

INTERVIEW: Diana Leventer
INTERVIEWER: Sarah Arvey
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Interviewer: Alright, so Diana we can finally get started.

D. Leventer: Okay.

Interviewer: The first set of questions that we have to ask are about some biographical information, about your childhood and upbringing just to let us know how you became active in the feminist movement in the first place. So, if you could tell us when you were born and where and maybe describe your family upbringing, your economic circumstances, et cetera.

D. Leventer: I'm eighty-one years old. I was born in 1922 in Pittsburgh. I have two brothers. My family upbringing, of course education was emphasized in our home very much but you want me to get right into the feminist?

Interviewer: No no, just start with your family right now. You grew up in Pittsburgh, why was your education so important? Were your parents educated?

D. Leventer: No, they weren't, maybe that's why it was so important. No, they weren't. My mother came from Europe. My father, I think was born in Pittsburgh. But education was important particularly with my father. Although at that time and in those years, it was important that the boys go to college and a girl could wait because that great prince was going to come by in the white charger and grab me up and everything was going to be happily ever after. That was the climate that we grew up in at that time.

Interviewer: And your parents expected this as well?

D. Leventer: Oh yes that's where it came from. Oh sure. Sure and I did go to a college. I went to a business college after high school for one year.

Interviewer: And then, did you have any religious affiliation?

D. Leventer: Any religious affiliation? Yes, I'm Jewish. I consider myself secular, secular Jewish. That means we observe the holidays because there is a dinner that the family can get together with and I'm certainly aware of the cultural advantages of the Jewish religion.

Interviewer: Did you practice when you were growing up?

D. Leventer: Yes, I did under some duress. My mother was very orthodox in her beliefs and

when I say duress, I mean I did go to Hebrew school and I went to Sunday school. And in fact I even taught Sunday school and that was very good. I had some background in that respect.

Interviewer: **Go ahead. And so you went to business school for one year?**

D. Leventer: One year.

Interviewer: **And did you do that in order to get a job?**

D. Leventer: Yeah.

Interviewer: **What kind of job did you get?**

D. Leventer: I worked as a secretary and I think it was then that my feminist thinking began. Although, it wasn't labeled feminism. I was aware that we secretaries would come in on time, get the coffees going, and then the men would come in. I worked in a public relations office for quite a few years. Then the men came in and had their coffee and smoked their cigarettes and shortly after that went out to lunch. And wrote a few reports which we corrected and we even corrected the grammar. They got paid well. I was paid well as a secretary but certainly not in any way, I could only sustain myself on the money that I made and it didn't allow for too much more. And I was aware that there is some discrepancy here because we're doing most of the work and these guys are getting paid and they're fooling around too while they are getting paid. And we're sticking to the job. And I was aware of the inequality and the discrepancies there. That was when I was maybe eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one years old. Something like that. I worked during the years of eighteen until I got married at twenty-four. Then when I got married, we moved to Baltimore. We lived in Baltimore for six years. And I had my family rather quickly. Two children were born in Baltimore and a third child was born here in Detroit when we moved to Detroit. My husband was sent to Korea and —

Interviewer: **What did he do?**

D. Leventer: My husband is a physician. He was sent to Korea. He was in the Korean War in '52. He came back in '53 and he had a nice job offer here in Detroit, which brought us to Detroit.

Interviewer: **Okay so you've been here since 1952?**

D. Leventer: No, I've been here since '53 actually. He came back in '53.

Interviewer: **Okay, so you pinpoint your influence into feminism as originating from your experiences on the job and the job market, not with your family upbringing?**

D. Leventer: Yeah, no not at all. Not at all within my family, quite the contrary as a matter of fact. Because I think the thinking at that time was that boys go to college, girls get married. And you don't have to have any kind of a background or anything you just get married and live happily ever after. You have your family and that was it.

Interviewer: Great. So Diana, did you have a career outside of your home after you had your children?

D. Leventer: No, I did not.

Interviewer: So you...

