

Feminist Oral Histories of the University of Washington

Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies,  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA

MARIE DOMAN

Interviewed by  
Victoria Chan

25 April 2019  
Room B 110 J, Padelford Hall, University of Washington  
Seattle, Washington

**Narrator**

Marie Doman is an active donor of the Women Studies and Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies department. She was born in 1944 in Seattle, Washington. She earned her bachelor's degree in English at the University of Washington and works at the University of Washington Medical Center in oral pathology. After getting her bachelor's she volunteered at an organization called New Beginnings and currently works as a volunteer ESL teacher at North Seattle College.

**Interviewer**

Victoria Chan

**Abstract**

In this in-depth oral history Marie Doman shares her educational background, her journey through university, how she discovered her current job and how she became a donor with the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies Program. She also goes in detail of her other works in feminism and how we can get more people interested in GWSS.

Interview recorded by VICTORIA CHAN using GoPro Hero6 Black and Olympus WS-331M & WS-510M.

**Files:**

Audio: Marie Doman Oral History Interview Recording.wma (36 minutes, 51 seconds)

Video: 22. Marie Doman Oral History Video [1 of 4].mp4 (5 minutes, 3 seconds)

22. Marie Doman Oral History Video [2 of 4].mp4 (11 minutes, 17 seconds)

22. Marie Doman Oral History Video [3 of 4].mp4 (11 minutes, 17 seconds)

22. Marie Doman Oral History Video [4 of 4].mp4 (7 minutes, 18 seconds)

**Transcript**

Transcribed by Victoria Chan, April 2019.

**NOTE:**

The video files have a gap in the oral history interview. The video stopped recording halfway through the interview and this document is transcribed from video file.

**Technical or other Notes:**

Timecodes relate to the video file. There were also a few video interruptions throughout the oral history interview.

Audio quality in video recording is poor. Audio quality in audio is okay.

[Audio: 22. Marie Doman Oral History Video [1 of 4]].mp4

[0:00:00]

INTERVIEWER: Okay. My name is Victoria Chan and I will be interviewing Ms. Marie Doman. If we can start, could you please state your name and how you're affiliated with the Gender Studies Program here at UW.

NARRATOR: My name is Marie Doman and I'm a long-term donor, used to be Women's Studies, now Gender Women Sexuality Studies. So, it's a long donation association.

[0:00:39]

VICTORIA: Okay, I'll ask some genetic questions; like when were you born and where?

MARIE: Born here in Seattle, 1944, so I just turned 75.

[0:00:57]

VICTORIA: Oh, congratulations! Could you tell me more about your family and the area that you grew up in?

MARIE: I grew up just between Burien and Des Moines, I guess its own city now. Normandy Park, but when I was born, it wasn't incorporated it was like country. My dad worked at Boeing during the Second World War and my mother had been a nurse. They had been married in Port Angeles and had my older brother in Port Angeles and when the war broke out, they moved over to Seattle so my dad could work at Boeing. My mother stopped nursing at that point, actively. And then '44 just when the war ended, I was born! Basically, that's it hahaha. So, I went to school out in South End and Highline high school and Burien was my high school.

[0:02:02]

VICTORIA: Okay, um could you tell me more about your household today?

MARIE: Um, I'm single now. Divorced... me and two cats. That's it haha.

[0:02:18]

VICTORIA: What are your cats' names?

MARIE: Well, I have a boy and a girl. They are brother and sister; the girl is Edna May and her brother is Oliver. Which is named after an old actress, I think she was British; Edna May Oliver. But actually, Edna came up because I had an older friend who was a veterinarian and she died. It seemed appropriate to name my next cat after Edna, because she was a veterinarian.

[0:02:58]

VICTORIA: I know you already kind of answered this, but could you tell me about your high school experience and your university education.

MARIE: Okay, well, high school, in the early 60s... unless you were in the really popular group it wasn't all much fun. I mean it was really sort of eyuem. So, there wasn't really so much going on in high school. My family wasn't... they weren't really tuned into the idea of going into college and so that wasn't really, sort of, pushed. But I had no idea what I was going to do when I grow up. We didn't have counselors that actually counseled people in high school. We would have a career day and the girls got to do things like; be a secretary or a nurse, or a teacher... or a stewardess. But I couldn't be a stewardess because I wore glasses hahaha. So, girls' careers were not exactly thrilling, and I had no idea what I was going to do anyway. Course you were expected to get married, so fortunately Highline Community College had just opened right around the time I was graduating, and they didn't have their own campus yet, but they shared a new high school campus. So, I spent the first year at Highline Community and then joined a friend up at Skagit Valley Community College. I spent a couple of quarters at Western Washington because I still haven't figured out what to do and my dad said, "well this is all very interesting but what can you do with it?" Hahaha and so, I said "gee dad nothing". So, it brought a stop to that.

