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Interview Transcript--Thelma McCormack-1.doc

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Interviewer: Naomi McCormack

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BEGIN TRANSCRIPT:

THELMA McCORMACK: Well growing up in Rochester was ideal. I lived a block away from the University of Rochester's Women Campus. At that time there were two campuses, the women's and the men. And that was my playground, was the Women's Campus at the University of Rochester. I learned to roller-skate. I learned to bicycle. I learned to avoid men asking funny questions. And it was a very careful; the neighbors all knew; the neighbors knew you and, so it was very guarded and happy childhood. People felt that they were, you know, there was a lot of talk about elections and Roosevelt and the Depression, but it mostly went over our heads.

Then we went on to high school. It was more of the same, only more serious. There was a lot of talk about history and a lot of talk about the current Depression and the crisis. But the truth is that I worried more about Chemistry than I did about History. My friend who was my partner in the Chemistry lab, she and I suffered together trying to figure out what an atom was. Sorry.

INTERVIEWER: Would you like a glass of water? I'll go get you a glass of water. 0:01:43.7

THELMA McCORMACK: Anyway, I can't do it. Anyway, I can't clear it. (Referring to her throat). Well we worried more about Chemistry than we did about anything else. However, by my last year in high school, I was very anxious to fly the coup. I had enough of Rochester and I wanted to do other things and I had cousins who had gone to other universities. And so after reviewing a few of them, I decided to go to the University of Wisconsin. That was far away. I wouldn't be having my parents visiting me all the time and I would have a lot of independence. And I loved Madison. It

was a very nice environment. Very stimulating courses. Very stimulating professors. Very serious and very beautiful. 0:03:27.1

And I had a lot of fun. I didn't worry too much about my classes, but I nevertheless worked hard and wrote the papers I was going to write. And in my last year there, I spent the summer working at Hull House in Chicago. And Hull House was a very famous social work agency and I thought seriously about becoming a social worker. But after the summer at Hull House, I decided that I would make a terrible social worker. I wanted people to pay attention to what I was saying. I was not willing to listen to their ideas quite so much. And everyone in my family agreed that social work was not for me. 0:04:20.8

And so I applied to Columbia and by this time people were leaving for overseas and it was not terribly difficult to get into. I was very happy, and I moved to New York. And New York, to me at that time, was probably what Paris was to another generation. I was thrilled with is. There was no place I wouldn't go, and there was every place, every thing to be seen. Whether I would go down to the new school and take some courses there and wander around New York. I thought it was just wonderful. 0:05:02.2

I worked hard. I had a small one room apartment of my own that was at 112th Street I think or 113th, so it was all within walking distance. And the courses were interesting. I still wasn't sure what I wanted in the courses, but I was willing to try a lot of things and every thing.

INTERVIEWER: Can I interject? What was your Ph.D. on? What were you studying for your, what was your subject, what was your major at that time?

THELMA McCORMACK: At Columbia?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

THELMA McCORMACK: It was Sociology. That was something I never had, so it was an interesting thing. But, you know, in those days, you weren't so restricted. I also had Anthropology with some very interesting people like Ruth Benedict and others that were very stimulating. And then there were some very good courses in Social Psych with some distinguished people in the field. 0:06:04.8

So I didn't feel any sort of bond. The bond was to the social sciences which I found very interesting. And I liked the courses, and there some outstanding people. When I took Anthropology, it was with Ruth Benedict and we had read some of her things when I was in college, so I was excited about that. So we sort of drifted through taking more in Sociology than anything else, but I wasn't the least bit hesitant to take something else. For a while I got very interested in 19th century British Social History, but I didn't like the course I was taking and I just couldn't keep awake in it long enough. 0:06:53.7

So there I was working my way through this graduate program which didn't seem to lead anywhere, but I knew I had to stay in it. There was no where else to go. And it was very stimulating. I wasn't quite grown up enough for it as I think some of the other students were. Some

of them had come from very big cities and much more sophisticated backgrounds than I had, but I held out and worked very hard. I was at the library every morning and worked hard, but not absolutely certain as to where I was going. 0:07:47.4

Well what you do in case like that is go to graduate school. So I drifted in to graduate school trying to figure out what I wanted to do with that. And in the course of this I did become more interested in problems of research. Not because I had any great interest in research methodology, but because I was beginning to get interested in how you do research, how do you find things out. Fortunately at the time, there were a lot of jobs floating around doing, among other things, market research. I thought that might be quite interesting. And that's how I got connected with the Bureau. Because the kind of work they were offering was primarily in market research and I liked that. I liked going out and interviewing. I liked seeing what other people's lives were about. And…0:08:55.2

INTERVIEWER: Were there any very specific studies that you worked on?

THELMA McCORMACK: I had worked on a little of everything. I mean it was interviewing one day and it was doing coding the next day, and three days on something else. I never felt any identification with any of the famous studies that were taking place. But that didn't bother me really. I just did what I was told to do. It wasn't always exciting or interesting, but it was enough to keep me going and there was enough money in it to keep me going, which was more to the point. I didn't want to write and ask my parents for more money. 0:09:40.9

So I drifted around in to that and I learned a lot. I learned a lot about how to do research, how to do sampling, how to do some of these big questions. They were all very small scale studies. It wasn't until I worked for the government that I worked on studies that would be 10,000 people. These were much smaller in scale and worth doing. Although I never really became enchanted with statistics or with some of these methodological problems. After a while I decided; I worked with some very good people at the Bureau and that was very stimulating. One of them was a man named Arthur Cornheuser. Arthur was a good Social Psychologist. But he also had something that I had been missing, and that was a very strong sense of the ethics of research. We talked about it a lot. And he was very firm about the ethics of research, whereas I felt there was a lot of sloppiness going on around me, and that nobody did talk about the ethics of research. So I liked working with Arthur and we worked together very well. But Arthur got a new job and I decided the time had come for me to leave. And I drifted around and finally went to Washington, D. C. and that was a whole other new world. Very exciting. I worked for the Bureau for Agricultural Research and again interviewing people, drawing up questionnaires, analyzing the data, and finding myself. 0:12:01.2

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to ask you to back track just a little bit.

THELMA McCORMACK: Finding myself less interested in some of the big questions and more interested in the mechanics of things.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, do you want to start that sentence again because you kind of broke it off in the middle.

THELMA McCORMACK: How did I?

INTERVIEWER: Finding yourself, when you're at the Washington Department of Agriculture. What were you doing there? What kind of studies; agricultural stuff?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yeah. Consumer preference surveys.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Was this during the war? Still there was a war over…

THELMA McCORMACK: No, no, no. It was still lingering on. Veterans were coming back.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so, let's start again. So what kind of work were you doing there?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I was doing, when I was working at the Department of Agriculture, I was working on a study for a while rather than little bits here, and a little bit of that. And got much more deeply interested in some of the philosophical questions that went with research and found that quite interesting. But of course I was in love with Washington. I just thought that was the most wonderful place to be. And…0:13:38.2

INTERVIEWER: Why?

