HAGGERTY: Let's start with your name and where you were born. And maybe just a little bit of background about how you came into feminism and why, if you would call yourself a feminist.

REMICK: I certainly call myself a feminist—

HAGGERTY: Pause, I didn't press Play on this. Redo.

[Video: IMG_0756.mov]

Let's start with your name, where you were born a little bit of family background and then how you feel about feminism and if you would call yourself a feminist.

REMICK: Helen Remick, R – E –M – I – C– K. I was born in Seattle but raised mostly in California and then came back to Seattle for job here at the University in 1975.

[0:00:57.0]

HAGGERTY: Great. And when did you first start learning about feminism or what we call feminism today?

REMICK: I was aware of differences in treatments of males and females, I know by 5th or 6th grade if not earlier, and certainly saw different opportunities for boys and girls, men and women at that point. The word 'feminism' really evolved later and certainly by— I started graduate school in 1968 and during the time I was in graduate school in Psychology I certainly formed some strong ideas about sex differences – which is what one talks about in Psychology – and feminism related to that; the differential treatment and disproportionally lesser treatment of women to men.

My introduction to feminism in terms of not liking what was going on actually came through my treatment by doctors, from a medical sense rather than necessarily employment, though the employment was there as well. In 1965, for

example, I was denied the right to apply for a job because I might have to lift something over thirty pounds, there was legislation that protected women. Doctors just didn't treat women very well. Doctors, being at that point virtually all men, their decisions about what was wrong with women and how should be treated were not good ones.

[0:02:53.9]

HAGGERTY: And what was your family like in terms of differences between men and women and maybe your mom and dad? How did that play a role in it?

REMICK: A great deal. I have one sister. My mother was one of those kinds of women that Betty Friedan talked about, she was very frustrated. My understanding is that she was, in fact, working at the time that she met my dad. She opened the first standing mail order business for Sear*s* that was in Mount Vernon. So she was running her own little store where you could go into the store to do mail order, it was something Sears was testing. And she liked that very much. When she got married my dad wanted her to stop working which she did, that was in about 1940 or '41. So she did stop. She would much rather— she would have been a good career woman but that was not what was there for her. And she eventually started a mail order business out of the house which was a way for her to work while still being at home. It was as nice little business, but she was very frustrated by what she saw as the options for women.

I grew up in a—I'm from a mixed social class family, she being of the lower social class of the two. But the women on my middle class neighborhood played cards and drank during the day. *Madmen* – if you've watched *Madmen* – captured that era very nicely. So that was the kind of life I grew up in. It was not happy.

HAGGERTY: But she was kind of a positive role model for you?

REMICK: No, she was not. No. She was unhappy and she shared her misery with others.

HAGGERTY: And what is your family life like now?

REMICK: Very different. I actually just had my 50th wedding anniversary. I married at 21, which at time was old. I have a daughter who is 47, I think, and married late and has children who are six and eight. Her life has been very, very different.

[0:05:51.9]

HAGGERTY: When did you know that you wanted to teach the idea of feminism and kind of spread that?

REMICK: I am of my generation, which is that nothing I did was planned, if I may say that. So very briefly, I did after high school go to college and I didn't know what to major in and was trying to choose between Home Economics and Physics and I think that contrast rather tells about my life. I mean, there were always pushes and pulls, but women weren't really welcome in the Sciences and I dropped out of that. I decided to major in Physics. It was not socially acceptable and I was interested in social interactions, so that was not happy. I then dropped out of college before completing my degree, married, put my husband through his last year of college – which is just what women were supposed to do then. My mother in high school had said, "You had better learn to type. You never know when you might have to support yourself." So lower class mothers said "Learn to type," upper class said, "Become a teacher." You never knew when you might have to support yourself and those were the two options.

So I dropped out of college, worked as a secretary, had a child. And then my husband finished his BA and then finished a Master's and when he was to go on to his Doctorate we moved to Davis and I finished my Bachelor's at that point. So it was a nine-year Bachelor's degree; a lot of units, too, because I had several

majors. But I then finished my degree in Psychology because I had a small child and that was of interest. Then I went to see my advisor and said, “My husband is going to be here a few more years, do you have either a lab tech job or a Master’s program?” And he said, “No, but we have a PhD program. Why don't you sign up for that, apply to that?” And I said, “Oh, well, why not?” And so I did, and that was my career planning to get into Psychology: none. I focused on Developmental Psych, which was appropriate with a two-year-old who grew up, went from two to five while I was at graduate school. And during that time experienced— feminism was in the air and when you are in a department with all male faculty who don't treat women graduate students and the like very nicely, then it helps foster the idea that this is something to do.

