INTERVIEW: Marcia Federbush
INTERVIEWER: Sarah Arvey
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[TAPE 1]

Interviewer: Okay and so Marcia you live in Ann Arbor?

M. Federbush: Yes. Down below stadium off Packard.

Interviewer: Okay, so Marcia the first set of questions is basically to get some biographical information from you so that we know something about your personal biography and what led you to your activism and the feminist movement. If you could tell me first where you were born, when, and a little bit about your family upbringing.

M. Federbush: I probably will have to mention something about religious orientation. I was born in Newark, New Jersey, May 25, 1934. I was second to an older brother and the fact that it was Jewish family, even though I'm totally un-religious, makes an impact on my life, because a first-born Jewish sons are apt to be treated like kings. So, I always felt things weren't fair and I kind of think and because I was younger, too, I remember crying my eyes out because my mother had a friend with two daughters and one of them was older than I, and I remember, "It's not fair she's older." You know one was younger but there was some feeling about the unfairness about the way younger kids are treated. And incidentally, I have two granddaughters now and I see how easy it is to say, "Well gee, I gave the older one this toy a couple years ago, I don't have to get it again." It's harder. You think, "Well maybe they have hand me downs," and as a kid, maybe you resent some of that, but anyway.

Interviewer: Did you grow up in New Jersey?

M. Federbush: I grew up in Newark; lived there till I got married at twenty-two. So, I guess basically I lived there till twenty-two. I went — I commuted to New York University. My first semester at college was at Drew University in New Jersey and I lived away. But my parents said something like, "If you didn't want to live away so much then we would let you live away; but because you want to live away you're going to have to go to NYU," to which I commuted by train and bus. And I had scholarships all the way, so it didn't cost them very much.

Interviewer: What were the economic circumstances of your family like?

M. Federbush: Well, you know, a lot of very poor families don't let their kids feel poor. We

always felt poor even though my mother and father both had two years of college. My mother was a schoolteacher for first, second, and third grades in probably what was considered the poorest school in the city of Newark, but she was considered a great teacher. My father was a pharmacist.

But one of the things that I appreciate so much about my mother — and I don't appreciate her as much as I should probably — she died when I was twenty and I didn't get a chance to say I'm sorry for all kinds of things. But she taught first, second, and third grade and probably a hundred percent of her students were African American and very poor and she loved teaching them. But what was so interesting is that sometimes we'd be walking downtown and she'd see a thirteen or fourteen year old — say a male with a changed voice — and she'd ask "Aren't you Jeffrey Smith?" and he'd say, "Yeah, yeah, who are you?" And she'd say, "I was your first grade teacher." And it's not easy to recognize older people, teenagers, from the way they looked when they were little, but she remembered every one of her students. And I — and apparently it's not supposed to be age — a ninety-three year-old teacher of mine that I went back to visit after my 50th high school reunion, said, "How are Jason and Laurel (my two children) and how about your darling Japanese grandchildren, and what about your brother Richard?" And I said — she likes us when we talk to her to call her by her first name — "Marie, how do you do it? I can't remember the ends of my sentences," and she said, "It's not age, it's attitude." So I try to say that as the words go flying away. "It's attitude," but anyway I forget. I can't recognize people at all - names, faces, voices — it's very difficult.

Interviewer: **Did you, you said that you got married when you were twenty-two but yet you pursued a college education, did you get married and then pursue the education then?**

M. Federbush: I graduated from NYU at twenty-one. I got a scholarship in, oh heck, it was psychology but it was the scientific part, I can't think of the word for it — you know you tested people for their memory of nonsense syllables and things like that. Experimental psychology. And then I got married and my former husband Paul was always a genius. We went to kindergarten together to fifth grade and he changed schools and he went to a different junior high school so he skipped half a year. You could do that in the big cities; you could graduate in February as I did. But, he then in high school was a half-year ahead of me, and he went to MIT and he was very very bright. Probably because he was Jewish, he didn't get into Princeton undergrad. They weren't accepting. But graduate school he went to Princeton. Ethos was changing, and Princeton was a good sixty miles from NYU and it was an expensive train ride. And as a good feminist I did what most or many women did — we felt that it was our obligation to put our husbands through school. Even though he had a fellowship, then on an emergency basis I taught elementary school in a city outside Princeton.

Later when I was about twenty-five, I got a violent strep and I was in my ninth month of pregnancy. I lost the baby and I had been teaching in Massachusetts by then. Paul was an assistant professor at the time and he went — as a physicist he had wonderful opportunities in the summer and he had a summer — it was a job where many professors were there and they all were teaching. He went to the University of Wisconsin for the summer and we had this beautiful apartment. It wasn't a beautiful apartment, but it was on one of the Great Lakes of Wisconsin, and after I was so sick — I had something like 109.2 fever (it was 107.2 under my arm) — I was in a coma for a while so it took a while to come back to life and he just, when we went to Wisconsin, again as a good feminist I would follow my former husband around. He enrolled me in field zoology which was a wonderful thing and I came back to life and I learned all about the lives of just every kind of species of invertebrates, well not every species, but I really dug into it and learned the names of so many things, and then when we went back to Massachusetts I was looking for a place to be a special student, and it was very difficult — for one thing I was married. And in Massachusetts, schools didn't accept married women. I think maybe they thought they would teach the young women about sex or something or other. So, but I did get accepted into Brandeis, but I had learned animals, you know, the differences between each species or each genus, and all that wasn't considered science in Massachusetts. So I did get into Brandeis but it was a very biological way of thinking. So, I kept taking courses after that.

Interviewer: **So you were —**

M. Federbush: Oh, I also got a Masters in education at Rutgers somewhere along the way after I was married, then I taught school.

Interviewer: **I'm going to work on your mike. I'm hearing some funny little sounds.**

M. Federbush: And I'm real — I don't always do it but I realize I'm going from —

Interviewer: **Oh that's fine it's making sense.**

M. Federbush: I'm supposed to have ADHD or something. That's what they tell me on committees I'm on. It's from the way I talk.

Interviewer: **I wanted to get back, you were talking about your education but also going back to your family life — do you think there was anything that might have influenced you towards your feminist activism?**

M. Federbush: Well, I was a tremendous tomboy and I wanted to do whatever my brother could do and now he was a great pianist — well he was three years older than I am — and even now he's a doctor, a psychiatrist, but he's still a great

pianist and plays on the side. Incidentally, this was a — our Jewish father who wasn't religious said something that was — Oh maybe I've been doing…

Interviewer: **That's okay, you just started.**

M. Federbush: Marvin wanted to be a pianist in the worst way but my father said — he wanted him to be a doctor so badly cause first born Jewish sons had to be doctors pretty much — He said, "You can be a pianist and a doctor on the side." So Marvin went to medical school and didn't like it but anyway but it was — I just sort of assumed the values they placed on him ought to be placed on me too, and now my father said what parents said then, "Don't let any of the boys know that you are smarter than they are. You have to play dumb all the time." My mother was a teacher. I don't remember her feelings on the subject, but there was a real feeling that girls had to get married and have plural children and there were no other aims for them. In fact my father, after my mother died when I was twenty, my father's two sisters were acting as surrogate mothers, and by then I was gonna marry Paul and I remember us sitting in my aunt's beautiful living room, and they were trying to figure out how could they make Paul's mother think I was good enough for him. She felt she really didn't want [him] to get married because then he wouldn't get a Nobel Prize. He really is incredibility smart and lots of his people we knew, his friends got Nobel Prizes, and usually he followed suit but he didn't in this case. But they were trying to think what would make me worthwhile enough for him, and the only thing they could think of when they called my mother-in-law, future mother-in-law, was "Well, her mother looked very young when she died at forty-eight. So, Marcia is going to look young." And it turns out I don't think I look very young. But that was my value. I don't play jazz anywhere near as well as my brother did, but I was a reasonably good pianist and he was valuable to me, and I use it sometimes, like every Thursday I play the piano for a senior day care center. And I'm a good rhymer, so I'm asked a lot to sing funny songs at events. And I just had to sing one that wasn't funny. I'm not asked so much anymore. At the June teenth celebration, which is the date that African Americans in Texas slaves were liberated, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation. So, I made up a song about that and just sang it last Saturday. But Marvin, my brother, used to play tunes, "I've been working on the railroad," you know just folk eastern songs and he would play them up there and he would make me play the chords and I guess that's what got me to play by ear. But girls didn't play in bands then. So I'm sort of amazed at all these wonderful women who turned out to be great jazz pianists. Maybe they played in bands or just had this natural instinct. I don't know. I'm pretty good at just accompanying people singing and things like that. Go on.