NEW AUDIO: [Audio: Marie Doman Oral History Interview Recording [FULL]].wma  
[0:05:11]

Then, so they agreed to pay for vocational school, which was the 'Dabney School of Doctor Assisting'. It was a little four-month program that ran out of the YMCA downtown and it taught you how to be a doctor's assistant (which is basically being a little office person). Then, so the Dabney School was thrilled because I was the first graduate that had got placed at the Mason clinic doing urine analysis. I was sort of thrilled because I had a job, but then it became perfectly clear that they were hiring people off the street to be urine analysts. So, I didn't really need the Dabney School, but when I was there, I discovered there was such a thing as lab work called 'histology' and 'cytology'. Histology is tissue work and cytology are doing smears, [though] histology seemed more interesting. So, I got into that program at Harborview.

VICTORIA: Oh, sorry

MARIE: Is it not doing its thing?

VICTORIA: I don't know what happened, but it stopped recording....

NEW VIDEO: [Audio: 22. Marie Doman Oral History Video [2 of 4]].mp4

INTERUPTION: video stopped recording

[0:00:00]

MARIE: So, I had graduated from the Skagit Valley Community and then gotten into Western. So, I had a couple of years of college before I got into the training for being a histo-tech. Histo-tech is sort of the lower levels of being a med-tech, cause it didn't require having a college degree; med-tech you needed to have at least a bachelor's degree, so I didn't have that it was fine. I got of the year's internship in being a histo-tech and my first job, and only job, was here at the University [of Washington] in the department of oral biology in the dental school. So, I'm a retiree after thirty years in oral pathology. There weren't too many of us that actually stick around for thirty years. But while I was early on working

here at the U, I'd also been married and got divorced in '71. From then on it was sort of like, I was feeling like I wanted to go back to school then and at that time, if you were an employee you could take a class for free.

VICTORIA: Wow, that's so cool.

MARIE: Which yes, actually was cool hahaha. So, I would take a class at lunchtime and unfortunately, I kept changing majors (I had three majors). I finally decided I was just setting myself up to fail because I would always get to the point where we would be moving up to junior level or something and then I would drop out again. But I finally got started up again in taking English classes, reading literature. The first time in college it seemed like the attitude in literature was all about the symbolism and the professor knew what the symbolism was, and you had to figure it out. I figured, sfwsh, I haven't got a chance. When I got into it the second time around, the attitude had changed, and it was like; everyone comes at literature from their own personal experience and can have their own personal interpretation of it. But you do need to be able to back up your opinion, so that worked. The professors kept saying "you know you're pretty good at this, you know you ought to think about being an English major". I said, "no, no, no, no haha, you know I wasn't going to do that." Then finally I realized that if I took five more classes I would have my degree and so I became an English major and took my five more classes. But I gave myself permission that if it got too hard, or if I didn't like it, then I could just stop like I had before and continue to take classes, because I wanted to take classes. So, I've been taking all the new classes, all the fun stuff and I would have to go back and take... fifteenth century British Literature or something like that. I figured, you know, if I don't like it, I could just stop. But then I'd get through it and I'd do okay. Then I figured the next one can't be any worse than that one so pretty soon there I was; had a degree. In the meantime, I had figured out, [what I was] trying to figure out what I wanted to do. The issue was I was going to be able to retire young, because I started at 23. I left for a short time when I was married and didn't buy back into the retirement system, but I was going to be able to with thirty years in (at 54). So, I was going to need some time, I was going to need something else to fill in the gap in between retiring and social security. So, I needed to be able to collect the retirement benefits right away and I needed to have thirty years in, in order to collect right away. So, I was trying to figure out what to do in the meantime; I finally hit upon teaching English as a second language. But, for that I was going to need a master's degree to work in the community colleges. You can get a certificate and go overseas but by then the folks overseas were sort of getting the idea that; nuh huh, no. We don't want you to send over your dilettantes over here. Just because you can speak English, doesn't mean you can teach it. So, I really figured that I needed the master's degree and about that time, Seattle U had opened a master's program. It seemed more relevant than what the university here [UW] was offering, which was more linguistics. The Seattle U program was more [about] actually teaching refugees and immigrants. If I want to take a master's here at the university, I was going to need a second language of my own, which I did not have. So, that was a big block and Seattle U didn't require that, that was a good thing for me.

[0:07:11]

VICTORIA: Where did you teach?

MARIE: Oh, I still volunteer up at North Seattle College.