I then had a faculty position for two years at a school that was also very hostile and I quit. I cold-dropped a faculty position and decided that I needed to find out what was wrong and how I could make things better. So I that point I went from being someone who, for example, taught Psych of Sex Differences which was feminism by what was applied then. Well, it was really gender, sexuality just like the department is called now but all of those things played in to how I was seeing developmental psych or psychology in general. And I had two years of kind of wondering around but it ended with working at the Women's Center at Davis. So I was actually the Research Director for the Women’s Center at Davis. And then in ’75 saw an ad for a job up here, and since I was from Seattle—it was Director of Affirmative Action for women. And I applied and the rest is history.

So at that juncture I became one of the lucky few who got paid to be a feminist. Most people don't get to do that, but my career here I like to characterize that way. I was paid to do the kind of feminist work that other people mostly have to do as volunteer or in other ways. It was gorgeous, it was wonderful.

[0:10:44.0]

HAGGERTY: So you were working at the Women's Center here, were you teaching as well?

REMICK: I worked at— Director of Affirmative Action was an administrator position, rather. There was no women center in '75. I taught as a lecturer two times in the School of Education. I taught something on women and higher education, but I was not primarily a teaching— that was not what I did. I was an administrator – policy wonk on feminist—and on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, disability, those were the things I got paid to work on.

[0:11:36.5]

HAGGERTY: And did you help start the Women's Center here?

REMICK: Well, yes. I'm the mother of the Women's Center. When I came here there were several important committees. Seattle in general was a hotbed of feminist activities, much more so then many other parts of the country.

HAGGERTY: Do you know why that is? Just more progressive?

REMICK: More progressive, and I think also because at that point the big issues were women's issues, issues around race, and Seattle had a small population of people of color, vocal and important. There was a relatively large Asian community – always has been – the African-American community then was fairly large in a small way, if I can say that. There been activism in there but the race issues did not overwhelm gender issues. And in many other parts of the country the issues of race were so important that issues of gender were overlooked. It's just a political reality. And they interact, of course, in various ways in various places, but in terms of laws around women's stuff Wisconsin was another place that was fairly active – again, outside of Milwaukee, with a low minority population. So it just varied, I think it was complex.

HAGGERTY: So you saw a reason to create a women's center here?

REMICK: Ah, back to the question that you actually asked me. There were committees on campus that were working on gender issues, on race issues, and one that worked on both. And every year they would have annual reports and the reports would say, "We should have a women's center." And then—I frankly can't tell you why, one day I got asked in by my boss who said, "Start a women's center." So I developed the plans for it and it reported to me, and I did the hiring for it. I was also arguing for it as well. At that point, in the Women's Movement there were a lot of issues that were very important and there weren't very many places for women to go to get information. Seattle was far better than most places—

HAGGERTY: What year was this?

REMICK: '75, '77.

HAGGERTY: OK. So still at the beginning?

REMICK: Yes. At that period of time when I got here there already was something called the Rape Crisis Center, which was one of the few in the country that was some place you could call if you had been raped. There was a sexual assault center out of Harborview with a woman – Lucy Berliner, I think is her name, marvelous person who was working with the police on making it possible for women to safely report and to get good treatment from Harborview and the like. The University YWCA, I think, were running the rape counseling and a Lesbian Center and a Women in the Trade, so there were very active community groups that had started working on many of these issues.

So to have a women's center… Nonetheless, even with all of that, students tended to look inwards. So they were coming to the Affirmative Action Office, to the

Women Studies Office, looking for sometimes abortion referrals or other kinds of things. So Women Studies and my office were not purely functioning in the administrative ways that one might expect. Women Studies was an academic program plus. Just has the Ethnic Studies programs were doing more than just that too. One of my arguments for a Women's Center was that that would be the place where activism could take place, and take some pressure off of the other, so that Women Studies could develop fully into an academic program. And my administrative program could focus on what I was supposed to be doing. But frankly, I wasn't sure who would come. There were enough other community supports, you know, we would open a Women's Center and what would happen? It was very successful and has been. There been only three directors since '78 and each one contributed differently in a very marvelous way.

[0:16:28.9]

HAGGERTY: Are there some umbrella things that you really work on and then it goes down from there? What are the things that the Women's Center really focused on, especially in the beginning?

REMICK: In each iteration of the Women's Center—the first director was a historian, she was A.B.D. in History so at that point… The larger picture here, and the reason for Women Studies being here, the academy as a whole had overlooked women. So whether it was that they never saw women writers as important enough to study in a Literature program, they did not see woman as important in History, they did not see women as suitable subjects in Psychology. Wherever you looked there had been no need to really look for women. And in part, then, that was because they didn't allow women into the academy; they didn't hire them as assistant professors; they didn't necessarily let them into graduate school, so the interest could not evolve. The Health Sciences were the same way. The topics that they thought were interesting did not include women.