Interviewer: **So you felt you were undervalued by your family you're saying so perhaps so you're saying perhaps led you to…**

M. Federbush: Feeling that things were unfair. Now I don't know if I felt undervalued. I felt unvalued. I kind of grew up feeling, I guess I deserved it, I suppose. People used to criticize me all the time for saying "I'm sorry, I'm sorry" all the time and it was probably very annoying because I didn't feel good enough and I was quite a perfectionist. So, I come in handy. I can do a lot of things pretty well, but I'm not a great self-disciplinarian. I was a big tomboy and I could throw as far as any of the boys on my block 'til I was thirteen at least, but I didn't keep at it. And I have friends who can ride bikes — women not quite my age but within ten years or so — for fifty miles. I get bored or tired doing exercise after three minutes or less which is kind of funny because it always meant a lot to me to be strong you know but I can. So, I was a good athlete. I can hand print well. I am pretty much ambidextrous, I write with my left hand though. I eat left handed and cut righty — the European style. When I taught I was good at making up plays. I guess I'm kind of creative and I've made up a whole bunch of feminist songs. I have a tape that I'll probably give you, "Songs Your Father Wouldn't Want to Hear, Especially Your Holy Father." But I never made the second tape and I have this huge bunch that I could do it with being how my voice gets lower and lower. I can't hold my breath very long. But when Alma Wheeler died, who was Mayor Wheeler's wife, they were great doers in the African American community, her daughters, Alma Wheeler Smith and Judge Nancy Francis, and then she has another judge daughter in Chicago — they asked me to accompany a singer whom I had accompanied, who had a glorious voice singing spirituals, Tiana Marquez, so they asked me at the last minute, "Would you accompany her singing songs at the memorial service?" So, we had to quickly get together. So, I come in handy because I can do a lot of things — I'm good at printing invitations. I make them very funny.

Interviewer: When you were attending all these different educational programs at Brandeis and at MIT with Paul, did you also have your children at that time?

M. Federbush: When I was so sick that time when I was twenty-five, I lost my first child in my ninth month and they thought I was going to be sterile, because they thought the high fever might have killed the cortex of my ovaries. It may have killed some of the cortex of my kidneys, but I happened to have the world's great kidney specialist in Boston. So I didn't have my first child until I was thirty and my second one when I was thirty-one; they are seventeen months apart. But I never could figure out exactly what kind of career I wanted with my life and somewhere…let's see Jason was born in 1964 and the Vietnam War was starting and we lived in Cambridge, but before very long when he was maybe a year and a half or two I guess he must have been two, two and a half, we moved to Ann Arbor.

And I.F. Stone was very influential. He would put out this four page

incredible news sheet every week, and he kind of predicted what was coming and I and a bunch of other people gave radio programs on this coming Vietnam War and things like that, and at some point I thought that I was getting more and more involved in what people are going through, people in terrible conditions. African Americans in this country.

I remember going to Hill Auditorium and seeing Van Cliburn — and this was somewhere when the Vietnam War was really rising and our own welfare mothers were being arrested for wanting more money and there were all kind of upheavals — and it felt as though it was wrong for these three thousand people to be sitting there just enjoying music, and I remember walking out in the middle of the concert. I felt I guess I've got to try to do useful things. And somewhere around 1967 or '8 maybe '69, I don't know, women in the area were trying to form a women's commission in the county and there were a couple of women there who were very incensed that their kids couldn't eat lunch in school. They were both students and the schools, Ann Arbor schools, said that in order for a woman, a mother, to leave her children at school at lunch time for a price, a babysitting price, they would have to have "highly unusual circumstances," and that included going to school or having a job, and these mothers wanted to change that. And I wasn't particularly interested in school lunch, at the time my kids were preschool, but they begged me — I don't know, I might have had a reputation for something or other, so I joined with them and as I said I'm sort of creative so we put up on supermarkets petitions, "Would you like school lunch?" And we got thousands of signatures and when the school board heard that they thought there must be thousands of people on this committee. There were two or three of us, I think, and because we were housewives and had husbands who made some money, I mean not much, at the time, well, Paul — my former husband — he probably was an assistant professor, we could call places. We called every school system we could think of in the area that had a lunch program. We called also some southern states that had been feeding kids for years and found out what kind of lunch programs they had: did they make it themselves, was it made it one school and delivered to other schools, did they use this airplane type — that I miss so much — on airplanes, you know, the trays yes, yes how much did it cost, who was eligible to eat how much, you know?

Just we found out everything we could and we made a paper for each of these school systems and we had so many of them that we took a role of shelving paper and pasted all of these things on the shelving paper and then we made an appointment with Scott Westerman who was superintendent of the schools then and rolled it out across his table and his desk and everything else and he stood there with his mouth open and I asked him, "Don't people come to you asking, demanding change all the time. He said, "Yes, but they don't solve the problem for us." And so that must have been a big hint for me: if you want to get something done, work on the solutions. See nowadays it's not as

much fun or it's less constructive because everyone's working and when you're on a group that wants to solve a problem they say, "Well, the school system is full of paid professionals. We can present the problem, let them solve it. And that's not too satisfying to me. And I think I sit on too many committees that have that philosophy and so we don't do the legwork so much; but after we

Interviewer: **I have a question about the school lunches. Do you consider that activism feminism?**

M. Federbush: Well, since it started from a group — I hadn't thought of it until today — it started from a group that was trying to get a women's commission, which was then considered feminist, and it was started by women who were incensed — I think I said that word before — that they couldn't leave their kids. They had to come home for lunch and it was difficult for them. So, it was an early stage of feminism. Incidentally we went before the school board then and one of our school board members who had — still has — an interview program every day said, "Well, if you give them lunch, next they'll be wanting clothes for their children who can't afford clothes and beds for kids who don't sleep well." Anyway, and I said, "Well, children in Alabama have been eating school lunch for years," and "Well, this is Ann Arbor, Michigan!" Anyway, but we got it. We got school lunch. But then because I guess my name was in the paper. Oh I had been — well let me see the next thing some graduate students in social work came to me with a problem asking me, "Do you think you could help solve this problem?" In Willow Run, which is the poorest town in Washtenaw County, the adults, many of them are working at very low-income jobs. They can't get food stamps easily because they have to take a day off from work and they have to travel to a bank in Ypsilanti, which is about eleven miles away, and most of these people don't have cars, so they have to ask neighbors if they will drive them to the bank and banks closed at two or three. "So they had to take off from work that day. So I'm sure — I think I'm quite sure it was food stamps, I don't think it was a check. It must have been food stamps." Could you help us think of a way of getting people to have food stamps who have so little money and they can't afford to take off a day from work and pay their neighbors?" So, we suggested loads of things. We suggested having them go to a supermarket which can accept food stamps, but — and they are considered sort of a safe place, so they could give them to people too, sell them to people. But it turned out that the supermarket closest by was robbed twice in a week. So, that didn't work. Then we thought that a community center could do it, but then the officials thought well that wasn't very safe. We thought that one of these safety trucks you know —

Interviewer: **The armored trucks?**

M. Federbush: Yes — could give them. The people in the truck could stand on the back

door, at the back door and give them over the counter. But then one of the banks decided it would build a little substation in Willow Run. So, that got solved. And then people were complaining, and that may have been somewhat feminist because most of the people were women. People complained that their kids who lived in the city couldn't get bused to schools so the kids had to pay for buses if they lived more than a mile from school or so. Whereas the kids who lived in the townships would ride by in buses and they were the rich kids. And then we had loads of township pockets. So, I worked with one of the state senators who asked the Attorney General to review it and I talked to him at a — this was Kelly — at a Democratic…what do they call them, the big meetings that they have?

Interviewer: **Conventions?**

M. Federbush: Convention, thank you, and he said, "Oh, I'll get that passed in no time," but his person who studied the situation turned it down and said no they couldn't have it or something.