[0:07:22]

VICTORIA: Oh, very cool! I guess you kind of already answered that, but were you involved in any activities while in school?

MARIE: No, cause I was working. I mean it took me 11 years just to get through the program, because I would keep stopped and changing majors and stuff. I was working full time, so I wasn't really involved in university activities or anything.

[0:07:57]

VICTORIA: Okay. Did you have any courses that you took, either here at UW or at the Seattle U, that were the most influential to you?

MARIE: Well the folks here have heard this before, the best teacher here in the English department was Carolyn Allen. It wasn't grad level or anything, it was lower level undergraduate courses and we had 50 people in the class. Somehow, I don't know how, and I never really did figure it out, she was able to make almost everybody in the class comfortable enough to discuss whatever it was we were reading. All the while make it a safe space. The books that we were reading generally had a pretty feminist bent to them and would bring up controversial issues. She just made it work and how she got us to talk, I don't know. It always seemed like a third of the people wouldn't talk at all, a third would talk occasionally and the other third would be the ones that generally participated in the discussion in class. She was able to get more people talking and feeling comfortable about doing that. And I would always just sit back there and ask; my god how would you do that? That was just spectacular. So... she was good ahaha.

[0:09:53]

VICTORIA: You kind of already answered my next question, what professors were also influential to you but, we can go to the next one. How did you get involved in Women's Studies?

MARIE: Well, I started out first... my mom died in 1986 and she had been a nurse, but she hadn't been practicing. But it was really, really important to her and she had always kept up her license. So, when she died, I got a small inheritance and I wanted to start something that would honor her and honor her nursing career. So, first I asked the nursing school about how to set up something. They obviously didn't understand where I was coming from with this; "you know for 20,000 dollars you can endow a chair". I said; well no, that wasn't quite what I had in mind. What I had in mind was a small scholarship for a returning student, who had maybe been out in the world working like I had and wanted to finish the registered nurse (RN) degree.

NEW VIDEO: [Audio: 22. Marie Doman Oral History Video [3 of 4]].mp4

[0:00:00]

So, that sort of stopped me in my tracks for a moment and then it occurred to me that I should call the women's information center and Angela Ginorio was in charge of the women's information center at that point. I said; how do I set up a little, not a very big one but a little one, and I still have control over it, a little scholarship for a returning nursing student? She hesitated for a moment and said "wait a moment, you want to give us the money? You're not asking for the money?" I said "no, no, I want to give it to you". So, she said "oh, oh well we can [definitely] work with you on that." So, I went in and talked to her and set up an annual 500-dollar scholarship. But people who were interested in it had to have an interview, had to write an essay about what they were going to do with it and what they were doing before, why

nursing was important to them. So, it went on for a few years, probably more, five or six at least. Then Angela was going to move over here to Women's Studies and at that point the powers at the women's information center just sort of dropped the ball on the scholarship and I think it was probably a little difficult to administer and they had other things on their minds. So, they hadn't gotten back to me about, who the applicants were. I talked to Angela about that she said "well, you might as well just come over to Women's Studies with me". I didn't feel like I wanted to shift the whole thing, so I split it, the women's information center still got 250 and came over here and gave 250 to Women's Studies. Then we had a discussion about what we wanted to do with it and what I wanted to support. We kicked around a few ideas and I don't remember a lot but then they came up with the idea of a teaching award. At that point, they had just started their PhD program. There had been a PhD program in oral biology but that never got off the ground. I mean it did, but it never got anything. The thing that was impressive here was this tiny, tiny department, they started this PhD program and bam! Right out of the blocks there were people finishing up and getting their degree, which was fabulous. So, the idea was that the award, the committees would nominate somebody that had been doing student teaching (which is apart of the curriculum, teaching classes). They would design the class, teach it, get reviews from the students and from your advisors. Due to my checkered past of taking classes, I had some really excellent professors and some others who were just... excuse me. More often it was just some poor soul to just finished up a PhD, had never had to teach anything, got dumped in a class and [was told] to go teach this. You would think; oh, that poor person. They just would shove them in with no preparation and Women's Studies was not doing that. They were giving them experience in the classroom and advice on how to go about that, how to create their classes and curriculum. It was spectacular. I said it was absolutely fabulous, let's do that. So, we started the Doman Teaching Award, which always embarrasses me a little bit. We've been doing it ever since.

VICTORIA: I think they renamed it the 'Marie Doman Award of Excellence in Teaching'.

MARIE: Then the women's information center finally and completely dropped doing the nursing award. We did that for a long, long time but I finally never heard anything more about it (in terms of applicants). So, I decided that the 250 that went to them, gets to go to Women's Studies and gives them a raise.