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh, it was really a fascinating place. Everything was going on in Washington. You picked up the paper in the morning and there all it was. I walked past the White House to get to work. And I passed the Supreme Court. And so I just was enchanted by Washington. Most people aren't; it's a dull place. But I found it very interesting. And I also, well earlier at Columbia, I had met someone I was in love with, one of several, but he was the one who lasted. He came to Washington too and we got married. And he was doing his graduate work at Columbia as well but still had a dissertation to finish up. And he was working at the Library of Congress for his work, so it was very comfortable for both of us. 0:14:37.6

INTERVIEWER: Can you mention your husband by name?

THELMA McCORMACK: Say what?

INTERVIEWER: Can you mention your husband by name?

THELMA McCORMACK: Robert. Bob.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

THELMA McCORMACK: McCormack. And…

INTERVIEWER: So when did you get married?

THELMA McCORMACK: We got married, well I think, I can't remember whether we were still in New York or Washington. I think we were married in New York and then went to Washington.

INTERVIEWER: What year was that then? Do you remember what year it was? No, okay. Just curious, that's all.

THELMA McCORMACK: Just say I got married.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Actually can you give me the sentence we got, Robert McCormack and I got married and moved to Washington.

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes. Robert McCormack and I got married and we both went to Washington. He was from Toronto, by the way. And he was doing graduate work in Columbia at a time when, again, during the war. People might have gone to the London School of Economics. They might have gone to a British school if you'd been a Canadian, but no, everybody wound up either in, well Washington was much easier and simpler. And there was plenty of money to go around. There were, you know, grants for this and grants for that. 0:15:54.9

So it was a very happy marriage and we lived in Washington for about three years and then he got a job in Ohio and I stayed on in Washington and continued to be quite happy with it, but then he was offered a job at Northwestern, and I thought that was the time for both of us to get together and live together. So we went to Evanston, Illinois and that was again back to the Middle West and all of the pleasant things. 0:16:41.5

Northwestern was a wonderful place. Northwestern was fun, fun, fun, and a lot of work and a good kind of group atmosphere. And I worked for several people who were, I think, very helpful in the development of my career. One of them was a man named Paul Hat who was a demographer. And I never though that I could be at all interested in demography, but Paul got me interested in demography and all of these other problems of research. Unfortunately Paul had a very bad heart and he died and I became the Director of the Social Research Program at Northwestern in Sociology. And that was a lot of hard work, but again, the range of things that I got in contact with, the range of people I met was just wonderful. So we had a good time. Everybody had left wing politics. No one knew whose politics were more left than anybody else's, but we all worked for Adelaide Stevenson and knocked on doors and handed out pamphlets and went out and asked for money and so forth. 0:18:11.4

About that time I got pregnant, however, and decided to take it a little easier than I was. But it wasn't later, I think, that we left Evanston and came back to Toronto or came to Toronto.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so basically you had us, and then you took a maternity leave?

THELMA McCORMACK: You were infants. You were six months old when we moved.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so…

THELMA McCORMACK: When we moved to Montreal…

INTERVIEWER: Okay, tell us that. So just say I had my children, I had twin daughters and then six months later…

THELMA McCORMACK: I had my children and to my surprise and everyone else's it turned out to be two, and with these twins, my parents helped me to get some help and we moved to Montreal.

Montreal is the coldest city you can imagine. And after the lovely Evanston springs and falls, I didn't think I was going to survive in Montreal.

INTERVIEWER: Why didn't you move back home? Why did you move to Montreal?

THELMA McCORMACK: My husband got a job with the CBC. He gave up academia. He wanted to be out there in the real world and he loved the CBC. That was his matea (phonetic). He loved the whole notion of production of putting on programs. And he was in one of the most interesting parts of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation which was, you know, social problems. So he was happy as he could be working very hard, smoking too much. But we were both very happy in Montreal except I was very isolated. I had two babies. I hadn't a clue about how you look after children, and I didn't know anyone. The French was not so much of a problem, but the fact that I didn't know a soul in Montreal. 0:20:39.3

By my second year in Montreal, I did know people and I met some very interesting people around Magill (phonetic) and I started doing part-time work in Magill, and learning about the whole French-Canadian environment and about Canada generally.

About a few years after that, Bob was offered a job back in Toronto and I said this is the last move I'm going to make; that's it. And so we moved to Toronto and have been there since. Unfortunately he became very ill and died very early, but he adored his children and he adored what he was doing. And he always felt very creatively fulfilled. So it was a sad time for all of us. But we didn't have much time to worry about it. 0:21:44.0

So we moved to Toronto and I started working at, I started freelancing. But then eventually people would say, Thelma would you like to do some research here or would you like to do…? I knew a lot of people there and I started out and I worked at this new university called York, brand new university and all kinds of experimental things going on. It was a beautiful campus and my Chair in the department said to me one day, you know, I think we should put you on full-time. And I said well alright, that's fine. It wasn't really full-time, but eventually became full-time. As he pointed out you were being paid half time for a full-time job so you might as well be a full-time person. 0:22:41.3

And so that's when my career at York began. And it was just wonderfully exciting, very challenging. The place was just full of American draft dodgers who had their problems and we all worked together. The other university, there were other universities of course, but York was the new experimental one and I've been there until I retired. Not that I didn't teach part-time elsewhere, but that was my main place and where I really dug into my scholarship. I was very happy there and however cold it was in Toronto, it wasn't as cold as it was in Montreal. So I felt that I was comfortable. And we would go and visit my mother in Rochester and we had a couple of very wonderful trips to Europe. You could do that. And then carried on. 0:24:02.4

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I'm going to ask you some more pointed questions now. That's a pretty good history. Got all the main points I would think.

THELMA McCORMACK: I would hope so.