Interviewer: **Were you at that time working with other women or some sort of organization or were you doing this on your own?**

M. Federbush: I was very much a loner, so sometimes somebody would come on board with me. But then Erma Henderson in Detroit picked up on it and she said, "We are going to sue the hell out of this state if you don't pay for our kids' transportation to school — our kids all live in the city and it's too expensive. The townships can have busing, why can't we?" And the Congress, State Legislature said, "Yes, kids in the city could have it on a par with kids in townships." So that one didn't exactly work but it led to something that worked and meanwhile I had somehow started writing letters to the paper. That's how I got my ignominy. People were very nice to me; I would get great support. A lot of people, and maybe I was by some people, my former husband was going to say, "She's a crack-pot, don't listen to her." I got well known sort of from writing letters to the paper, that were — every so often I find one — and they were always recommending something. But as a kid, growing up we weren't allowed to be angry, jealous, hateful, so we had to be polite. Politeness was what that was the going word of the day including — and I've heard people discussing this since on television they spend days — what direction are you supposed to put your toilet paper — the paper coming out the top or the bottom? Because it was considered polite to put it out of the bottom, believe it or not. And incidentally, some young people nowadays will hit on this: "You folks have to be too polite in talking," but I guess I was angry but I didn't recognize anger. Whatever it was was very motivating.

Interviewer: **And you turned this anger into something useful?**

M. Federbush: Into something useful. And I remember writing one on every elementary

school should have next to it a children's palace. I think we had been to Europe and again my former husband, a physicist, got all these great summer placements. I sometimes didn't want to go because the wives just had to take care of the kids all day, and a lot of places you went to like Taiwan, you had to walk to market and they had these nylon string bags and Americans always bought too much and they would be so heavy. I would be carrying one kid on my back and one kid on my hip. And I didn't look forward to that; but anyway in Switzerland, which didn't let women vote at the time, for years and years after that they couldn't vote. This was still about 1970 or so, '69, '68 and I wrote that every school should have a children's palace next to it, a childcare place, so that mothers could go to work or go to school and because it would be a part of the school system it would be psychologically sound and all that and then the parent could drop one kid off at the school and the other kid off at the childcare center. And it got a lot of support on that kind of thing.

But then the paper in 1970 — *Ann Arbor News* — had a big centerfold — I tend to say a clean centerfold — showing the house that the home program building for boys built and all of the neighboring mayors, superintendents and school boards, city councils were "oohing" and "ahing" over this wonderful house that this program had built. And the Director of Vocational Education made the comment that I guess changed my life: "Maybe someday the girls can do the interior design." And if there was anything I had wanted to do, it was to build a house. And so I wrote a letter to the paper how, you know, women are responsible for fixing up houses, for knowing what's wrong and all, they ought to be able to build them, then they'd really know how to take care of them, but I don't think I said all that. But I'm sure it was my usual polite anger — and incidentally I used to sign my letters "Marcia Federbush Mrs. Paul Federbush." Now I don't send money to groups that call me Mrs. Paul Federbush, and I'm not, he's not even around in the house anymore — even Mrs. Marcia Federbush, the word 'Mrs.' to me means possession. But so I wrote a strong letter to the paper, and then the president of the League of Women Voters called and said, "You know we were interested in that, too. Would you come with us and meet with the Director of Vocational Education?" And we did and he swore up and down the line of that was just an error. Just really, "We don't segregate, you know. We will make sure the girls are in the program." And then very shortly afterwards they again talked about the home building program for boys. So, I suppose I wrote again and I carried on by myself. The League had seemed to trust him and I looked into all of the vocational programs and I was devastated. Girls couldn't take and I — parents started calling me up — they couldn't take woodwork shop even if the parents said, "My daughter just wants to build a dollhouse that is very much like a regular house," and they said "Oh no, she'd be much better off taking cooking and sewing." And in fact at the time or soon after that in some summer program they had kids building houses with Popsicle sticks or sticks and they were kind of realistic in their building.

I mean the windows had bars underneath and things like that and some parents, mothers, complained, "We don't want our daughters doing that!" Anyway, incidentally, I just helped on the women-built house for Habitat for Humanity and I do think that schools ought to be encouraging their students to help build — high schools, middle schools, any schools. Kids could help do it. They ought to learn how are houses made. Because I haven't been doing a whole lot of exercise, for years — I've worked for habitat houses before. (Cough) I'm sorry. But I've gotten sort of ungainly — I'm not coordinated. I always thought I was this great athlete, but I wasn't particularly good at things I assumed I would be very good at. Anyway, I'll have to keep working out. I've done a whole lot of building in my house until maybe eight or nine years ago, building shelves and desks and things like that.

Interviewer: **So did you kept up this issue of girls in vocational?**

M. Federbush: I kept at it for a very long time. Well vocational — I looked at: the girls couldn't take auto mechanics, they couldn't take metal work, they couldn't take well, any of, oh they couldn't take drafting, and they certainly couldn't take what's the drafting what's that, mechanical drafting but —

Interviewer: **Architectural drawing?**

M. Federbush: Architectural drawing, yes. The school offered it and incidentally in about 1973, well maybe it was about '5, '75, the school district formed a Title IX committee and incidentally I have seniority in all the equity committees since that time by every name they have.

Interviewer: **Can you explain Title IX to me I don't know what…**

M. Federbush: Title IX is the law that recently had a commission picked to see if it should make changes about athletics. It forbids discrimination in publicly funded education, but for everything else the sexes have to both work in partnership and this is true in Title VII, that's the vocational law. You can't have discrimination in employment. And then every other part of education and employment, sexes have to be able to be allowed to work at the same things but in athletics, they can be vastly apart. Even if you separate the squads — and almost all sports now — I'll probably talk about that a little more later — but most women and men like doing, with the exception, in the United States, of field hockey, and that's a men's sport every place else, and synchronized swim. But the first time I wrote with the exception of those two in the paper there was a picture of a young male student on a synchronized swim team and they said that he almost can hold his leg up straight. But I have grave concerns for what the feminists in athletics think of as equal opportunity. It's very much separate; we're separate species just about. Have to do our own thing, and they are cutting out men's things that both sexes

love doing. How can you have a track meet at a coed college without men on it? It's just wrong because they put a lot of money into football. Anyway, but boys couldn't take cooking and sewing but only boys could take the chefs course and bachelor cooking so I went before the board again and again and wrote letters and stuff like that, and they changed, and it was kind of funny because I had mothers calling me saying, "Because of you my son does the dishes now."

Interviewer: **Now did this change just for the Ann Arbor school district? You were working on a local level?**

M. Federbush: It was probably a year or two before it was to happen elsewhere but it caught on, maybe Ann Arbor caught on to others and then because I was working on this and I guess I put notices in the paper that I'd be happy to have people come to meetings to talk about it and people did offer a lot of help. I did the writing part, but people sent me stuff. So, they would send me a picture — I think I might have mentioned it to you before — of the workbook for I guess it was first grade math workbook and then there was a lot of set theory — that was the new math — so they'd have groups so you'd see a group of six female nurses, ten male astronauts, five male doctors, and one women called, "Did you see all those house maids." And they probably were waitresses. I tend to say wait staff or wait staff persons or something they call now people call themselves, "Servers," I think.

So, they also had pictures of the marching band, which was all male. There was one cheerleader and two clarinetists and three trumpets, you know, and cheerleaders of the pictures were all female. And that bothers me about the high school athletic association now. They have competitive cheer but it's all female. Cheering, if they are going to have it, should be males and females cheering for girls and boys. Anyway, so we got that then Rusty Shumacher, I'm trying to remember what's her husband's first name, Shumacher. He up until a few years ago had a jazz program on the FM station at the University. She showed me some pictures from a lot of reading books and every mother wore an apron. When the mother was talking to her kid, she'd be doing dishes in her apron, ironing while her kid was telling her some problem. The girls watched with their eyes wide open as the boys performed. The girls stood and the boys did stuff. Even if they showed boys and girls riding bikes, the boys would be standing riding and leaning forward and the girls would be sitting riding. Or leaning back or riding horses, the boys leaned forward and the girls sat up straight. The girls were always playing with dolls. And I remember there was one that got my goat: this little girl couldn't figure out how to get her wagon down the stairs with her doll in it and so the boys were always the older brothers — laid a couple of boards down and then rode it down. I wanted to beat them up on things like that. And the only jobs I remember seeing in story after story for women were somebody was working in a supermarket, a checkout person, and a teacher.

Interviewer: **Now someone was showing — these weren't necessarily schoolbooks these were just regular - These were schoolbooks…**

M. Federbush: These were schoolbooks.

Interviewer: **All of them school books?**

M. Federbush: Schoolbooks, that's right and the story lines always had women getting married, animals always getting married and having children. It was nice to have children but it was all they did.