D. Leventer: No, I did not. I did not and the feminist movement I guess got started in the 60's when I became aware of it. And I was fortunate enough to be able to make the choice to stay home. And my feminist feelings are because I do feel that the feminists address the issues of the homemaker.

Interviewer: In what way?

D. Leventer: Well, my role in NOW and in feminism was when I got started on a credit project committee and I was aware then of the inequities that women are confronted with and particularly the homemaker.

Interviewer: What do you mean credit project?

D. Leventer: I had an experience. You want me to get into that now?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. The next questions are about what lead you into the feminist movement.

D. Leventer: What lead me into the feminist movement?

Interviewer: Yeah.

D. Leventer: Well I started thinking about feminism as I say when I was working in the office and I had a lot of girlfriends that were also working in the office. This was what we did.

Interviewer: Could you move your necklace a little bit? It's rubbing onto the microphone.

D. Leventer: Oh okay, the microphone's all right. A little asymmetrical necklace here. It's okay.

Interviewer: So what lead you into the feminist movement?

D. Leventer: We all knew, the friends I had at that time were all working as stenographers and secretaries and we all knew that this prince charming was going to come by and in many cases he did I guess. But that was it that was the career we were going to have. I had a friend at that time who was twenty-seven and wasn't married and we were beginning to feel sorry for her. But that was the nature of the climate at that time. What got me really interested in the feminist movement was I joined NOW.

Interviewer: What made you join NOW?

D. Leventer: I was a good friend of Joan Israel and also it appealed to me, it was one of the organizations that was addressing the kind of thinking that I had anyway. So, I got into NOW, went to the meetings. And I enjoyed them because they were saying the kinds of things that I liked to hear, because those were the kind of attitudes that I had right along. And here there were other people with the same ideas and the same feelings. So, I felt very much at home. I felt that NOW was addressing what I was thinking. Around that time I had an experience that really pushed me into the ideas of feminism. And that is, this may seem far-fetched or somewhat irrelevant but I had a credit card and at that time they were putting out credit cards with little pictures on them. So, I went in to have a picture put on my credit card. This was Master Charge and they took my picture and I said, "I'd like this in my name" and they said, "Well you can't have it in your name. It has to be in your husband's name." Oh I was to pick it up and they said, "Well you'll have to get the permission of your husband." I said, "No, I don't need the permission of my husband." I was married, about twenty-five years at that time. I said, "Why don't you just put it in my name?" and they said, "We can't do that." And I thought, well I have been paying the bills and I have been paying them on time and in full for twenty years (incomprehensible) — Well, that's exactly what they were telling me. So, I got a little up on my haunches then and I thought I want that card in my name without my husband because I feel I'm entitled to it. If I were working outside my home, doing the same jobs I was doing in my home, I would have an income and I would have a credit rating but doing these jobs in my home meant nothing to the credit industry. So, I devised a theory that I am paid for my work by my husband but I don't have to say by husband. I am paid for my work for doing domestic work. I had to go through a lot. But I did finally get it. I finally get it.

Interviewer: And did you negotiate with the actual bank you were working with?

D. Leventer: Oh yes, oh yes I had a lot of negotiating to do. And I remember telling this story and then I had another experience where I wanted to buy a car. And I decided that this was sort of along the same lines. I wanted to buy a car and I wanted the ability to finance it. Whether I was going to or not is irrelevant, but I wanted the ability to finance it. So I went to a car dealer where we had