And you asked me a question that I missed, I remember. What was the first person doing? So Judy Hodgson was the first director of the Women's Center, a historian. One of her first projects was a statewide conference on women in history. And there was a woman whose name does escape me from WSU who was very important nationally and especially in the Northwest in looking at history issues. But immediately there were groups for recently divorced women. "Who was a good feminist counselor?" "Can you tell me who I should ask about an abortion?" Domestic violence issues came up, they always do.

So this center had a number of things that just really always happen in a women's center. And I knew some of this because at Davis at the women's center that's what happened. One woman came in to see me about academic counseling, she said. And then as the discussion went on it turned out that she thought that she might be pregnant and though she was a Baptist— I said, "Maybe you should be talking with someone religious." "No that won't tell me the answer I want. You help me, I've come here specifically." But I thought I was going to be doing academic counseling. That's just very typical of a women's center.

[0:19:15.6]

HAGGERTY: So who would you say was on campus during that time? Was it a lot of younger woman or was it quite a range or who were—

REMICK: Who were coming in to the Women's Center, or just interested?

HAGGERTY: Yeah. And the students on campus – were there a lot of women at that time on campus?

REMICK: Yeah. At the undergraduate level probably it was less than half, it wasn't as many as now but probably 47, 48% – somewhere around in there. And the age range is broad. Around that time one of the phenomena that showed up in a lot of different

ways were a lot of women who had quit college, got married and their husbands left them, for example. One of the programs that we started here was a re-entry program. There was, in fact, when I came a separate office that was called Displaced Homemakers was working on programs designed for older women – like thirty or fifty [years old] – who had thought in the old model that they would marry and live happily ever after and didn't and so there they were without college degrees. Often around that time there was less— alimony was payment by husbands, that was replaced by programs, there was federal grant program on Displaced Homemakers to help with the cost to set up these programs to help this women so their ex-husbands would not have to continue paying them. It was a senator from California – divorced his wife, didn't want to pay her anything, and it's at that point he sponsored the Displaced Homemaker Program.

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[Audio interruption: 0:21:21.9]

[Video: IMG_0757.mov]

At the same time that this was happening – that younger women were becoming interested in feminism – so were the women who were already here. So there were women in their twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, on campus. So the employees, the women in employment, many of whom were under-employed were interested in feminism too. "Why am I, with my Master's degree in English, acting as program assistant for the English professors? I am smart enough. I could be writing these papers, but you wouldn't let me into the program." So it was that level, from clerical work on up with women saying, "This is not OK. This is not OK. We need to be changing something."

So the women's centers designed programs for the needs of the women that were there, counseling always shows up, these referral services always show up. It doesn't matter what the center thinks it's going to do, a lot of the needs show up. Sexual assault always is one, and then there are all the legal issues that you have to work out with if you report it – and the law as evolved over time with that – but

at that point if someone comes in and says, “I've just been raped.” What can you do with that information? What do you have to do with it? So over this whole time span we've been working on issues like that.

The second director of the center was Angela Ginorio. And she went into the Women in Math but as a psychologist added some focus there, so these people would put on programs depending on their interests. And Sutapa Basu is the director and has been for over—I don't know, fifteen/twenty years maybe now. And her interest is in international sex trade and it’s a more international approach. So each director has laid her interest on top of this basic core group of services that are needed.

Early on, I think Judy probably started it—One of the areas of interest were women who were transferring from community colleges, so the Women's Center would go out to the community colleges to encourage the women to transfer here. And these women might need a lunch group on dealing with divorce because they could afford a community college, coming here was a big step for them. They were older; they weren't sure how they would fit in with nineteen to twenty-two-year-olds; they had kids; “How do you work school and family?” etcetera. Lesbian groups, “How do I come out? What do I do?” These things, that's just what happens in women's centers.

[0:24:38.8]

HAGGERTY: And what was the general feeling that you got from people around about the Women’s Center and about this ‘feminism’ and this rising of women?

REMICK: There was, for many of the men there was just bafflement, “What is happening?” When I was at Davis I did a little bit of work and it ended up with one of the meetings with a dean saying, “My wife is mad at me and won’t talk to me. What did I do!?” And I think that explains a lot of what was going on. I had

conversations like that here too. I chose— my way of bringing social change is one of being nice to people, pushing but staying on a nice social plane with them. I'm off your question a little bit, but I think an important point—I liked there being radical groups around because that allowed me to come in and move policy in big ways sometimes by saying, "Yeah, look at those folks. Look at them; they are raising hell about this. And, yeah, they are way out there but you know, we could really make some changes in here that I think would make it better for everyone. And we can move a lot in this direction while that's going on over there" In my role I was able to gain trust of some of the administrators so that they would in fact listen to what I had to say.