Interviewer: **And people were coming to you with these examples?**

M. Federbush: People were coming to me with anger. And then Harriet Powers, who, now I think she still is alive and doing this now she — I saw an ad up a while ago, so I don't know if she is still doing this, in the senior center, asking for seniors to do big athletic things — to go biking across the country, climbing hills, doing things like that. But she said, "You know there was a professional women golfer, a wonderful golfer, and they wouldn't hire her to coach boys in golf and the girls didn't have golf." There were no interscholastic sports for girls until about 1973 when it just began. I guess I wrote something in the paper and there was a woman who was the head of physical education and maybe that included athletics too, I don't know, but she said, "But we don't have any discrimination in athletics — the only discrimination is that boys can't be cheerleaders," and then she said, "Or any discrimination there is, isn't the fault of the schools, it's the Michigan High School Athletic Association." So, incidentally I come on apparently as a ton of bricks sometimes — a tank of a feminist. But this second child-ness: I can spot second children in two seconds and first children very often. Well, let me give you a fast example: when I worked at Equal Employment Opportunity Commission I was in a room, I was the only one there then. I had a desk and a table and there were three other desks and a fellow came in and he was going to be one of my roommates and I said, "Well, pick a desk" "Oh which one would be more convenient for you?" and I said, "Oh, second child." It's this feeling that you have to try to please the older people because second kids so often have been told that they are stupid or been made to feel that they were stupid and second rate. Or if a women says, "Oh I love math," say, "Oh you're a first child or a fifth," because when you're a younger kid sometimes an older kid takes a liking to you and starts teaching you things. But first kids are pretty much shown to be better at competition. They aren't afraid at losing so much. They don't say "What will people think of me quite so much?" They're the physicists, mathematicians, and they tend to be in more aggressive kinds of things. Anyway, I'm trying to remember why I mentioned that.

Interviewer: **Well, we were talking about the Michigan Athletic Association and how they were the ones that made the decisions too.**

M. Federbush: Okay, she gave me like a 1967 handbook and I looked through it with great distress but I just looked sort of casually there was nothing for females, females weren't mentioned. Then I called the Athletic Association and they sent me the 1971-72 handbook and I was absolutely dismayed. They had the list of all the Athletic Champions for twenty years — male. Every committee member was male. Well, I'll tell you in a minute. The word "he" and "him" was always there. Nothing ever said "she" and somewhere along, maybe the director of phys-ed had given me a special booklet of the ten rules governing girls' sports. They had to have a female teacher, couldn't have a male couch. They were supposed to play in — why do I forget that word? — they had game days, play days I think they called them where girls from several schools would be on one team and girls from other schools would be on the other team, and I guess they wore pinnies of different color, and it turned out that, well, they weren't supposed to compete. Competition — as I was told when I went around the state for a long time showing slides and giving talks, and a nurse said, "You know we were taught that competition isn't good for females' internal organs," and I went up before the school board once and I was on television once saying, "Well, I think males should only play in non contact sports because their external organs are so delicate." And it made the guy up front say "What do you mean? They wear these supporters that are very tough," or something like and there was a while and it has carried over. Even now I still read about things where, in order to participate in this activity, the person has to wear a jock strop. So, they make women wear jock strops they were doing that then.

But I highlighted, critiqued this handbook that I had sent away for and I don't know where the handbook went, but I did make a copy of it page by page and it still has all my writings in it. And I was driving down 5th Avenue and the school board met in the basement of the library then and I stopped by the — oh, I heard on the radio they were going to be talking about their annual joining the Michigan High School Athletic Association, and I stopped by just in time and I got on audience participation and I read them things from it. "Over 80,000 boys are members of their schools teams." "The athlete must not bet cheat, grandstand, or abuse his body," and I said, "Better his body than someone else's body." And "The duty of a coach is to be the kind of man he wants the boys under him to become," And so they said we're going to form a committee now. In those days they knew Title IX was going to be coming. The law which has loads and loads of — heck what's it called — rules, regulations. So they knew that was coming and they were beside themselves. They didn't know what to do about it. They didn't know how to get there. So they said, "We're going to put you on a committee," and this committee consisted of a whole bunch of men in the community — some were associated with parks and athletics, and then the head of it was this

woman was the head of the phys-ed director — I wish I could remember — Harney, Elise Harney — and so I had — I told them so many of these things I found wrong and they said, "Why don't you write up a report of the changes that need to be made."

Now some of the changes that I suggested they said, "Oh it's too radical." So, I condescended and I left off some. The thing they [the MHSAA] didn't change — they made all of these at least cosmetic changes, "he or she" "him/her." They put a committee governing girls' gymnastics or something; they at least mentioned girls' gymnastics. It was all-male, but it had a female on it. Things like that. So, they started putting a few women on committees here and there. The Representative Council of the High School Athletic Association was all male. Actually they had had one female who was the athletic director or the assistant athletic director in Detroit because Detroit always had people who said, "We have to put an African American or minority person or a female one." So, for years they had a fellow named Lorenzo Wright on. He was the only African American and it was just about impossible for African American or female to get elected to the Representative Council. The way the voting was at the time was the people who wanted to run would send their resumes to all the school districts of that area.

Interviewer: **Can you hold on for one minute? I'm getting some funny sound.**

M. Federbush: It's not that I'm hitting too much?

Interviewer: **No I don't know what it is. Let's carry on, Marcia, with your talking about this change with the Michigan Athletic, High School Athletic Association.**

M. Federbush: Oh, okay. Incidentally the reason I mentioned before that I come on as a ton of bricks or a tank of a feminist — I tend to scare people and this committee they put me on invited…his last name was Bush. I'm trying to think of his first name, the head or the director of the High School Athletic Association, and I scared the life out of him, but I'm an incredible pushover. I start off strongly but I can be taken advantage of by anybody. Anyway, but I look tough. Oh their voting system is so funny, and women didn't have a chance, so when a women finally decided she was going to run she would do what the men did. She would send her resume and experiences to all the schools in the voting district and they wouldn't give at the voting time, they wouldn't present a slate. That all these people were supposed to remember which people they read about and it gave an awful lot of leeway to, like, the Football Coaches Association, the Men's Basketball Association. They told people who to vote for. So, they hadn't heard of these women. So, they just had an empty thing [ball of]. Now they write out a slate of the candidates, but it was — shouldn't say it was a very male way of doing things somehow. But

Paul, I told you, was very bright, my former husband, and he went to the Advanced Institute in Princeton in 1973 and '74, and as a good feminist again I followed him there. And before I left I begged the woman who was the head of the middle school, the junior high school athletics to start having interscholastic athletics for females and she said she would, but when I came back she still hadn't started. For one thing girls were too scared of playing before crowds and things like that. I begged the woman who was president of the Education Association to pay women's coaches on the same scale. It wasn't exactly a scale; it was sort of arbitrary how much they paid the men. And in fact at one point I worked with a couple of people who were on the Title IX committee, both physical educators, great ones, both with doctoral degrees who were very educational-minded, and they felt that all coaches should receive the same pay, because they all work as hard. They work as hard as the football coaches work in their own sports, but that's not the way it went. But when I got back from Princeton they had made all female coaches get 5% of base pay — that's starting salary — as needed, and the athletic director for girls was going to get her pay also in base pay, 15% of base. Meanwhile the male got 15% of contract. Contract was what he actually made after twenty-five years of teaching; football coach also got 15% of contract and men's basketball. You know, huge differences.

Interviewer: **Marcia, why do you think these issues piqued your interest? Was it the children?**

M. Federbush: Unfairness to females. I really felt that females were getting a raw deal all over the place and they were at the time.