purchased a car previously. I walked in. He knew me. He was very cordial and I said, "I would like to buy a car and I want this. I want to finance it in my own name." Well his first question was, "Has anything happened?" And I thought, "Well what do you mean?" "Well are you divorced?" I said, "No, I'm not divorced? Are you divorced?" And it sort of went along like that. I think he got up on his haunches a little bit too and I said, "I just want to buy the car and I want to finance it." He wouldn't do it. Absolutely refused to do it. He refused to finance the car for me. It couldn't be done. He said, "Can you?" I said, "I have an income?" I didn't mention my husband. I said, "I do have an income." He said, "Can you provide an income tax form?" I said, "If you require this of all your applicants, who have a residency requirement and who have an income, I'd be glad to." Well, this didn't suit him. He had called the GMAC and they were sort of trying to figure this one out too. Now, I want you to know my sons who were maybe eighteen years old. They were getting credit cards through the mail that they could have, but I couldn't as a homemaker of twenty-five years at that time get a credit card in my own name. He would not finance the car. So, I walked out of there. Walked across the street with the same story that I wanted to finance a car. I wanted the ability. I wanted the permission to finance a car. They wouldn't do it either. It was the same questions, same thing. They wouldn't do it either. And finally I went to another car dealer and I guess he was more aware, or maybe he was just indifferent, maybe he just wanted the sale because it was a sale. And I'd like the permission to finance the car, said it was perfectly ok, took my name, no husband mentioned. No husband, and he did finance. He did give me the permission to finance the car. I just wanted the permission.

The fact is I was going to pay for the car in cash anyway, but I didn't want them to know that because I wanted to see just what this was all about. I was really very naive about it. And that gave me the push that I really needed and Joan Israel. You never say no to Joan Israel. She said, "You're in charge of credit." I don't even know the terminology that she used and all of a sudden I was in charge of the credit committee. Well, I had a lot of help, a lot of very very good knowledgeable help among the NOW members who came on to my committee and we eventually went to Hudson's, we went to Sears, we went to Michigan Bank. At Hudson's they treated us cordially, but not very — they weren't very encouraging at Hudson's. They said, "Well you know if we remove marital status..." That was the idea to remove marital status as a qualification. They said, "If we remove that, we have a lot of stationary we have to change." And I thought well what stationary has to do with it? I mean this is equal opportunity — they were non-committal. They did not comply with what we requested. We went to Sears and I mean we went to Sears with very very knowledgeable high power. I consider very knowledgeable high power women. They insulted us. We paid two visits there. They ended up insulting us by saying — one of the men had come in from Chicago and they called a meeting and we said, "Yes we'll come right away." We thought they were going to remove this from their form, remove the marital status from their form. So we got there, there were

about ten of us sitting around a table and one of the men said “We knew we weren’t going to do anything before we came here, but we were just giving you the courtesy of coming to this meeting.”

Interviewer: **Oh no.**

D. Leventer: Well, you have women who are charging all kinds of money per hour and they had given up time to come to this meeting. They had said that. And Sears just said, “Well we’re sorry.” So we walked out of there.

Interviewer: **You did. Hold on one second. I think we’re going to have to take your necklace off.**

D. Leventer: Oh ok.

Interviewer: **Or the clasp. Oh there’s the — I got it. Sorry it just keeps banging.**

D. Leventer: Alright.

Interviewer: **And then I’m going to pull your shirt down.**

D. Leventer: Pull my shirt down okay.

Interviewer: **Alright.**

D. Leventer: Alright.

Interviewer: **Okay. I have a question about that. So you were attacking and targeting — you were targeting specific companies as opposed to as maybe broader legislation or policy. Why was this your tactic and what other tactics did you —**

D. Leventer: Alright, we wanted to go to banks, to department stores where they were extending credit. And we wanted them to remove the marital status qualification because we know and there are studies that have been done to show that marital status really has no relevance to your ability and willingness to pay. And this was being done simultaneously by the way in other areas of the country. Martha Griffiths was in Washington at the time and she sent me a telephone book of affidavits of people had recorded for her. Where in order to buy house for instance they would ask the woman what kind of contraception she was using because if she were pregnant obviously they were going to default. And these testimonials read like dime novels, when novels were a dime. Believe me I couldn’t put them down. I was just leafing through this and in total disbelief of what was going on, with in terms of credit for women. Now when I say that that the feminist movement addresses the homemaker, it particularly addressed the homemaker because if a women came in and had a

salary then yes she could buy a car and yes possibly not be able to buy a house as easily, but yes she could get credit cards all over the place. But, if she were a homemaker and was saying that she had money from her husband this was not applicable and I had the same experience at Hudson's when I went in, but oh let me get back to the Sears episode. We walked out of there; they weren't going to do anything. Needless to say all these places did eventually come around and I have a letter here from one of the banks, which I have saved and I should really frame it because it was so significant. You want to hear the letter?