[0:06:12]

VICTORIA: Alright, you kind of answered like practically all my questions, which is great! If you can remember or recall what GWSS department was like before you started donating and what it grew into after?

MARIE: It was tiny. They had two or three faculty; they had a fair number of undergraduate students, but the graduate department was still pretty small. I think the first person to finish a PhD was the only one that year and it's grown ever since. When I first started, they didn't have the PhD program, but they did have a master's, but it was still pretty small. Most of the students were ad junked from other departments like, psychology, sociology and whatever other history out there. They would come in as an ad-junked student. They weren't necessarily getting their final degree in Women's Studies they'd get it in their home department, but they could still get the Marie Doman Excellence in Teaching, dadadadada award. It just continued to grow and get more and more impressive every year, so of course why would I want to pull out my support? They just keep getting wonderful and wonderful.

[0:08:22]

VICTORIA: Okay, we're going to branch to questions on feminism. Are you involved in any other feminism work, other than donating to GWSS?

MARIE: I've always felt a bit like an imposter, because the second feminist wave sort of started in the 70s and it always seemed like you needed to be a bit more rabid about it (and I'm not rabid) and I was sort of just there. I'm definitely a feminist but I'm not a real drum beater. For a while, I was volunteering with New Beginnings, which is the shelter for abused women and their children. There is an immediate shelter where women can stay for a month, until they can find other housing and some other way to be safe. There was an apartment building where women and children can stay for like 18 months until they can get into housing. So, I went through their training program, which was like 6 weeks, and then used to volunteer with transitional housing, teaching ESL (or if they didn't need ESL just whatever else they were doing). So, I got to know a number of the women and of course the training was fascinating. That tends to focus you on some huge issues are for women whose status is not considered very important or valued. They spend lot of time getting hurt and protecting their children. Generally, the women I was working with were refugees or immigrants, whose language skills were not particularly high.

NEW VIDEO: [Audio: 22. Marie Doman Oral History Video [4 of 4]].mp4

[0:00:00]

Of course, they didn't have the coping skills, they didn't have the language and they were being dominated by their husbands, boyfriends or pimps and just really didn't have a clue on what their rights might be. So, the one thing that I was comfortable with and capable of doing was helping them with some English skills while they were in the transitional housing. With some of the women, I was able to get them comfortable enough of being out in the world, that they were able to come up to North Seattle College and take the regular classes. I was able to get them to the point that they were able to be in the class and able to get enough of a clue that they weren't just sitting there, being completely overwhelmed by the classroom experience as well as everything else in their lives. That was valuable for me, and I hope that was valuable for them as well. That was probably the only major feminist thing that I did.

[0:01:15]

VICTORIA: Okay, we're almost out of time and I wanted to go with these few final questions; what do you see as impressing feminist issues today?

MARIE: Oh god, so many impressing issues to choose from. Being able to take control of our own sexuality for one thing, when you have an administration like the one, we have now, that is hellbent on taking away any right to reproductive health... that's just huge. Just sexuality in general but mainly women's health, women's sexuality, women's right to decide what happens to their own bodies. It is wonderful, the group is obviously too large, but it's absolutely wonderful that at least half or more that the people that want to run for the democratic nomination are women or women of color. That's just spectacular. So, getting more women in politics in local, national, state, whatever and getting the voices out there and making them heard. That is absolutely prime.

[0:03:01]

VICTORIA: Alright, and our last question; how do we get more young people and donors involved in GWSS and feminism?



MARIE: I think GWSS is already doing it. They started doing this, at least once a quarter, they have a speaker come (there's been two now) and give a forum or salon. The invitation goes out pretty wide, as long as they keep getting invitations going out further and further, beyond anybody associated with GWSS would be helpful. There's a limit to what you can do, limited resources and limited time. I think the undergraduate program that they have; making sure that so many students throughout the university know what Women's Studies is and making sure that the information is put out there. People would say early on in the game; 'so what can you do with a degree in women's studies'? Well, you can do anything you damn well please. It's just remarkable the range of areas of interest that people in Women's Studies have and where they all come from.

[0:04:39]

INTERRUPTION: interviewer had allergy attack

MARIE: Bless you. When you see a list of the PhD candidates who have finished their program and gone out into the world to get an actual job, the range of their jobs (and they all get fantastic, important and powerful jobs). It's like, where else would you want to be? So, just making the department visible across campus and across the community. They did [an American Sabor festival with Michelle Habell-Pallen]. She did [the American Sabor festival] at the music museum with Hispanic and Latino music. Big events like that and that association with GWSS really helps get the word out in the community. Soon after that whole festival thing, there was one other PhD student and she had a band and she got like music awards, Grammys. It's a deal.