Interviewer: **And you had had your both your girl and your boy and so they were in the same school at this time did you feel as this would affect them education?**

M. Federbush: I guess my thoughts were just for kids in general. Kids and teachers and stuff. I really wasn't thinking of my own family…and as we were waiting for the microphone to improve, [I thought] "I have to tell [the interviewer] about this, this and this," but I had forgotten things by now. But okay we got equal pay for coaches and wherever I went — in Princeton, and I sent away for the pay scales of loads and loads of cities. Any way, you could make the girls' coach get less pay they did. If they had a point system like in Ann Arbor, the male the coach of football got an extra twenty points for coaching on wet and muddy fields, but the field hockey coach who used the same fields, didn't get anything extra for that. Things like that. In 1972, when they first started letting girls play in interscholastic sports, the word was they were going to let men coach girls for the first time, and men in the athletic association said, "Oh good, let's put girls in the wrong seasons. Then we can coach boys in the right season and girls in the wrong season," and just this past year, you may have been there I don't know, there was a big court case in Kalamazoo

brought on by the students and parents [of] volleyball players because they have to play in winter in Michigan and volleyball season in college and in every place else is in the fall. And so in order to get chosen to a college they have to be looked at in their sophomore or junior years. They can't be looked at in their senior year, things like that. Basketball season — everybody knows god made it in winter, but not for girls in Michigan. The High School Athletic Association has been defending it up and down the line. But at the lower court level I think it was actually — what's the review court called, the second court that that reviews —

Interviewer: **Appellate?**

M. Federbush: Yes, appellate court, thank you, came out in favor of same seasons. Girls and boys should have the same advantages and disadvantages, but by now the girls and women coaches have gotten very used to being in their own special season. And if it's so wonderful for girls, why don't boys try it for a while. Things like that. But so they won. I led a vast group — well to me it's vast, about 55 people — signing complaints, Title IX complaint and also a Michigan Civil Rights complaint in 1982 to try to get the same seasons and Patsy Kollen who was this wonderful Ph.D. physical educator in Ann Arbor schools, wrote one with me in '75 arguing that they should play in the same season. People talk about it though, "Oh it's so hard on the facilities," but we're going to be the last state that has girls playing in the wrong seasons.

Interviewer: **I'm going to stop right here Marcia because we have run out of this tape and we're gonna —**

[TAPE 2]

M. Federbush: In 1982, I coordinated this vast group of people, athletes' parents, school board members — in fact a woman on the state board of education was a signatory, the woman who was the boxing commissioner, just loads of people mainly to get girls and boys playing in the same season. Because I thought they should be — I used the word before partners — they should be working as an overall team, and I'm still trying to sell that and Title IX isn't interested in that approach at all. But, I called it an Olympic approach. Actually in '72, I probably gave one of the first talks in the country as a member of a panel, and how do you — this was to the Michigan Association of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation and Dance — didn't have dance at the time. "How would you create equal opportunity in athletics?" It was such a sore subject at the time. Men and women both would be sitting like this with tears welling up in their eyes. I had to say to men at one talk "We're not asking you to fall out of bed, we're asking you to move over." But anyway, but in '82 I led this group mainly on that issue. But, also trying to say that there should be a system of getting women and minorities elected to the Representative Council.

Incidentally after we wrote our report in '72, I guess, on the High School Athletic Associations the handbook, they did get rid of their special ten rules for girls. It may have been '73 by the time it got out. They didn't change the way of electing representatives but they said in case — this became part of the constitution — in case they didn't have enough women and minorities, there could be four selected members. So, for years they selected three women and a minority male. And one year the minority male was a white school board member because school board members were minorities. Incidentally, the case filed in 1982 — Title IX, the federal law, wouldn't deal with it because the High School Athletic Association didn't receive federal funds. Now it was funded by all of these schools getting federal funds, plus parochial schools and private schools, but almost all of them were public schools, and the state ended up after ten years dismissing it because the students who had complained were all graduated already and they stopped having a systemic program in state Civil Rights that would look at the whole program across the state. Incidentally one of the reasons it took ten years — the guy who was handling it said, "This is clearly discriminatory." But, I thought I was being so clever, I filed against the High School Athletic Association and five school districts that followed their rules and one of the school districts was East Grand Rapids, and I thought, "I'm going to cite those school districts that have officers on the association." The president was the East Grand Rapids High School principal and they were so furious at being charged that they wouldn't send answers to the questions.

Interviewer: **So, how was it that you were getting involved? You were filing cases — did you have lawyers that were helping you?**

M. Federbush: I didn't file suits at the time 'cause it would have cost money, and somehow charges seemed reasonable, but you know state agency or federal agency would look into something.

Interviewer: **Were you supported by your husband and children in these?**

M. Federbush: No, my kids — I always sort of felt guilty that, oh gosh, I'm taking time away from them. So I would try to make up to the kids by dragging them to meetings with all their toys. Other people — other women who took their kids with them, like to political meetings where they'd be addressing envelopes, the kids would be so happy, they'd be pasting on labels, but my kids — I guess they sensed that I felt guilty — they didn't exactly let me live it down. And Paul, he never did write that letter to the paper: "Don't listen to her she's a crackpot." You know? But I felt guilty about this and women did then, and I used to ask people, here me the big tyke of a feminist, "How do you manage to go to work? How do you leave your children all day?" Because teaching your own, teaching kids was always a

great priority to me. I taught school, and outside of Princeton I taught at Billerica, Massachusetts. I taught labs at Brandeis, and so teaching, and I see with my grandkids too — you know if you see a tree in Arizona, "See this is a Mesquite tree; see it has these big beans," they like the beans — meanwhile they had a name. Anyway, to speed up a little bit — but that one, the state one got dismissed.

And then in recently in '99, 2000, then these women, these parents and coaches and students from Grand Rapids filed a suit for same seasons. In 1973, I was busy around then. I filed what became the first huge — it was comprehensive — Title IX charge against a major university (it may have been against any university) they gave me some recognition at some point, but this was the first against the University of Michigan because they had zero intercollegiate sports for women. And I remember reading when the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame had in 1993 or '4 an exhibition of women's athletics, they talked about this woman who was an expert rifle, rifle woman, who joined the men's team at the university. But they really didn't allow her to be a real member, so they never counted her score even though her score was wonderful. So, she couldn't get her name.

And then when women as a — well the reason I filed against the university which had nothing and I filed — Title IX's regulation's guidelines hadn't been created yet and I was trying to give them fodder to create guidelines, so I asked about 125 questions. I would describe a problem, like I even covered the inter-dorm volleyball, say, or inter-Greek volleyball, and the booklet for boys, for men said "Let out all your aggression and compete like mad" against the other fraternities. The women's said "Let this be your respite from the cares of the day." Very different philosophy. But they were picking a women's commission at the university, which had men on it, at least one male, the women were always more considerate that way. But their philosophy was one I heard thousands of times: "We don't want to make the same mistakes the men have made — same mistakes the men have made." And I once in fact went before the Regents — the Regents were always very very nice to me. I, for instance, gave a speech — this was a few years later with a couple of other people, but I think mine probably was taken very seriously. Gave the speech to get the first women's scholarships, athletic scholarships at the university and really was treated so nicely by the Regents. I was just pleased, it was nice.

But before that, when women were under the AIAW — Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women — and now they're under NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association], there was a rule if a woman was found to have an athletic scholarship by the athletic director she would be kept from participating in sports for the rest of college life, and all the members of her team would be kept from participating for that year. If she had a scholarship. So anyway, I filed this charge and I did go before the

Regents — what was I going to tell you? They were going to pick a women's commission, "Oh, we don't want to make the same mistakes the men have made," and my feeling was that you are supposed to treating women and men equally. If the men have made so many mistakes, then stop the mistakes the men are making. And I went before the Regents when I wanted to get scholarships for women and I'll have to remember his name later — we had a legendary athletic director at the University of Michigan — as soon as I need a name I can almost see it take wings and fly away. He's the one who wouldn't let women be cheerleaders, and I guess marching band was somebody else's responsibility. But I pleaded with him, "We have to start scholarships for women." "Oh no, scholarships are the worst thing that has ever happened to men's sports," and I told this to the Regents: Fritz Crisler, the guy who Crisler Arena is named after, he said, "Men are bought and sold like so much beef on the hook," and I said to the Regents very angrily "Then women must be bought and sold like so much beef on the hook — or else make it better for both of them." Anyway, women did get scholarships, at first very tiny but it started it — I'm trying to think of the name, the woman who asked me to speak before the Regents on scholarships, why can't I remember her name: Beckett — her daughter was a great golfer who wanted a golf scholarship but they didn't have golf for women. So, she couldn't get a scholarship and she couldn't get a golf scholarship. And incidentally I called Title IX for years 'cause I just didn't like so many of the ways their guidelines were being interpreted like — oh heck, just when I need it I can't think of it. Can you turn it off for a second?