Interviewer: **Yeah I do.**

D. Leventer: And then I'll tell you about Hudson's too. And I do have to have my glasses for this one. But this is addressed to Ms. Diana Leventer: "I am enclosing a copy of our new application, which has been distributed throughout our banks in Michigan. We adopted a number of your suggestions, which show our concerns in remaining a leader in the areas of women and credit. Some of the significant changes resulted in removing all marital status questions. On credit references we ask the applicant to indicate any accounts listed under another name. This will take the spouse's credit history into consideration. On the signature portion, we are utilizing words 'applicant' and 'applicant spouse signature.' We also provide a box for the second card to be issued in the spouse's name. We will keep you advised on any additional changes and we truly appreciate your organization's support." So Hudson's had to change, Sears had to change; every place in the country eventually had to change.

Interviewer: **That's great.**

D. Leventer: Another interesting thing that happened during that time was we — I had a telephone service going where I had women calling me with their experiences, so that we could use these anecdotal instances in our meetings. And one of them said she had gone to a department store and she requested a card and she wrote down her name and then where it said spouse she wrote "irrelevant" and she got the card back in "Mr. and Mrs. Irrelevant Jones." That's a true story. I had gone to Hudson's, I had another experience at Hudson's at that time where I went in and again wanted my own name and the women who waited on me was very indifferent. She said, "What is your occupation?" and I said, "I'm a homemaker" and she said, "Well we never had that before." I said, "Well this may be the first time." And then it's as if a light went on in her. First she told me she wanted to ask me a question. I said, "Well I'll have to call in that answer. I don't [have] the data for that right here." She said, "No, we don't accept any call-ins you'll have to bring it in." I said, "Okay, I'll bring it in." But when the light hit her of what I was doing, it's as if she switched over immediately. She was so excited she said, "You just call in that information that will be perfectly okay and I want to send this up to the administrator and see what happens with this." She was particularly interested and totally on my side. What happened was and I have that document too, she did send it up and that

man called my husband on a private line, which was listed in the phone book. He had called. I had not given him the number. He called that number and asked to speak to my husband telling him that his wife was opening a charge account, did he know about it, and did he approve.

Interviewer: **How did your husband feel about this?**

D. Leventer: Well, he was "Oh sure I know about it. Oh sure it's perfectly okay." I mean yes he was naturally very cooperative. But the idea is Hudson's gave me the card, but it was on their terms at that time. Things have changed and I think things have changed because of this committee. They were changing all over and it was time and one of the members of our committee was one of the authors of the bill.

Interviewer: **What bill is this?**

D. Leventer: I don't know. I don't know what the name — equal opportunity. One of the equal opportunity bills in Lansing. I don't remember the exact name.

Interviewer: **What did it change? What were the —**

D. Leventer: Well, the marital status was not to be a consideration. Marital status was not a consideration. I mean what's the difference in your ability and willingness to pay if you're divorced or if you're separated. How does that affect your ability and willingness to pay for an account? I had a merchant friend who wasn't on my side and he said, "Well, when a women is getting divorced she immediately comes into the store and runs up a charge account." I said, "That may be, but if she had it in her own name for sure she wouldn't do it." And also what you don't know and what is impossible to record is how many women are paying off their deadbeat husband's bills that you don't know about. Probably far more than are coming in and running up charging accounts.

Interviewer: **So, it was the economic injustices and your work on the credit that really made you active in the feminist movement? Were there other organizational roles that you played?**

D. Leventer: Yes, yes. You mean within the feminist or other organizations?

Interviewer: **Either one. Well I'd like to hear about both but within NOW, what roles did you play.**

D. Leventer: Within NOW, yes yes there was a committee called the Michigan Media Project. That was not an offshoot of NOW, but all the members of that committee were members of NOW. And that was to define the older woman. In terms of respect, the things you'd see on television. You'd see these women "Where's the beef?" You know this foolish woman. These foolish women were

in rocking horses who are maybe sixty years old. It was very demeaning to women and we wanted to change that image. We were successful in some instances. We were successful in changing — these things go through honcho after honcho after honcho and you have to get to the top particularly when you are talking about television and they give you a lot of flack but we did have certain things removed from television that were demeaning to women and I think that we made an impact, a small impact, but we did and I don't think you see too many really really ridiculous women. Many voiceovers where they'll have a voiceover of sanitary pads and the voiceover of a male, you know a male voiceover which was an absurdity. There were other instances like that that we found that were very absurd in the treatment of women on television.