INTERVIEWER: Let's go back to your early, your childhood, okay. And were there, do you remember any role models or were there any mentors or anybody? Do you remember any specific goals when you were a little girl?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well there probably were and they were probably wonderful grade school teachers. Those were the role models we had. And they were very kind and they were very eager to have you achieve. There was very little rigid discipline. But nevertheless, you were remarkably unsupervised even in the school. When I hear about police guarding schools now, I can hardly believe that. There would not be even a remote possibility of police guarding the schools and the teachers were all very eager for you to achieve. But nevertheless very sympathetic and understanding and I did very well. But it was my younger sister who seemed to me was getting all the attention. I'm sure she would deny it. I supposed all older sisters; I've talked to others who said yes, I certainly felt my sister was getting all the breaks, all the good things and so forth. And she would say I wore your clothes, what are you talking about? 0:25:58.6

But we had music lessons and dance lessons and all the things that middle class kids were doing. And yet it was a very encouraging, but we weren't pushed. Nobody said well you'll never go anywhere. They always were saying oh you'll get there. It wasn't that great middle class push that I saw later on. It was a very gentle environment. We had a nurse in the school. And you used any excuse you could to go up and have a little talk with her.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't have any idea when you were a kid what you wanted to be or anything like that?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I went through a whole series of things. I lived very close to a Catholic school and I decided at one time I'd like to be a Nun because they passed us and so forth. And I thought that would be very nice and then somebody told me they weren't allowed to talk to each other and I thought oh well that's out. 0:27:07.5

I suppose I went through a number of, I never wanted to be a movie star, but I did do a lot of creative writing and I thought that would be a nice career. But vocational education was not part of this. The thing to do was to survive Chemistry. And then get in to college. So I didn't have any real role models, but I was certainly surrounded by some very nice people who were very encouraging. You know, they would give me books to read and you know read to me. The teachers were very supportive, but I had no intention of becoming a teacher. There had to be something more interesting than that. And I felt that way eventually, that I would never be a teacher; that's not very interesting. 0:28:08.8

I thought I'd be a journalist for a while and I took a course in journalism, and they sent me out to cover Sunday morning sermons and that was deadly. I came back and said that's out. I'm not going to be a journalist. And I did drop that as quickly as I could. But I was interested; I was interested in

newspapers and read them. I remember one time; well, when I was young it was my job in the morning to go downstairs, open the front door, run out on the porch, get the paper, take it upstairs and give it to my father. He said thank you. Every morning I did that. And one morning I ran downstairs, opened the front door, went out on the porch, got the paper, and I knew I could read. I was just flabbergasted. The headline said "Smith Loses." 0:29:13.8

Now if you're my age, you know that was Alfred Smith and he lost because he was a Catholic, so they said. But in any case, I took the paper upstairs to my father and I said "Smith Loses." He said just put it down there. I said "Smith Loses." He said just put the paper down there. So it had no impression on him at all. No impact. But it did on me. I knew all that day that I could read and that my life was turning into something really quite interesting. So I became a big newspaper reader. And on Sundays, we used to get the Hearst papers which were full of terrible stories and there were arguments between my parents about whether I should be allowed to read these tabloid papers or not, but I read them and found out what was going on in Baltimore and all the real places in the world. 0:30:16.7

So I liked that and I liked the whole literature thing, although I don't think I was very successful at it. But I used to send stories out to publishers and they would write back and say thank you very much, but this is not quite what we wanted.

INTERVIEWER: What about radio? Were you interested in listening to radio?

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh yes, everybody listened to the radio. The radio was powerful. We listened every night to these awful racist Amos and Andy things and the news and as many sensational things as we can get about who got a divorce and who didn't and what kind of, what was going on in the world and what wasn't. So we all listened to the radio. And we followed those big sports stories. I remember one prize fight where I think, oh I think it was Joe Lewis; it may have been. But he won in the first round and he was a knock out. And the one he knocked out was Max Schmeling, who was a pro-German. So there was just an ecstasy all over the United States that this black fighter had knocked out this German fascist in one round. I'm not sure I have all the details, but there were these tremendous victories going on that were part of the environment. 0:32:03.9

You know when you listen to the sports here, I remember all that shouting and screaming and celebrating and people who would never; my father didn't know a thing about prize fighting, but he was just as excited and worked up about this as anyone. But we did listen to the news and the news was quite, you know they had a couple of very good news readers and then we were clubbies. A lot of girls clubs. I was a girl scout. My sister was a girl scout. We went to all sorts of clubs and learned how to do things at these clubs. But we were not wandering around the streets, I can tell you. 0:33:03.0

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so let's …

THELMA McCORMACK: Also, we had a lot of homework.

INTERVIEWER: You said at one point that you wanted to be an activist.

THELMA McCORMACK: Be a what?

INTERVIEWER: Be an activist.

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you can talk about that a little bit?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I think that the more I, especially in at Wisconsin, I got very interested in politics and very interested in what was going on in the world. That's what I wanted to do, I thought at one time; be a political activist. And I would go around to the newspapers and ask them if they would like someone to do a book review and yes they did. And I did some of that, but I really got very interested in the larger world and what was going on. That wasn't unique with me. I mean this was a very political environment. Everybody knew who these people were. Everybody knew who they wanted to win the war. And everybody knew who should lose it. And there was no doubt about this at all. 0:34:15.4

And so there was a kind of constant political tension in the environment which I think all of my generation picked up. I mean they were constantly, you know, finding out what was happening. We didn't sit down and have serious discussions, but we were a part of this very edgy environment about what was going to happen in the world. And we knew all about the Germans and the fascists and who we were for and who we were against.

INTERVIEWER: So do you think that, you know, growing up during the war had an impact on you in terms of your political consciousness?

THELMA McCORMACK: A tremendous impact. I think it had an impact on all of my generation.

INTERVIEWER: Can we rephrase that with a question then?

THELMA McCORMACK: I think that this whole environment of the 40's for instance, had a tremendous impact on my generation. Tremendous. On the one hand, we were very anxious to achieve, but on the other hand, very worried that the opportunities for achievement weren't going to be there. So there was this kind of ambivalence, but all of us thought a lot about what we wanted to do and we were constantly asked what would you like to do and you had to have an answer. 0:35:42.2

INTERVIEWER: Why did you think the opportunities might not be there?

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh because of the economy. We thought the opportunities might not be there because of the economy and we saw a lot of unemployment. I lived near a park which was full of men sleeping on benches at night. And we saw a lot of unemployment. If you went down to the public library, which I often did, it was just full of men just trying to keep warm, reading up on magazines "Popular Mechanics." I remember one called "Popular Mechanics" and these men who were unemployed were sitting there reading "Popular Mechanics" keeping up with their careers as

it were or finding out what was new. But the Depression was very visible. I mean husbands were leaving and there was a lot of suicide. In that sense, a very touchy and difficult generation. A difficult environment for my generation. Yet somehow, I mean thanks as we say, to Roosevelt, this whole thing ended and the men came back from the Army and the family was restored and everybody was having a, buying cars and having a good time. 0:37:14.1

And we had a car and that was a big thing. My father thought that was wonderful. And every Sunday we had to go out in the country for a ride. Either myself or my sister got sick on these rides, but it was the pride. Everyone had a family picture. Oh Rochester is the home of Eastman Kodak, so we were all very conscious of photography. And everyone took pictures and there is one in everybody's album and that is you were, there is the house that you now own. The car in the driveway and the children lined up against the car. That was the perfect middle class aspiration; the house, the car, and the kids lined up against the car. And that's what we had achieved. 0:38:16.4

INTERVIEWER: I wish you had that photograph.

THELMA McCORMACK: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so let's get back to the activism thing. That happened when you were at the University of Wisconsin.