Interviewer: **Sure.**

[Pause]

M. Federbush: They were supposed to have sports in schools that were that accommodated the interests and abilities of both sexes. Now Michigan didn't have golf and I said, "Everybody in the world knows that women play golf. So, it obviously accommodates the interests and abilities of women." But not at Michigan. "They didn't ask for it, they didn't sign something saying, 'We want golf.' " If you leave these kind of choices for something new up to students, they don't know what they deserve and right now I mentioned, with the exception of probably field hockey in the United States and synchronized swim, women and men are participating in just about all the same sports. Women in Minnesota, in Canada, and the east coast schools — including Princeton since we were [at the] Advanced Institute '73, '74 — women have been playing ice hockey. They do it at the Olympics. Women are going to wrestle in the Olympics. In fact in this next Olympics in 2004 they will have women wrestling. And the world champion wrestler is Tricia McNaughton Saunders who's from Ann Arbor — family of wrestlers. When she was eight or nine., she says eight, I thought it was nine, I mean I just read something in the *USA Today* about her. There was this darling

picture in the *Ann Arbor News* of a little red-blonde, shiny haired with two pigtails, very small little girl, walking hand in hand I guess with her father and then there was a picture — okay, she wasn't being allowed to wrestle in an AAU, Amateur Athletic Union, event at Eastern Michigan, which is public accommodation. So, we had to sue, or we had to take it to court then and there. And you saw a picture of this little boy-like profile, and his father had his hands on his shoulders, probably shaking him saying, "Don't you dare let that little girl beat you." Anyway, so they really do the same thing.

Several professional women's football leagues — that hasn't caught on yet. But, it seems to me that certainly with the sports that women and men have traditionally loved or now love, a school should just automatically have it for both sexes. Yes, for now you can have separate squads. I, incidentally, when I used to give workshops, I once had to give a workshop at the University of Michigan in the gym: "How would you create equal opportunity?" And we tried taking all kinds of measurements — height, weight, distance thrown, balance beam, pushups, sit-ups, just all kinds of things, and putting people into quartiles. They wouldn't let me use kids so we had to use gym teachers and coaches and you could tell that a lot of the male gym teachers were frustrated, basketball players. They were absolutely huge. Some of the women were too. But we took all the quartiles and all these measures and added them up and then took their total scores and arranged them into quartiles and we made some teams based on — you had to have four teams to do it for what quartile people were in. And they were perfectly nice teams; now the lowest quartile had mainly the shortest and probably people who didn't do as well or — I don't like to think of this as an ability thing — I like to include it all kids in the school — but you could group students, but you'd probably need four squads. Okay, you could group them some other way but if you had well —

Okay one of the things that I am most pleased that I did this was when I retired — oh, I didn't tell you: from 1978-1993 I worked as an investigator at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. That was more discrimination concern. When I retired in 1993, the man who was coach of the men's gymnastic team at the University — I guess I was a touch of a legend for getting girls to be able to participate early and for being concerned about equal opportunity, not to "We have to make up for all those years so we have to come first." Anyway, he said they were cutting the men's gymnastic team, and I knew that Don Canham — he was the great, the legendary athletic director at Michigan — he'd been wanting to cut men's gymnastics for a long time and he was promising the women we'll have women's crew. We'll cut men's gymnastics and have women's crew. And maybe synchronized swim or maybe they already — no, they were going to make women's crew. Well, anyway he asked me if I could fight for him. Well, I devoted a whole year — spoke before the Regents again and again, always with a great deal of support, but they're not the

ones who make the big decisions in athletics. I finally learned it was the Board in Control of Intercollegiate Athletics. I wrote op-eds to the paper and I spoke to the Board in Control, and my argument was, and this is what I said to the Regents, well, they were going to cut it in the name of gender equity, and I said, "No, in the name of gender equity you have to keep men's gymnastics. Having the sexes work in partnership is an aim of gender equity." That's nobody else's aim. It's not Title IX's aim but it seems to me it should be the aim. So the women and men gymnasts are the sons and daughters of the University and both should be participating as partners proudly as the University's team in gymnastics and then they could get — they could perform at the same meets whenever possible — in fact there is a little while where we got them on the floor at the same time. But anyway, that was a good thing and Michigan State did that but they don't do that anymore, partly because women want their own thing. And yeah okay, they did save the men's gymnastic team. So that's what I liked.

Interviewer: **That's great. Did you — you've mentioned that you've always worked on equal opportunity, so this was another facet of your feminist activism during that time. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?**

M. Federbush: Well, working for the government where an aim is to clear it off your desk as fast as possible isn't always the best experience because I used to take things home, sneak things home, so I would try to get settlements. If I couldn't prove cause then I'd try to see if I could get the company to settle for the person. But it's just the way my head works — I'm supposed to be kind of right-brained, whatever that means, and I wasn't exactly teasing — I was supposed to have ADHD or something, which keeps you doing a lot of things at the same time, sort of. But, I had a hard time, actually, with individual cases, taking care of a hundred at the same time, remembering them. But, I, at some point, I had seniority in the country probably in systemic discrimination and because I was relatively good in math, I mean I could do algebra, I could do percentages — which doesn't sound very complicated, but most people had a very hard time with, including the legal staff in the Washington office.

But in individual harm, people would file a charge and you would try to help them solve it as well as you could if there was discrimination. I tend to be an over-writer. I still am. So, the charges I would write would be very long and I would try so hard to say, "This person really has a problem and it feels like discrimination to the person. Can I prove that there's discrimination in some way?" So, I really worked my damnedest. I didn't produce a whole lot. I'm better working on my own or having somebody suggest something maybe and then doing it then, working in a regular work environment. I was sort of surprised. But I was good, I guess, in systemic, but, you know, the company always wants to come out looking rosy. And Asian Indian engineers came to the Commission and complained about

discrimination in a very important — probably not supposed to say anything now even ten years later. We used to be able to be fined a $1,000 dollars or go to jail for a year if we told. But it was a city thing that needed engineers and chemists, and the Indians were wonderful engineers and chemists. They had Ph.D.s and Masters and professional engineering licenses, and they said, "But we can't get promoted. They'll move us into another building without any desks or telephones when they want to promote their own person," who would be a white person by large. Those kinds of jobs were not particularly the ones that African Americans in Detroit were by and large trying to get. But one of the guys who was considered an expert — the country's expert perhaps — in waste management or something, was moved to another building when a promotion came due. So they put on a farewell dinner for him and I said something like Asian Indians that — he begged me to speak cause they liked me I worked very hard for these folks. There were a bunch of them. I said something like, "Asian Indians have complained to the Commission that they reach a glass ceiling they can't rise above," and the lawyer for the city of Detroit, who was from Washington and he hadn't been at the dinner but someone working for the city, a manager, I guess, told him that I had said that "Asian Indians complained that they had reached a glass ceiling" and that was considered a no-no. I didn't say against that department, but after that, life became very hard for me and I was actually — I retired on disability retirement because I had diabetes flaring up and it was out of control for a long time.

Interviewer: **And that was in 1993?**

M. Federbush: 1993.

Interviewer: **And did you consider your work at the EEOC part of your feminism?**

M. Federbush: I tried, you know, I had felt that way but what was sort of interesting is that people who worked there thought that sex discrimination was stupid. I mean it wasn't real discrimination. Real discrimination was race. So, I wanted to but you're having supervisors breathing down your neck all the time and yell at you and you don't have freedom of thought and creativity as much as I guess I personally need. I guess I began to realize my head works a little differently than some people's do and I almost — in fact when I ran for school board in 1971 — that was after putting out this first — did I tell you that? Yeah, I told you I put out the first study of sex in discrimination. Maybe one of these days I'll give you a copy. What was the last thing I said?

Interviewer: **Well we were talking about making the connections between working for the EEOC…**

M. Federbush: Okay, I ran for school board; now nine sort of progressive people, very

good people, were running against three very conservative people but including the guy who has the radio station, Ted Heusel. I dearly love Ted Heusel but the three conservatives won, and incidentally at that time we had a Human Rights Party, which was some form of a sort of a Socialist party in town. I maybe even signed my name to it at some point, but I left a whole stack of my "Let Them Aspire" — is what the study was called — at the old school board administration building got burned down at some point and when I went before the school board to give a presentation they loved the slides. They had never seen anything. I had copies of course descriptions; incidentally there was one course description that seemed to be written for particularly for minority females to work in cleaning motel rooms. Anyway I ran for school board — oh, oh my stack of "Let Them Aspires" — well the school board said, "Well why didn't you give me a copy of that?" I said I did, I left a huge stack and it's expensive. The people in the Human Rights Party had taken it so they could argue against me at these League of Women Voters meetings and all that.