Interviewer: **And what tactics did you take to try to convince the media to make these changes?**

D. Leventer: We went to the radio station, to the television stations and said, "We think that you're demeaning to women," and we gave them instances, after instance. We had monitored programs and we were aware of the voiceovers on feminine products, or products of concern to women the voiceovers were men, because that was the final authoritative voiceover, not a woman's voice, and we were aware of the discrimination against women, particularly older women, particularly older women. They were never shown as doctors. They were never shown as real estate people. They were never shown buying cars. We were aware of those discrepancies and tried to bring that to the attention of the television people. Well, locally you can get into it, but when you have national programs we really had to get into it very definitely and we did because some of those programs were embarrassing, where they show women — they show women with one man. They'll show several women with one man and he's to make a choice of his secretary or what would his secretary think of his wife, you know this kind of foolishness was terribly demeaning to women. We've come a long way but we haven't completed it. It's still going on.

Interviewer: **So your activism was both targeting a local level, a level most immediate to you as well as you had a broader vision you could make changes and directly affect national media, national credit, et cetera. How were most of your efforts at a local level and how did you make those connections towards...?**

D. Leventer: Well, you just walk into the channels. You could just walk into the channel stations and say you would like to speak to so and so and they were always very cooperative. They always listened and they always nodded their heads too. And changes came about. Some changes did come about. Locally that's no problem. I mean they will see you. They are interested in viewer comments and viewer attitudes in the same that with the national. There was one that we had taken off. One we had taken off because it was so demeaning and I just don't recall which one it was. We had a big conference too it was an older women's

conference, a Michigan meeting (incomprehensible). It was focusing on the discrepancy of — the age discrepancies, you know if you're twenty you're okay. But if you're fifty you're sort of over the hill to say nothing of sixty, seventy, and eighty. Women who are still vibrant and vital and they aren't in rocking chairs. Far from it.

Interviewer: **You were all fairly young at that time though correct?**

D. Leventer: Well, everything is relative. It's all relative. At eighty-one I still feel young, but I was in my sixties maybe fifties, sixties, seventies. What is young and what is old and what's wrong with old? I think old is great. These are the golden years, let me tell ya, that's another whole subject.

Interviewer: **So, in NOW did you play any other organizational roles?**

D. Leventer: That took a long that was over a long period of time. No, I've always been a member of NOW and I'll be a member of NOW 'til my dying day because I think that what they have done to address the homemaker which is where I am to me is my *raison d'être*. It's the most important thing. One thing happened in NOW that was almost a negative thing that they addressed very quickly. There was a poster that said "Fuck Housework." And I thought, "You know you're offending me. You're offending homemakers with that," and there was quite a heated discussion we had over it, but they got rid of the poster. Because it was offensive. It was offensive for those who chose. If feminism means anything to me is one word that I can sum it up with and that's choice. And if I choose to be a homemaker I want all the credit that's due me and I want the dignity that's due me. It's my profession and it's my calling. I am fortunate enough to be able to make that choice. Many women cannot make that choice and it's not a negative.

Although the non-feminists claimed it's a negative that the feminists have pushed the women out of the home the feminists didn't push the women out of the home. Let's face it. The economy pushed the women out of the home, against their will. Should they want to stay home the feminists would say yes stay home and I have pamphlet, after pamphlet to prove that. That the feminists are not the ones who chased women out of their homes or who demeaned the home, who got rid of that poster. Look the feminist movement is the only movement that addresses domestic violence, equal credit, a lot of them jump on the bandwagon after it's done. But who are the ones who got it? The same ones who got the vote. The suffragists got the vote and the others said "Don't worry your pretty little head, we'll take care of this one," but the feminists did it. Now everyone else says, "Well women got the vote what more do you want to?"