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And…

THELMA McCORMACK: And I found out about all kinds of politics left and right; more left than right. I didn't quite believe it all, but if they needed somebody to march, I would march. If they needed somebody to hold a banner, I would hold a banner. And I got a lot of lessons in Marxism from people who hung around the university, but weren't students. There was that big sort of loose Proletariat that was out there giving instructions to students about what to think of the universe. And I was very amused about this because some years ago I was working in Ottawa and I decided to take a course on computers and to do this I had to go out to one of the community colleges, which is a long ride out there. But I would get there quite early in the evening and hang around in their cafeteria where sure enough there were a whole bunch of charming young girls just waiting to be instructed by some of the new immigrants about the world and sex and politics and they were listening avidly and I thought I could just see myself a few years earlier hanging on to the words of someone who explained to me about the dialectic. 0:40:01.9

INTERVIEWER: And did that continue when you went to Columbia, that interest or did you, what happened when you went to Columbia?

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh, that interest was still there. I mean people were, I got more interested in some of the cultural things and there was a wonderful theater near Columbia, the Valley which had these foreign films. That was just sensational. French films, Italian films. We used to go to the Valley all the time. And saw Ingrid Bergman and all of these European films that were simply wonderful. I couldn't get enough of that. 0:40:49.2

INTERVIEWER: Okay. When you were at Columbia, you worked at Columbia for a couple of years before you went to the Bureau?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So how did you…?

THELMA McCORMACK: I lived in Washington before I went to Montreal.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Okay. So it was Columbia, the Bureau, Washington, joined (inaudible) and then Canada. Alright, let's go back to Columbia and the Bureau because I know Peter is really interested in the Bureau and all the culture that went on in the Bureau. When you were working at the Bureau, can you describe a little bit of what the culture there was like? Were men and women or sort of equal par? Were you doing the same kind of research? Can you describe some of the people? 0:41:39.1

THELMA McCORMACK: Well the Bureau was a very interesting place because Paul Laserfeld was doing everything he could to help refugees. And there were a number of people who worked at the Bureau who were European refugees and they were fascinating people. They were extremely well educated. Very sophisticated, but just horribly depressed and doing work well below what they could do. And then there were the rest of us graduate students who thought we should be doing, running the place and doing any kind of research. I didn't pass judgment on it. But some of it was very challenging and some of it wasn't. 0:42:29.4

Now in general, women did a lot of the dumb jobs, interviewing, coding, calculating, doing you know nothing very interesting. But enough to keep you interested. And Paul, I think, tried very hard to balance the Columbia University atmosphere and the Bureau which was a business really, and getting people to feel the same commitment that they might have felt to a classroom. So it was a very busy place and yet you might walk in and not see very much because people were out interviewing or people were over in a corner doing coding or doing something else. There was usually a coffee break during the day when everybody would pull together and have some very sophisticated ideas to throw out. But it wasn't at the busy office that some people in visage. I mean I would be out interviewing the whole day and just come back at about 4:30 and put my interviews down and say I'll see you tomorrow. 0:44:01.7

So it wasn't the busy busy place, but it was extremely stimulating. And some of the people who were most interesting to me, of course, were these refugees. I knew nothing about it, nothing about Europe and what was going on. I mean compared to the reality of it. And so I was a good ear for some of these people were only too happy to unload their unhappiness. But as a, it was a dreary building. It had been part of the medical school at Columbia and nobody had ever bothered to fix it up. It was just awful, 59th Street, but you made friends. And but you weren't constantly off in cliques arguing with people. You did a lot of reading, not at Paul's suggestion, but you know it was expected that you were there for serious purposes. 0:45:08.7

There were some rivalries that went on, but they didn't impact on me very much. But I wasn't terribly interested in making this a career.

INTERVIEWER: Why not?

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh I thought, you know, market research is not all that interesting. I found it interesting, but not always I mean. I still find consumer research an interesting part of social policy. And a lot of my friends said oh well, this is just, you know, you're just helping the advertisers with this. And there was some proof to that, but in general, I was interested in social planning and I could see from the kind of research that we were doing that it was essential to social planning. And then it would be, but not everyone felt that way and there were, you know, there were rivalries. There were ambitious people who felt they weren't getting ahead and some were and some weren't, but it didn't impact on me the way it did on some others. I just thought I'll learn what I can and get out of here. 0:46:35.9

INTERVIEWER: And what did you like about interviewing?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I liked, you know, women like to talk or listen to other women talk. And much of the interviewing I did was day time interviewing, so I'd be interviewing housewives. And I found their lives very interesting. And was, you know, very, it wasn't the over protected environment of Rochester. People said to me, it seemed to be lead much more interesting lives than I had. But I also encountered some deep deep poverty. And had to write all of that down as well. But I enjoyed, I still enjoy talking to people. I enjoyed that kind of listening. 0:47:40.1

Now later on when I went to Washington, I did very little one on one interviewing. It was, you know, you sent out the questionnaires and the interviewers in Oklahoma did those and sent them back to you. So it wasn't always as interesting as the one on one interviews that you did. But eventually you are going to grow tired of that too.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so then you went to, after Washington you went to Northwestern and at Northwestern you were still doing research, market research?

THELMA McCORMACK: No, I was, but I was also teaching.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so what lead you to sort of segue from doing the research, market research or (inaudible) research or social planning research in to teaching? 0:48:30.9

THELMA McCORMACK: Opportunity is what lead me in one direction. An opportunity lead me in the other direction. But I began to get more interested in the courses and they needed people. So I was there. I had the qualifications. And they needed me to teach Introductory Sociology. I taught Introductory Sociology.

INTERVIEWER: Did you say this was at Northwestern?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yeah. But at the same time, we had this center for research, Paul had sort of begun. And I assisted him there learning a lot and when Paul became ill I had to take more

responsibility for the research and learn a lot in the process. So there was a lot of learning experience going on. At the same time, we were all teaching each other and it was the kind of environment where you could do that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, we still haven't heard Northwestern, so could you just say at Northwestern?

THELMA McCORMACK: At Northwestern, well, at Northwestern it was the kind of environment where we could teach each other and learn from each other and keep the thing going and enjoyed it. We used to go down to the University of Chicago for seminars and then come back and talk about that. So it was a very stimulating environment, but also a learning one. I don't think of it, in retrospect, I don't think of it that way. I think of it as sitting around drinking all the time. We didn't. 0:50:17.8

INTERVIEWER: So you enjoyed that culture better than Washington?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes I enjoyed it much better. It was much more open and equitable.

INTERVIEWER: Why is that?