Anyway, there was a group that was endorsing school board candidates and they didn't endorse me because they said I could do more as an individual on the outside than I could as a school board member. And I was very lucky to be successful. And there came a point in 1978 when a school board member said, "We've heard it all already" — that's when I decided, "Oh boy, I guess I better really think of getting employed," and I wasn't crazy about the problems of employment. I'm sure they are as creative as education, but I had gone — while I was teaching I had gotten a Masters degree in education from Rutgers in elementary summers and weekends. But there was something about teaching that allowed you to use all kinds of creativity and I probably should have kept teaching at some point. I theoretically stopped teaching in Billerica, Massachusetts, because it was six 6th grade classrooms in a old-fashioned wooden school. Three upstairs and three down. And because I knew some science and my former husband had a friend who every week wanted to come to our house — he's considered a great experimentalist — he would bring a little experiment for me to try out, including a piece of fur. I don't think that artificial fur nowadays would do it, but he'd rub a little fluorescent bulb and it would light and "Why is it doing that?" and stuff like that and I knew some myself and they would pile all six classes into one room and I would teach all six grades and some would sit on the floor, two or three in a chair. And one time I turned off all the lights and I had a globe and a ball on a string and a strong flashlight, and I made day and night, seasons and eclipses, and things like that. And one of the teachers — and this was an older teacher, and this was probably in '59 or '60. It was just before I got sick that time. She was a teacher — the war, the Second World War, had been over for a long time. She was a teacher who would keep on ordering the same geography books year after year that showed Germany as a pastoral green place. Anyway she just shouted out "Oh" and then said, "Mrs. Federbush where did you learn

all that science?" And I thought, "God, if I'm considered a genius for being able to make day and night, I guess I ought to try and go into a different field" And that's when we went to Wisconsin and I took — Paul enrolled me in field zoology and I became fantastically interested in invertebrates. And if we could have stayed in Wisconsin where it was respectable not to chop up little teeny invertebrates and take out their enzymes, I probably would have been an invertebrate zoologist. It was funny though.

Oh I wrote — 1974 and '5, I was asked by Scholastic Press to write a book on sexual discrimination in education, and unfortunately it was too long — it was three volumes and that's expensive and they couldn't do it. But my technique in writing about the kinds of discrimination, I sort of had them all one after another. It was sort of the same as keying out an invertebrate: these are a couple of the things that could happen and this is what will happen if you do such and such. They were kind of related to each other. Incidentally in the past five or six years, I'm used to being the most unpublished writer — people have often copied things I had written, smaller things. But I haven't had great success, especially that one — [the] Scholastic Press went out of business. It wasn't called Scholastic Press; now there is a Scholastic Magazine Press, but it was called something else then, but that went out of business and so I never did publish that. Somebody wanted to do it. As soon as she retired she was going to do that as her desktop publishing — the things she was going to do but she never did. I gave her all these things but the last five years I wrote a very again too long book that my daughter finally — she's a very good writer, very terse. She gets and has gotten letters in the *New York Times* letters to the editor, now they allow them to be this long they used to allow them to be this long including the name of the article it was copied from and the date and all that. She writes the *Ann Arbor* — but anyway she was very much involved in the father's rights movement where the fathers were gaining custody of kids and this was even fathers who had been sexually abusive of the kids. The father rights movement, they say, "Oh no, we don't want abusive fathers. They fight for parents." That's almost the way of getting some of the lawyers and psychiatrists to defend the parent. And Richard Gardner, a psychiatrist at Columbia, he just died very recently, was sort of the father of it, and several years ago the University of Michigan had a case of a father who had been called by the Family Assessment Clinic, a pedophile of his own daughter. He sued, said "I'm not a pedophile and never was" and the University paid a million bucks to hire a law firm, and it's kind of wonderful having a lot of money to hire a firm, a big firm because then you have assistants who can read every article and every case by the opposing lawyers.

I wrote a book with — or for — a grandfather in Baltimore whose daughter in Ann Arbor not only lost total custody but total visitation of her two kids when they were four and six till they were eighteen — and now the older

one is past eighteen already, to a judge who only listened to the fathers' rights side. And by now my daughter and I have written op-eds and letters to the editor about the subject and each time we do, people call us and say, "I thought you were describing my case." You can tell the arguments they use — like the mother is considered the sexual abuser if when the kid comes back from visiting the father, she's crying, "I don't ever want to see that man again!" and they see finger marks on her rear and she complains of hurting and they take her to a doctor or hospital and she's [the mother] considered the abuser for bringing too much attention — for having too many people examine the kids. So that's common. Incidentally men go through awful things in custody and in child support, but this isn't nice, good fathers wanting just, "Oh, please I love my children so much, I want custody." It's sort of vengeance for women getting custody for so many years. So one of these days now that my daughter has read all 750 pages or something and has cut out lots of pages, I'll try to get it published.

Interviewer: **...Questions about reflections upon your activism for example what is your definition of feminism? When did you first consider yourself a feminist and what's your definition of feminism?**

M. Federbush: See, I guess it's giving all people, women and men, the full range of possibilities and trainings that will enable them to have those possibilities. People can make fun of women for not being good in football but they didn't teach them to be good in football. And when girls play that powder-puff football, which is the most trivial name in the world, they loved it, but it was for the purpose of making fun of them; so it's just giving everybody — helping everybody achieve potentials. When I wrote about education, I don't know if I thought of this as feministic but it is, it seemed to me the best thing schools could do for students would be to help them identify what they're good at, what their personality is in line with, what it looks as though they have potential for — help them just identify what they could potentially do and then help them figure out a way of making money at it at some point. But it feels to me — it always has — that girls are potentially capable physically of so much more than they have been trained for and I may have been more dogmatic. As I say I don't do much athletic stuff anymore. And I changed my thing in the sink that grinds up the food.

Interviewer: **...the come — yeah it doesn't matter.**

M. Federbush: Three times by myself. But the last time I said, "Oh god, I'm going to forget how to do this." So, I asked somebody else to do it for me, and I feel guilty about things like that because I used to think — see incidentally I always when I was younger, I always wanted to do what the boys did and when I was in elementary and I signed up for printing and they laughed at me. Girls couldn't take printing and woodwork, and they laughed 'cause girls couldn't do that and I always thought, "Unfair unfair unfair." But, I could

have done it. But, when I was at the EEOC one of the things that distressed me: we had a systemic case against a major baking company in Detroit, and the women were in these jobs and the men were in those jobs even though, starting with Reagan basically, they were saying, "We mustn't let women take over men's jobs. Men are losing jobs." Women were — there was sort of a feeling women were supposed to be staying home taking care of their kids. That's when I started wearing slacks all the time because I wanted to get down on the floor and work and paint you know stuff like that. But women were — I'll be fast — women couldn't load the little bread trucks. Bread trucks are sort of like the post office, those trucks, and I said "Why can't women load those trucks? How much does a pallet of bread weigh?" They said, "Seventeen pounds. Women have to go home and feed their husbands and children and do the housework; they shouldn't be having to lift those heavy weights." I said, "My cat weighs seventeen pounds, a baby weighs seventeen pounds." But the women themselves said, "Oh we like standing up and talking to each other while we do our jobs." But now we had a case against a major steel company where the women tried out for jobs and it was such gross sexual harassment including, "We'll hire you if you sleep with the hirer guy," things like that, or men in the cranes up above would pee on the women down below, but in order to qualify they had to pick up a seventy pound chain and these women said, "I'll do it. I want this job and I want this money." The company had never had African Americans in it either and it was just down river in Detroit. And so those women, knowing that they had to do those things, did them, but where the union and the company says, "Oh no, we don't want you to work so hard," the women go along with it.

Interviewer: **Some women have characterized second wave feminism as a bunch of bored housewives and overwhelmingly racist, what do you think of that characterization?**

M. Federbush: Well, you know, I was a long time member of NOW. My cousin Muriel Fox was one of the founders with Betty Friedan. She was — my cousin — was called the number one woman in public relations and things like that. But, they try at the national level to have a very well rounded board, and Jackie Washington, whom I got into the Hall of Fame, the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame, was head of, CEO of the NOW's Legal Defense and Education Fund, but you don't see many African American women in it. She had to form her own pro-choice group with African American women. I hate the thought. I have been extraordinarily involved in the Black community almost since I got here, I think, and I may have mentioned on the tape I'm not sure that I was asked to sing a song for.