In 1977, again, I get a phone call—groups had been saying, "We need something on sexual harassment." And I drafted the first policy and helped pick the person who was the first ombudsman and worked closely with her and worked out what the policy should say and how we should be able to do this. And we were able to do those things by having more radical groups saying, "We need these changes." And me having gotten the trust to be able to say, "Let's do this. But let's do it this way, and we'll watch for that and we'll see how it evolves and let's go this way." And that is one of the ways to make social change. I loved what I was doing for the ability create social change to those kind of processes.

[0:27:32.2]

HAGGERTY: Did you feel that you had to be careful saying 'feminist,' or "This is a feminist—"

REMICK: I don't know. No, my identity was pretty clear. That's what I was doing but there are of derogatory qualifiers to go with feminist and I tried not to be that but I definitely pushed on all the issues. And by being nice about it I was able to get, I think, more done.

Also, my first boss here, I was the age of his daughter…So they often talk about mentoring of sons, someone taking someone— the daughter relationship was a little different, but nonetheless…his daughters were also talking to him. It was an interesting time. And they couldn't quite deal with their wives. They didn't want their wives to be feminists but…

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I started this job at thirty so…

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[Video: IMG_0758.mov]

I started working here at thirty or thirty-one, these guys were in their fifties and sixties, most of the administrators. So I was less threatening in that sense than when their wives were doing something, like the dean. And I had a provost here once when I was talking who just said, "What do you women want?" Which is I think the Freud question. Freud asked that question at some point too. They really were baffled. They really were baffled, and so it was finding a way—and again their daughters— family size was dropping and so they were investing a little more in their daughters, and maybe they had only daughters. And that was part of the social change that they wanted more for their daughters, but not always. I'll give you—well, you wanted to keep me to half an hour...

[0:29:55.5]

HAGGERTY: We are coming right about up to it, so if you have any good stories or anything that you really want to get out.

REMICK: About Women Studies I started making notes, I have them right here. I was involved with Women Studies because of my job I was on the advisory committee. So the points I would make about Women Studies, I would like to make these. We played out in the Women Studies program all of the tensions, both with the outside and the internal tensions of the Feminist Movement. There wasn't "A Feminist Movement," there were all kinds of things going on, all kinds of

ways of being a feminist and they all played out here in our – I believe they were Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5:00 or 3:30 to 7:00 when they started really rolling sometimes.

After talking to you the first time, just really thinking about what all that was…For example, towards the rest of campus the issues were getting women hired in departments; why were there so few women as faculty; how do you get women in to graduate school. Some of that was policy issues from what I was doing but that issue remained there.

Women Studies started the way that Ethnic Studies started, the way that Disability Studies started, where you have a few people – existing faculty members – who volunteer some time towards that area because they think it's so important and then someone gets hired. But it's always the volunteerism, then you get some part-time faculty and they are coming from an activist point of view, that's why they are interested. So the tension then goes with the activism, here is a state institution, you are trying to be academic at one point, at the same time the people who first come in are looking at it as, "Well, I'm going to change the institution and revolutionize the institution from inside," which is very difficult to do. And at the same time there are other people saying, "There is academic subject matter here, it is important that should be included in the curriculum, not just as activism but as an intellectual pursuit."

So when Sue-Ellen came here, one of her first jobs was to establish that there was something to study. Many of the men on campus didn't think... "Well, why do you need Women Studies? What's—There's nothing interesting there, there is no scholarly work, what would you study?" So you had that – and that was going on nationally – establishing what it is you study when you study in Women's Studies. If you are a historian of women's issues, what do you do? If you are a psychologist, how can that possibly influence what you are doing? I use

psychology always as the example. And Sue-Ellen said, “I'm going to come in, I want a major, I want a field here.” Well it had to be developed, and there wasn't a lot of research done. So part of it became doing the research here and nationally to have the subject matter to say that this is what we are studying. It wasn't there; women were systematically left out of study so how could you possibly have an academic field?

And then within Women Studies were the separatists, the integrationists, the Trotskyists – the Radical Women was a Trotsky group. I had to do reading up on Trotsky, which was you come in to existing groups bringing them the word and they would see that the word is more important then what they thought they were doing and that's what the goal who would be. So you had people who were saying, “Oh. Women Studies, this is our way to the University.” They were interested in women's issues but from the perspective of we are going to take over here.

