think was the most important decision or turning point in your life?

Frederick: Well, there's part of me that wants to say, I don't think I've made it yet. (laughing) I don't think I've gotten there yet. I would say, from a personal development standpoint, I would say the decision to move out of Illinois and to move to other parts and try different things, because I do think that it makes a difference in my overall perspective of the world, of my life, whatever.

And I guess I would say being a part of the Equal Rights Amendment campaign, being socially active. I'm not a radical social activist. I have friends that are, and I can only take so much from that. I can't let it consume me. I can't find fault in everything. That just is not my way of living, which is why I say, I hate politics. But, on the other hand, I think being involved in something, taking a part and taking some responsibility in things that you believe in, is so important.

And I will tell you; I will admit this that, in the last election was the first election my daughter was eligible to vote, because of her age, and she did not vote. And I cried (laughs). I mean, that disturbs me. I'm glad I'm not apathetic. I mean, my eighteenth birthday, I was down there, registered, and I was ready to vote. I haven't raised my daughter to be that way, but she just hasn't found that thing or whatever that created an interest for her. Not that's she not outspoken about issues, but—

DePue: But you and I grew up in an age, the climate of which was so much different. It was the Vietnam era, the Vietnam protest era, all the other movements that were going on.

Frederick: Right. And I think that's, yeah, having voice, and you know.

DePue: So, being involved in NOW and being involved in the fight for passage of ERA was more important even than getting back to school?

Frederick: Oh, yeah. Obviously, I learned a lot in school, but I don't know that my school experience would have been as rich as if I didn't have the perspective. If I didn't have those experiences.

DePue: I suspect I know the answer to the next question. What would you say was your biggest disappointment in your life?

Frederick: In **my** life or like, for example, the failure of the ERA? That was, yeah, that was the most disappointing thing that's happened in my life, yeah. I just…That tops the list, absolutely.

DePue: Have your views changed since that time, the way you see the world?

Frederick: I think somewhat, because I was…What was I? Twenty? Thirty? I don't know. How old was I?

DePue: You were born in what, '56?

Frederick: Fifty-six, '60s, '70s, '80s, so yeah, I was twenty something. I believed in (laughs) people and places and things. Now I've lost so much trust. I'm more likely to distrust establishments, you know, the politicians.

DePue: Whatever their stripes?

Frederick: Yeah, really, whatever their stripes, yeah. I mean, I don't have that rainbow view of the world anymore. And I used to. I really believed that there were good people. But, even if somebody is good…Like, I'll tell you, I love Hilary Rodham Clinton. I love her. I'm sorry that she hasn't risen to power before now, because I think things would be different. But do I think that she doesn't cut deals and…Oh well, her decision to go to war. That was very disappointing.

I don't believe in the fairy tales anymore. Things aren't what they seem. They're never what they seem, and you just never know what you're not seeing. So I guess I just don't trust. I mean, not everyday people; I think I'm really trusting. But people in positions of power, I guess, I don't trust. Oh, that's what I was going to say. So, even if they started out and they were a wonderful human being, they're not going to survive in this system by being that way. So, that's another part of the junk is the system doesn't allow for people to stay honest and stick to their guns. You won't be around if you do that.

DePue: When you say "the system," you're talking about our political system, our political process?

Frederick: Um hmm.

DePue: Well, I'm going to give you an opportunity to end on a different note.

Frederick: Okay.

DePue: How would you like to conclude our interview today?

Frederick: Well, this has just been a very exciting and interesting situation for me, and I feel proud to have been selected. That's one of the things that I said when you contacted me. I said, "I feel like, well, okay, there is some good that came out of what I did thirty years ago". (laughing) So, even though that felt like a total loss at the time and kind of a waste in some ways, I feel, looking back now, I feel like well, good. At least, historically speaking, my time has a place in history. We got to be proud of that. (laughs)

DePue: Well, we certainly hope that people will have an opportunity to hear the interview and to read the interview, later on down the road. To see the pictures, to hear your passion about it. They can't help but walk away with a better understanding of what it was like to be involved in it.

Frederick: Yeah, thanks. I mentioned it to a couple of people at the university, and they said, "Oh, well when it's transcribed, you need to let us know, and we're going to put a link to it, and we're going to have an article in the alumni magazine and…" And I said, "It'll be years from now." (laughing)

DePue: It'll take a while to get transcribed, but not that much longer to get posted on our website and to actually listen to the interview.

Frederick: Oh, okay. Well, that'd be good then. I'll have to let them know, because they're already ready to promote this situation, because our current tag line is "Leadership Lived." So, because this whole thing started as an applied study term in my undergraduate work at the university, it kind of feels like it is "leadership lived."

DePue: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to talk to you about it.

Frederick: Thank you. It was lovely.

(end interview #2)