THELMA McCORMACK: It was just smaller and we had all come out of graduate school and all suffered through the same things and all having babies and part-time jobs and working things out.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, now, when I was talking to Gladys Lang, she said that she had an experience where she had applied for a grant, some big grant, and she had been issued, awarded the grant and they had found out that she was pregnant and they had withdrawn the grant. And she and Kurt had to fight very hard to actually get the grant back and I could see when we were talking with her that she was still very bitter about this.

THELMA McCORMACK: I don't blame her. 0:51:14.4

Northwestern was bad. They didn't want you married. You could live with the guy, but they didn't want married couples at all. And they didn't want to get stuck with married women I guess, who might then get pregnant and say hey look, I need more money. No, they were very biased in that direction. And the women used to joke about it half the time, you know. Where are you from? I'm from this street. Where are you from? I'm from that street. But they were very, a very blind to the talents that women were bringing to the situation. And very uninterested in what talents you might have. And that went on at Northwestern and other places as well. Women did not have an easy time of if. They nevertheless persisted and if you had two babies at home, you were just glad to have a job. So there was prejudice and it wasn't pleasant, and women talked about it and they knew about it, but there was no discussion of women's liberation at all. 0:52:39.7

I mean Betty Friedan (phonetic), I don't remember when that book came out, but you know it was sort of well, this is a nice help but where are we going? And it wasn't, I mean I think it was my generation really that, had we been a few years earlier, they wouldn't have had anything. When my mother married, she had to give up her job. And that was that. There was no question about it. And

she did. But no one even questioned that as unfair. But it was much, a little later on, of course, the women's movement began to develop and one of the places that began to develop was the universities. And in fact there was a whole lot going on in universities at the time about changing the curriculum and the grading system and the opportunities for advancement. 0:53:44.6

There was also, you know, a lot of race prejudice and so forth. No, those were very disturbing times and no one took any of it for granted. It might be stimulating to you, but it was underneath you knew that this was a very precarious environment and I've never forgiven them either. I mean I'm sure that I feel exactly the way Gladys did, that there were absolute jerks getting ahead. And we were being left behind. 0:54:29.1

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Well you have been quoted as when the Royal Commission on the Status of Women came out here, you felt like it was, I think the word was epiphany? So with the, how did that affect you and also the kind of work you were doing? Because at this time you were at York.

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes, by this time I was at York and the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was an absolute bold report which documented the amount of discrimination there was around women's salaries, on women's health, on women's courses, on women's education. And I think it was a tremendous waking up on academic women and becoming conscious that they were being left behind and under rewarded for what they were doing. 0:55:29.3

And so the movement became a movement. It was no longer just a few of us complaining. It became a movement and it had a big impact especially on these new universities that were just developing. And all of us woke up I think and said what's going on here? I can teach this course. Why am I not doing it? So there was really a revolution going on in Canadian education, post-secondary education. But it was going on elsewhere too. There were women writing about, not about their discrimination so much, but what is being left out, of course. What content is being overlooked? Why wasn't this discussed? Why are we not discussing abortion? Why are we not discussing birth control? All of these things were a very powerful movement, and men very often participated in it and were, you know, willing to see this. It also began the period of husband and wife working, the two job family. 0:56:59.8

So we worked, we were trying to work all of this through. I mean what kind of a woman were you supposed to be and how far could you go in your sexual freedom as a married woman. All of this came at a very good moment for me and for a lot of other women. We looked back on those days now and I can hardly believe it. But you know, women couldn't belong to some of the clubs and they persisted.

INTERVIEWER: Good. Okay, so you can discuss what you were about to discuss?

THELMA McCORMACK: One of the things that we learned to do at the Bureau and elsewhere was consumer preference surveys, survey research. And that was very interesting research because some people were very opposed to it as basically serving the interest of the advertising agencies. Others thought of it as part of social planning. But there was a very interesting woman in Germany, I think, Elizabeth Nolie-Noeman (phonetic) who saw herself developing consumer preference research or survey research in Europe. And she was very aggressive and very hard working, but she

saw this as in a very different way from the American pollsters did. The American pollsters were doing electioneering and consumer research, but Nolie-Noeman saw this survey research as part of a system of control. And she saw society as being essentially unstable and polling as part of a stabilizing process for unstable societies. 0:59:47.8

Now this was a very shocking idea because it really was saying, you know, what this polling is doing is helping to control society. It's not liberating you in any way. It's not giving you choice. But it is giving you peace and comfort. And it was. Her argument was that in an unstable society, we tend to read the polls and say where do I come out in this? Here is a public opinion poll that has just been published. Which category am I in? And if you were in a category where there were very few people, you suddenly realized that you were very isolated and vulnerable and hence the function of public opinion polling was to help put all of this together. 1:00:46.8

You can see how this could be a very controversial attitude to take and particularly for a German woman to be taking it. But it was quite different from the public opinion polls that we had been doing or that the Bureau had been doing, or that the kind of research that Tad's talks about, which was, you know, interviewing people and finding out where the situation stood. This was much more underneath it was a scenario which was very disturbing. But about the time that Nolie-Noeman was being very successful and she was, she used to turn up at our Bureau things and so forth. There was a new approach, an economics to research and people were not looking at public opinion polls anymore. They were looking at how you can succeed. They were looking at a new kind of research. And this was a kind of, it was mostly economics, but it had an impact on Sociology. And I think it was very, I mean in a sense, it was the end of the Bureau because that was a much more liberal and kind of thinking. But the Nolie-Noeman type of thinking was much more holistic, much more totalitarian in a way. And then what went beyond it was back to a very extremely conservative economics. 1:02:53.0

Now during that time when people were doing these studies, they were very small scale studies. But during that time that they were doing them, people began to rethink what they were doing. And out of this group came the new people who were looking at administrative research and doing studies that would look at how do you succeed or how do you make your choices, and what are the best choices to make? They weren't worried at all that a large number of people weren't voting. But this was now purely academic research on choices that people were making. And what were the best choices and what were the least? And I think that was the end of the whole, the end of the Bureau in a way because these people were doing purely academic research; it was not for anyone. And it was very interesting and I got involved in it at one time. In fact I got very heavily involved in it and I thought wow, what's wrong with this. I think this is pretty good and the studies were excellent, but in fact, I also became disenchanted with this kind of research and wanted a much more socially responsible kind of research. 1:04:32.9

INTERVIEWER: Sorry. So let's go back to Nolie-Noeman.

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes, Elizabeth Nolie-Noeman was working in Germany and she was working in a society that had been very destabilized. So that her emphasis was on seeing public opinion research become part of a tool of control. And she worked on that and she called her thesis "The Spiral of Silence." And she was looking at the repetition of studies as did Paul at one time.