Sue-Ellen was trying to— at that point there was in all feminism some discussion of which parts of the patriarchy we should ignore, that we should not be part of because that's male driven and bad and how can set up better means of interacting, better means of running an organization? So we'll have an advisory committee, not like a faculty committee where there weren’t any—there was only one or two or three faculty members – so bring in people from the community, staff, students, everybody coming together to make collective decisions about how Women Studies should run. And you can't do that; you cannot run a collective in a larger bureaucracy. And so she was in constant conflict so our meeting would go over and over, round and round with the tensions of finding out…

My goal, and I loved it – I just have to tell you I loved all of it, I found it fascinating and I participated strongly – but my end goal was having a field, a large field because it encompassed many: History, Biology, everything – but to

have it have an academic presence. I believed and believe there was subject matter there, it had to be developed. I had tried as teacher to integrate that into my work. So how do we have as and end goal a program that is stable, that continues funding, that grows, that has real academic credibility in programs? Some of our arguments: should someone with a BA be teaching Psych of Women? And my answer was, "No. You lose credibility. You have no credibility at all with the rest of campus if you have someone who is teaching at that level." First they had some courses on lesbianism. "Should you have someone with no college credential—" or whatever it was "—teaching about lesbianism?" which was really then teaching about political action. And there was a woman in town – and I can't remember her name – who had a PhD and then she was teaching about lesbianism as an academic subject. And then she was having student rebellions who were saying, "No. What we want is activism, not intellectual endeavors," so there were those kinds of tensions in the classes as well. But we just kept working at it.

Nancy Kenney was a very important hire: PhD in Psychology, taught Psychology of Women, built curriculum as to what that meant. It's a rigorous course. So that had to happen from my perspective as well. The alternative – which I see the administration do frequently – if it's political and you feel you are under pressure, you need to do something but not very much, you just starve it and you just kind of leave it over here so it never has many resources and it can't get its act together. So you don't cut it, just let it fail by not getting its act together, not being academic enough in an academic environment. My read – and I hope my contribution was supporting Sue-Ellen in looking to make this an academic program that fully functioned – not that we all didn't care about activism and weren't doing things in our own ways – but Women Studies had to have substance. And once it started getting substance it started growing; it got lots of students. The students were interested but it had to offer something, and it had to be acceptable at some level to the Dean in order to keep its support there. So those were some of the tensions that were fun.

[0:38:53.9]

HAGGERTY: And it really shows today that we are coming up on the 45th anniversity and it's still thriving so much.

REMICK: Yeah and the first was just getting a BA. Sue-Ellen had boxes in her office. We were on the other floor – when you talk to me about early Women Studies I immediately went back to the other space. We would have meetings and in the conference room there were the boxes that Sue-Ellen was putting together material to get that degree. And it took several years, and it was hard work for her, putting together everything of substance. But how can you have a degree if you don't have any subject matter? So then you had to have people in different fields putting together material, creating new material, mining the material that was already there in order to say, "There is something to teach here. This is not just getting together and doing consciousness-raising and talking to one and other about how bad men are." [inaudible: 0:39:57.7] those kinds of things. "This is substance, there is something here to think about, something here to do." And about that time journals were starting to evolve, *Signs* was one of them. And then within each field there were committees in the professional field that were developing and taking on various issues and raising hell, so at all levels. And then the men would go home and their wives would tell them to straighten up and take out the garbage— not just take out the garbage but take care of the kids or whatever it was. There was a lot of … It was an uncertain time.

[0:40:48.5]

HAGGERTY: We can do this as maybe our closing, but was your husband pretty supportive through all this?

REMICK: Um, yes, given that his world was turned upside down too. He was known, on many occasion – more than one occasion – to say, "I'm not the enemy," when I

would come home and rail. But he is non-traditional in his roles. Had I married someone who was— My husband is a writer so for me to be the main wage-earner which I was for almost all of our relationship, and still staying together, I was able to develop in ways that had he had a traditional relationship to work, I would not have been. I did not know any women who remained married to men who were fully involved in work when they themselves wanted to develop work as well. Didn't happen, it was just too hard. So a lot of things— it was a lot of time of a lot of evolution, at the personal as well as the public. The revolution went on at many, many levels. And he took my daughter to school and picked her up and did a lot of the supportive stuff that allowed me to do what I did. Other women I know who have remained married where in those kind of relationships. It's been interesting. (laughs)

HAGGERTY: So many good stories.

REMICK: Yes.

HAGGERTY: Well thank you.

REMICK: You are welcome, I'm glad you asked me.

[End: IMG_0758.mov]