Interviewer: **Yes with Alma Wheeler and the yes —**

M. Federbush: Well this was for the —

Interviewer: **Memorial.**

M. Federbush: June teenth, yes, and when I write I make sure just to be very inclusive. Even when I wrote this massive set of books on sex discrimination in education that didn't get published, there was always a combination of sex and race.

Interviewer: **And so it doesn't, to you, resonate, that characterization.**

M. Federbush: Well, in my own life it doesn't. I'm very impatient, though, when I hear women, white women, being elitist. See, NOW had a president at some point locally who had a pureblooded Native American adopted brother. She was very concerned about integration of all kinds, and a friend of mine who's now become a lawyer, African American, and I were picked to be the vice presidents, one of the vice presidents of the group. We worked together. The choice group had about 85 people in it and we went to one of their — the two of us went to one of their meetings, and we begged them, "Please extend yourself. See if you can get some more multiracial, multiethnic participation" and we got these very elitist answers back and "If they want to come they can come!" And the same with affirmative action — people need encouragement when they don't feel welcome. So, I don't like to see it in other people and the people I work with; now I'm very much involved with the Peace Community. Particularly in my head — again I'm not a great joiner of things, the Student Advocacy Center I just got finally and I got Ruth Zweifler the 22-year director, into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame.

Interviewer: **If you had, oh did you want to talk at all about your work with NOW? You were working with NOW on your Title IX stuff correct?**

M. Federbush: I did things on my own. Now and then I've used, where I suspect that some group can give me information or be helpful then I'll thank them and acknowledge them. NOW, in town locally, doesn't meet any more. We used to have regular meetings. Beverly Fish was president and has a Christmas cookie party at the end of summer, has a turkey roast with a put down — where they try to find the person who has said the most outrageously anti-female comment.

Interviewer: **If you were to give advice to the next generation of feminists, what would you say the most outstanding issues are and what advice would you give them and how to confront these and work?**

M. Federbush: Well, as I said when I think of feminism, I think of giving every encouragement and training to help, I'll say women now, I'm not crazy about — I don't like sex separated classes because that says you need

different goals than that group does and the aim of equal opportunity to me means to prevent segregation of the groups you are concerned with. I would like to have them take whatever kind of lessons they need, or to use all of them to use — I was going to say their whole bodies, their whole thinking. Now I…friends of mine make fun of me. I had a friend that became a millionaire during the great decade. She's lost a lot of it but she's ashamed of me because I can't care less about money. I don't understand how it works still after all this time. It seems to have a life of its own. She said, "That's what you always complained that women suffered from," and I guess that's true but now we didn't have training in the management of money. That was something that was out of school. When I was writing this massive set of books I wrote it in two ways — that's why it was so long. One of the ways was across: I took every suggestion that I made in it and I gave it a title and sometimes the titles were cute. A description of the problem, who should solve it, by when, and I did construct what I thought and still think was a very good lifetime skills kind of program for middle school kids, where have a big variety of things but they have to learn something in each. Like they'd have to learn how to fix their bicycles minimally, change tires on cars, just do — now everybody would have to learn how to type — now that's become useful since we have computers, and then typing was just girls who wanted to be secretaries, different kinds of cooking, including chef for everybody, but vegetarian, you know cooking without meat, all kinds of things; but there would be metal work and wood work where you actually did things, and I wanted to give training to teachers. Elementary teachers are by at large good at cooking and sewing when they are female, but I don't know about the newer teachers nowadays. But I got the schools to have a woman who actually — she was a vocational, not vocational — in middle school it's called industrial education — Vocational educators in high school may even get paid more than some others by and large, and this is a reason for saying that all coaches should get equal pay. Teachers by and large no matter what they teach get the same pay, you know they do what they're good at and they do what they love doing. But, she gave some training to elementary teachers in use of tools because you know teachers are very good at helping their kids cook stuff, but making things any kid should be making a little house even in kindergarten. So, I would just like to see people use every part of their bodies as well as possible.

Interviewer: **What do you think were the main achievements of second wave feminism?**

M. Federbush: Well, it's gotten women certainly working and making money. Now they still aren't making as much by and large for the same job and I do get a little thrill when I see some of the women who are heads of major corporations and I get the same thrill when I see minorities being very well respected. So, I guess it's been largely vocational. Well, educationally, girls seem to

take calculus.

Now my daughter-in-law, who was brought up in Japan — and I'm so disappointed that this can happen there — they talk about high school kids there committing suicide because they have to get into college and it's so hard — they have to pass this incredible test, and she'll say she and a couple of friends and her sister whom I know, all hate science and math they say. But now my daughter-in-law is very very good on computers and isn't afraid of all kinds of things. So she may be better than she thinks she is but I'm just surprised to hear people who've gone through it all saying "I hate it."

Now in Russia when I led a group there in '90 to the Soviet Union, and in Poland I understand, girls just automatically take science and math. In Poland, in fact, I don't know if it's true anymore — girls and boys until they are about twelve or thirteen — kids mature earlier now and maybe it's a little younger — the pronoun for them is "it" and they are taught, they say, exactly the same physical skills, they say "muscle building." It used to kill me that for second grade girls the President's Physical Fitness Test, the girls could just hang from a post; the boys would have to do chin-ups. Let them [girls] do chin-ups. So, girls are much less afraid of math and probably of science. Although I must say I read enough that when women get into the world of work and science they tend to be treated as second-rate people and they often drop out and I hate that. They certainly are doctors now. Medical school classes are at least half female; they're lawyers. So vocationally they've come a long way. Oh, I was going to say before when I would — this was like when they said in the bakery company, "Oh they can't do that. They have to go home and take care of their husband." I don't like seeing women let men carry their books, I think, or carry their things. They can carry their things perfectly fine. I don't like seeing people not doing what they are perfectly capable of doing. "Thanks, I can carry it." I don't like to see men exclusively holding doors for women. I think women should hold the door for the person, too, because it carries over into the workplace. It gives them the feeling that "I need special treatment."

Interviewer: **When you think back on second wave feminism do you think that there have been any failures or something you would say was a failure?**

M. Federbush: Well, you know it's funny because I judge, I try not to, what people can do with what I kind of feel I can do now. Now, I know that women are being bodybuilders at seventy and doing all kinds of things. So, I have to keep reminding myself, but I've gotten lazy and so women are being hugely athletic now and people thank me for that — "That is something that you helped design." And I can't do it now so I think there are a couple of groups of women. There are those who are putting their all into doing everything they can do and then it almost feels a little bit as though people are getting

back, like teenagers, to wanting to wear shoes with very high heels and no support in back and not at least not looking as though like they feel like strong people. They are looking again as though they are going to be models. That's not saying anything bad about models but it's Barbie dolls and Barbie dolls are still the great desire of girls. I've seen little girls play with a Barbie doll the way they play with a baby doll and put them to bed and give them a little bottle and stuff like that. I think that's cute. But so there's some tenor in the wind that may be saying, "Remember you're women, you're not men" and maybe at some point I may have felt — I'm not sure if I really felt that. Well, on the average I thought "Well, women could do whatever men could do," but I'm willing to have separate squads because women Olympic people have scores slightly less than men do now but they have scores better than men did fifteen years ago, but I'm willing to say, okay there's an average difference. They made the basketball lighter for women because they weigh less. But women are also nine or eleven percent shorter, I forget, on the average, and it wouldn't kill them to make the baskets instead of ten feet, six inches lower for women and six inches higher for men. So that men don't dunk so easily and women could dunk a little bit more. Now, I go to the women's basketball games at Michigan as much as I can and I've gone to the shock and there is some fun in seeing dunking — half of the audience is male and I'm very proud of that. I think that's wonderful, but men, I think there was a big article in the *Times* I'm not sure, that men watch women more than women are watching women. And they're giving it some kind of hereditary genetic reason, but I'm happy to see men watching women and they say, "I like to see a pure game of basketball." But, you know, women may be saying more now than they did for a while "Oh I'm just a woman I can relax more," and the idea of women staying home and taking care of their kids isn't offensive. I used to want to do that so badly too. But there really have to be more jobs that bring in money while people are staying home — women and men.

[END]