Looking at series of studies over a short period of time and what happened to people in her sample. And what she found, of course, was that people were dropping out; that there was more and more conformity building up and becoming the majority. And this was what she called the "Spiral of Silence." It was a very controversial idea. I don't think it was ever as fully discussed as it should have been, but it was certainly an example of a distinguished woman drawing on this American woman model of public opinion research and using it to reinvent a stable, or what she thought was a stable nonconflictual society. 1:06:46.6

So she was quite interesting. As I said, I don't know what's happened to her work or her since. But she was important in this whole field and this was to some extent before this other new research was coming out, and I forget what the title of it was, but I'll tell you later, in which people were looking now at small groups and what was happening as people built up their opinions. And out of this came some interesting research on social organization. The dominant theme of American social research was based on class analysis and class conflict. This new research was built on economic growth and how that was working through. And a number of people have worked in that area. 1:07:59.5

Looking at punishment and reward models in research and that was also very interesting. So that the old sort of Laserfeld's model has just kind of in my opinion disappeared. People are still doing it, but…

INTERVIEWER: What is the Laserfeld model?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well the Laserfeld's model was where you had a sample and you began interviewing people and as you got closer and closer to the election, you kept rotating sections of it so that you could see what was happening in the process of persuasion. And that's why there is so much emphasis. You can see that in Tad's. The emphasis on persuasion and what that was all about. This was less emphasis on predicting an outcome. You know, once the election was over, that was it. 1:09:02.0

But there was a group hoopla against a British election I think in 1992 where people had been interviewed exhaustively and everybody was anyone in this field was involved in that election and was predicting it and they were wrong. Absolutely wrong. They just had predicted all wrong. And this was a great blow because there were very brilliant people doing it and some how they didn't know what they did. Some of them said well we stopped interviewing too early and others said, well no, it doesn't look like that. But I think public opinion research has taken some very serious criticisms. One coming out of Nolie-Noeman, she wasn't critical of it, but people who were political saw this emphasis on using public opinion research to control people was a rather touchy thing to be doing. And some of them were interesting in other things. 1:10:15.3

But the old fashioned public opinion research, I think, is no longer has the kind of status that it once did. Now you can still go to the public library and you can get the latest in public opinion research and everybody is doing some kind of public opinion research, but it doesn't have the philosophical depth that early researchers like Walter Lipmann, for instance, were doing, in which they were trying to understand the voter and trying to understand what citizenship was all about. Now this is what some of these early people like Walter Lipmann were doing when they were studying public

opinion. They really said who is this voter and what are we going to do about these voters who are now permitted to vote but know nothing. They've never been outside of their own little farm. 1:11:22.3

So there was a lot of discussion of that. But then it got in to the big time with public opinion research, and even I was certainly one of the people who said well these surveys may not satisfy you, but I think people are learning from them. I think they are learning about what politics are all about. Well that certainly went down the drain with this other research. And now you don't find the kind of old fashioned, you know, right before an election you may find something going on, but no one pays very much attention to it. They don't count it very high. Whereas there are other kinds of problems people are raising about how you study public opinion research and what public opinion is. 1:12:22.7

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

THELMA McCORMACK: Well in this country, of course, you had McClewen (phonetic). And McClewen was very popular and he would go around saying the medium is the message and people would say yes, the medium is the message. What that meant, no one knew. But he attracted a very big middle class audience. He attracted students. He attracted business people and advertisers and he was highly regarded by them. I don't think people are still going around saying the medium is the message, but they did have a center at the University of Toronto called the McClewen Center or something like that. But a lot of this kind of small scale survey research. 1:13:24.5

INTERVIEWER: And so how did your research when you started working at York and you started doing your own research, what lead you to in to things? Well you did voter studies?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And then pornography censorship? How did that all develop?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I was doing, you know, electoral research and choice making research because it was very easy to do. And it didn't take up a lot of time. And with a lot of equipment around, you could do a survey study quite easily and go home. But the mood changed as people began to ask more complicated questions. And I also was more interested in more complicated problems. 1:14:19.1

Now you wanted to know how I…

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, what lead you to go in to things like pornography and censorship?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well again, people ask you to. I mean this whole business of pornography in Canada, people were obsessed with it. And they'd say, well you know something about this, and I said well yes I know quite a bit. And found out all there was to know and then everyone was infuriated by the results. They'd say, oh, it's just what she wants. She wants to believe that, but she's going around saying it's not harmful and we know that little children are being killed as a result of this. Part of hysteria about pornography that went on and the Supreme

Court got involved and there were a number of decisions and I finally said I can't be bothered with this anymore. But it was a sort of hysteria, and it still is. There still is hysteria about pornography. Why I don't know. I mean it's; there were a couple of us who were doing research on it and kept saying, you know, why are people so hysterical about this? And the women's movement got involved in this and the women's movement were both pro and con, but there were a number of academics who saw this pornography research as a kind of hysteria which was in a sense, just simply anti-intellectual. But then there were others who saw this as a very serious threat to the decency and honor of Queen and Country. 1:16:19.1

That wasn't as strong in the States at all. I mean they were much more, much less concerned about censorship. But Canadians were just going crazy over this question of censorship.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever feel that your, you know, your identity or your role as a feminist was put in to conflict by, you know, some feminist views that pornography was…?

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh yes, I was put into; I was very much put on the spot about it. But I said well I'm sorry, this is the way I read business, this stuff. And if you give your kids a good sex education, you don't have to start worrying about all this because the people who are advocating censorship they really meant censorship and they did not want sex education in the schools and they did not want sex education anywhere else. And they were very much afraid that all of this was being too permissive, too promiscuous, and that the result would be a lot of illegitimate children. 1:17:33.7

So there was a kind of hysteria about it and I thought I don't know where they're going with this and what kind of evidence they have. But oh yes, I was very much on the spot with this. And lost a lot of friends I think as a result of it because they were, a great many people who sincerely thought that we were doing something very bad in allowing kids and anyone to have this much freedom. And they still do. The Supreme Court was very good on this, but you don't have to pay any attention to the Supreme Court.

INTERVIEWER: Can you talk about what it was like to be called in as an expert witness?

THELMA McCORMACK: An expert witness. I was asked to be an expert witness on some of these censorship cases, and I was very careful. I knew exactly that one mistake and it would be on the front page of the Globe and Mail or something. So I did prepare very carefully for the courts and for being a witness in these cases. And so I personally did not have too much trouble. In fact, the other side lawyers just wanted to get me off the stand. Yeah, okay, we'll go to the next person. Judges were more interested, but the lawyers knew that I was bad news. I wasn't the only one there, there were several others. 1:19:24.4

INTERVIEWER: Can you just describe what you were called in? You were called in by the defense?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us what it was?

THELMA McCORMACK: I can't remember the case.

INTERVIEWER: Oh okay. But you were just say that you were called in by the defense.

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes. I was called in by the defense and for the, you know, the Civil Liberties were involved and all was, and the censorship people involved. And I didn't take this lightly because I thought, you know, we have a constitution and the first amendment is about freedom of expression. And that what's involved here is a hostility, and I think there is involved a suspicion of freedom of expression. And I must say you two kids were seen as the daughter of this woman who believes in all this freedom. But I was very careful and it still goes on. And people are convinced absolutely that people are being brainwashed, anti-religious, and you had to say I don't see the evidence of people being brainwashed and if you're worried about this, see to it that your kids have a good sex education starting with kindergarten. But they didn't. 1:21:00.1

INTERVIEWER: When you look back on it, do you think that was some of your more important work when you look back at the things that you've done?

THELMA McCORMACK: No. I look back on it and I think I wasted a huge amount of time on it. I could have been doing other things that were much more interesting. I mean I did it, but I don't think it had any impact. I made some good friends but Canadians are not civil libertarians. They may tell you they are, and the Civil Liberties Union believes they are, but they're not. They are very conservative and very anxious about any kind of freedom; sexual freedom, any kind. 1:21:46.3

INTERVIEWER: Well you never know mom. Maybe things have changed a bit since then.

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I'm sure they have, but I'm astonished at how really conservative they have been on these issues without any evidence. I mean people who should know better say I'm against it. I don't want it in my house. I don't want it on my television set. I'm just against it and you would be too if you had any real values.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let's talk about values. We were talking earlier about you were asked to do studies on, some kind of studies that you were asked to do. Can you talk about that?

THELMA McCORMACK: That goes back to my earlier discussion about ethics in research. This is one of the things that Arthur Cornheuser and I used to talk a lot about this. In any case, I was, there were several experiences I had on coming face to face with this ethics thing. In Washington, everybody is looking for a job all the time, so everyday somebody calls you up and say Thelma there's a job in the War Department that I think sounds like you. Why don't you go and see about it. So there's, this was an Air Force job and I thought I'll go over and see what it's all about. And I went over and saw this very handsome young who said no there is nothing secret about this. We want to know how to do saturation bombing of Russian cities. So I, you know, I was astonished and we began discussing this, how you could do it and how you couldn't do it and so forth. And it wasn't until my way back that I thought I have just spent 40 minutes discussing saturation bombings of Russian cities. I'm not going to do that. I wouldn't do that. How could he be doing it? And by the time I got back to my office, people said well what was it all about. I said I can't tell

you, it's classified, but I was just horrified that this was research being done just discussed very casually. 1:24:21.4

Then I was in Montreal and working on a team study on stress and the senile psychoses. And this was one of those interdisciplinary things where nobody could agree on anything. And in particular, no one could agree on a definition of stress. So the head of our team who was a Czech said we're all going to take home some interviews tonight and come back on Monday and you define stress anyway you want and we'll see how much agreement we got. So we came back on Monday and he picked up one of mine and he said you've given this man maximum stress, what's the matter with you? And I said well Dr. Crowell; I thought this was very serious. This man had had his taken away from his family. He didn't know what happened to them. He was put in a concentration camp. He never knew from day to day what his life was going to be. That seems to me maximum stress. He said what are you talking about. He was in; I forgot the name of the concentration camp. I was in one much worse and I thought this man wants me to rank concentration camps from 1 to 4. I thought I can't do that. I simply cannot do that, ethically rank concentration camps. 1:25:58.7

So there are a number of experiences I had like that in which I felt there are studies I will not do no matter how important people think they are, there are just some studies that I will not do and I've kept up keeping a sort of list of these studies that shock me that people do. And I, you say to students, what would you do in that circumstance? I'd probably do it. You know, getting ahead and all the rest of it and the whole question of when do you say no to research, however intellectually challenging it might be, is I think a very serious one. I do not see any evidence of our students are raising these questions or want to or think about them. Our students would do almost anything. They go and interview funeral parlor directors and you know, want something grotesque to talk about. 1:27:08.9

But I think the question of values is very important and I think it's one of the things we are missing in teaching even women studies. I think women studies have been more conscientious about it. But even they will, you know, you get a march and some you know panel goes up or something and you think where in the hell are they getting this from? Do they have any values about this kind of research? And, so it's been a problem that's plagued my life. I haven't resolved it. 1:27:53.9

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like you have resolved it for yourself.

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh yeah, I resolved it for myself. I clearly decided that under no circumstances would I do it. Now that's easy to decide when you've got a job.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Okay, so let's talk about Women's Studies. What lead you to start and get involved with Women's Studies and start the program?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I got involved in Women's Studies very early because the literature was just coming out and women were the ones reading it. So we began to get more involved with the women's movement and how it was going in what direction and York was one of these very open and progressive universities. I can't say enough about the liberalism of York compared to any other university in Canada and particularly where the women's movement was concerned. And so we became more and more of a group. We would meet, you know, once a month

and have papers given and then we would have our own little groups and we began giving courses. And these were very successful, these courses. 1:29:14.8

The university was very pleased. It was not at all, you know, they liked the image of York as a progressive university. And we began developing a program and had very, you know very good cooperation from the administration so that we were beginning to give courses and eventually develop a women's study program where you could get a degree in women's studies.

Now they were very tough, these courses you know, just giggle giggle. But it was very difficult to get the right kind of atmosphere to discuss whatever they wanted to discuss and we were very open. We would discuss whatever they wanted to discuss. But we discussed menstruation last week. Well why can't we talk about something else this week? But there was a lot of, it was a very intellectually stimulating environment and it's one of the things I think that contributed to York's success; that it drew some very brilliant women. It had a strong appeal to women in the graduate program. And they were good. And no one could argue about that. So it became a kind of flagship. York became a flagship in women's studies and those of us who are in women's studies certainly moved that program ahead much faster than it was going. 1:31:02.1

And for me it's been a very thrilling experience. You know that's where I felt I wanted to put my time and work. And you know, there are problems about it. We now have people who want gay and lesbian studies. Well I want women and labor; I don't want gay and lesbian studies, but anyway. There are the usual conflicts, contradictions going on, but nevertheless, York will have a reputation and does have a reputation for women's studies and even now has an undergraduate program in women's studies and that seems to be going fairly well. But at first it was a graduate program and a graduate program only, and that meant that many of our students were coming from other universities. So that was quite challenging and interesting. 1:32:02.5

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you have received several honorary degrees from various institutions and then when you look back on your career, what are you most proud of or what do you think is your biggest accomplishment?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I suppose because I think we did start something. I think the thing as I look back on my career, there were lots of things that could have happened and should have happened, but didn't happen. But I think that I was part of a very positive social revolution going in Canada and elsewhere. Being on the cutting edge of it has been something that was; I've never been bored with any of the work in Women's Studies. Never. And I worked hard on my own publications. And I think it's all been very worthwhile. Now it can fall apart. I have no illusions about that. There are people who want it to be, you know, girls third wave feminism which is full of, you know, girls dancing. But I think it has been a real contribution to young women who were sort of groping around and had mothers and fathers who weren't sympathetic; to older women who had divorces and bad marriages and who were trying to come to terms and try and understand that. I think it was a very major contribution. It certainly wasn't me alone. It was a major contribution to knowledge and I think to social welfare. So I've never regretted it. 1:34:13.0

INTERVIEWER: So what would you say to young women who were starting out now on a similar career path to what you had?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I think that young women starting out now need some good supervision; a basic orientation. They very often don't have it. They are annoyed by some things, they aren't pleased. They want something else. But they have no sort of broad orientation. And I think we need to go back and say what this is about and this is what you can expect. You can't expect a job, but that's alright if you're talking about; they don't believe that. They really want a job and should want a job. But I think they have to get a broader orientation. There's too much superficiality about it. And too much opinion making where someone comes in and says I'm in Women's Studies and this is what we believe. You say, just a minute. And a lot of, you know, cantankerousness about establishing a control over this new area. I think that they'll work it out. Some will. Some won't. 1:35:47.9

But for some women my age, it has just been a God-send figuring out what happened in their lives. And that's good marriages and bad marriages and divorces and all the rest of it. And it was very challenging to my generation.

INTERVIEWER: Can you talk a little bit about those challenges combining a profession and motherhood and…?

THELMA McCORMACK: Combining a profession and motherhood is not always easy, but it's not impossible. It can be done. But what often happens is that they are not clear about what it is they want.

INTERVIEWER: Who is "they?"

THELMA McCORMACK: The student coming in and wanting a degree in this or, you know they don't understand that there are some things that you don't have with this business. We used to talk about how much sleep do you get? And it's astonishing how little sleep people got trying to work out all of these things together. I think it's, I think though it's been very rewarding. People are still trying to figure out what some of this means. And I think men have started to recognize what's going on, but unwilling to work it through. And I think there is a big problem with divorces that, you know, where women have just been working like anything and the guy say well it's your problem if you want that. 1:37:44.4

So I think there are a lot of these things to be worked out yet but they will be and I think that they difficulties that women are having are really not overwhelming. I think they can be done. Not all women feel they have to be married. My generation, if I said to my mother I don't think I have to be married, she would have said you just drop right out of that school right now. But women feel that they have more rights and more dignity. They aren't getting the support from their spouses that they should be getting. I think that they have difficulties explaining to their children what it's all about. Everybody else's mother says they can do this, I mean, why are you the only one? 1:38:44.6

INTERVIEWER: I remember that you used to say that you felt people were looking down at you for working as…

THELMA McCORMACK: They did. Eventually they looked up, but they did.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, can you rephrase that?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I think at first they did look down on me. What's the matter with her? I mean shouldn't she be playing golf at the country club? Her mother did. Why should she be working when she doesn't have to? So I had to say well I'm not working because I have to. I am very interested in this. I'm a committed professional person and that was a struggle. Then after a while they looked up and said, oh, will you please come head up our home and school organization, Thelma? You're the one who can talk. You're the one who can say these things. I say oh thank you. I mean that's very nice. 1:39:40.9

But I think that you do go through this kind of, you're breaking the code. And you still haven't got the new code worked out. And this old code, I mean I look back on it and I think did I ever believe in anything like that? But you know I didn't want to be a dependent person. And I think there are people that say when you can have the chance, why not be it? And you say, oh you'll find out. 1:40:18.1

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so what do you think, I just want one more wrap up question, what do you think is your greatest legacy? What are you leaving behind in all of your scholarly work?

THELMA McCORMACK: What do I…?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, what do you think is your greatest legacy that, you know?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I think I have in some small way made a contribution without sacrificing other people. You and Judith may have to answer that question, but I think people did think that I was sacrificing my children; that they were neglected. And I didn't feel that way. Fortunately I had the right husband. But there is this feeling that as a person, I have a right to read the books I want. I have a right to work out these things that I want without everyone passing judgment on me. And I am not going to acquiesce because someone thinks it's the wrong thing. And I had good friends as a result. So I don't know what the legacy will be. It's going to be an awful lot of unpublished articles. 1:41:44.8

INTERVIEWER: Alright. So anything else that you'd like to go in here?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well I think the study is going to be an interesting one because you are going to find variations among women and among men who read about this. I think it's very interesting that this is a study about women by women. And there aren't that many of them.

INTERVIEWER: Do you mean the film?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

THELMA McCORMACK: Oh yes. I think so. Now there are very outstanding women in academia these days that do brilliant things, but they don't have a cohesive group and they don't have a sense of, you know, they have a sense of competing with men when they ought to understand that they are not competing with men. 1:42:44.8

INTERVIEWER: Why not?

THELMA McCORMACK: Well why should they? I mean why should men set the standards? I mean it's up to you to set the standards. It's your study. I wouldn't have objected if you had interviewed men. But I think it's a nice idea to try this. See where it goes. See how many recruits we get to the cause.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, is there anything that I left out here? I know that, we talked about the Bureau. We did talk a little bit about the war, didn't we? About the impact World War II had?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And that was mainly that, oh, that was about being a very edgy time for everybody?

THELMA McCORMACK: Yeah, but I think as you look at history today and the anxiety people have about war and peace, I'm speechless. I am absolutely speechless. I think the Women's Movement has been pushed off in to the sidelines. They are not standing up and saying let this thing come to an end. And they are; you know we now have this whole thing about whether you wear a scarf or you don't wear a scarf. Where in the, you know, as you look back at the stages of history, does this fit in?

INTERVIEWER: Does it feel like a simpler time then?

THELMA McCORMACK: It seems like what?

INTERVIEWER: Did it seem like a simpler time then in the 50s and 40s?

THELMA McCORMACK: No. There was a much clearer idea of what was right and what was wrong. Nobody would have worn these scarves then. You just didn't, that's all. Well now everybody is wearing something.

INTERVIEWER: Things are more complex now, or you don't think it is?

THELMA McCORMACK: It's more confusing, I think. And a lot of the answers, you know, the question of abortion never bothered me, and it never bothered any of my generation. I should not say my generation, but any feminists it didn't bother. Now apparently it bothers all kinds of people. 1:45:17.5

INTERVIEWER: Did you do any work on abortion rights?

THELMA McCORMACK: Did I what?

INTERVIEWER: Did you do any work on abortion rights?

THELMA McCORMACK: No, that didn't seem to me there was anything to be done. But I think, I mean I'm sure every woman who has an abortion does some thinking about it, but now there seems to be a revival of a kind of conservative anti-abortion movement that just, I don't know where it's coming. There's something missing in this whole picture.

INTERVIEWER: Coming from the religious rights.

THELMA McCORMACK: You're what?

INTERVIEWER: It's coming from the religious rights, at least in Pennsylvania it is.

THELMA McCORMACK: Well there were no religious rights when we were growing up. I mean if they did, they were very quiet.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, well should we cut?

END TRANSCRIPT