Interviewer: **Did you work along other organizations at the same time? What kind of work did you do?**

Oh yeah. Peace organizations. Many peace organizations. Whatever peace organization there was I was involved with. I also think that the American Civil Liberties Union is one of the greatest organizations there is as far as bringing equality and justice to population.

Interviewer: **And how did you make your connections between the feminist movement and the peace movement and civil liberties?**

D. Leventer: The connections?

Interviewer: **Yeah.**

D. Leventer: Well, I think that feminism is a, is a very fair kind of an organization. It gives you the choice and the dignity that goes with the choices that you make. I think that sums it up. I feel dignified as a homemaker whereas before, well I'm just a homemaker, but I think that with what the feminist movement has addressed in childcare, which they're still working on. I mean these are still big big issues. I don't mean to say that they're solved but who's working on them? It's the feminists.

Interviewer: **What do you think of the characterization that feminist movement was a bunch of bored housewives or what do you say do you think that accurately portrays the movement?**

D. Leventer: No, of course not. No, no indeed. I see what the feminist movement has done. Who worked on the credit committee? Who worked on the older women? It's all feminism. Who got the vote? I mean this has been going on for years. I don't mean to say that we are the pioneers of this. The suffragists were certainly more pioneers than we were and they went possibly through more degradation than we did. But the same forces were at work then trying to discourage the suffragists. Whatever we read or hear about the suffragists they were they were victims of terrible harassment, terrible harassment. Ours is a little bit more subtle, but some of it is still terrible. But, I think that the feminism takes in a lot of things. It takes in gender equality. It takes in, as I say it addresses the glass ceiling. I'm not on the outside, but I'm not worried about who's opening car doors for me. Open up the boardroom doors. Feminists are the only ones concerned about that the others say, "Well I just open up the car doors and I still want men to open up my doors." Well, sure that's nice but that's just courtesy. I believe in courtesy too. I think that's very nice, but open those boardroom doors.

Interviewer: **And by making these connections with civil liberties and the peace, another characterization of second wave feminism movement is that it had racist undertones. That it was basically something that benefited white, middle class women. What do you think about that characterization?**

D. Leventer: Well, I think that black women have a different agenda, which includes feminism, but I think that their agenda is something that we actually cannot totally relate to. It's too overwhelming. When I think about it, I think that's even beyond what I can comprehend and I'm concerned about that too. I know that in some of the progressive organizations that I have belonged to there's always been an outreach program — an outreach attempt to appeal to African Americans and we do get them and we should and we should just continue the outreach, but I think they have a different agenda and it's very important for them to stick to their agendas, too.

Interviewer: Going back to your activism through the 60's through the 80's did you have any people close to you that were opposed to your activism?

D. Leventer: Not people close to me. My whole family are feminists. My sons are feminists. My daughter's an avid feminist and they married feminists. Feminism is the common denominator in my immediate family. We're all feminists. My grand —

[Pause]

Interviewer: Okay, you were saying your family supported you?

D. Leventer: My family, my immediate family supported me, yes. There were members of my extended family who don't know from feminism and this was something I never discussed with some members of my extended family. By this I mean my aunts and uncles. They were not aware of feminism. If you ask them, they'd say, "Oh yes I think women should make equal pay for equal work." I think we're still pretty far away to understand that at all and just to keep peace in the family I never got into it too much. You know how certain issues are, even with family member you don't discuss. My immediate family, my three children, my in-law children, my grandchildren, my husband. I'm very pleased about that. All of my grandchildren, all of my grandchildren are very feminist. I mean what I started to say was my one granddaughter said was, "But everyone in this family is a feminist." So, I was very pleased that she was aware of that. When she was quite young she said that, but everyone in this family is a feminist. So that yeah and my daughter is very active in the feminist movement.

Interviewer: Okay, so they've made it a part of their lives.

D. Leventer: Oh yes, it's definitely a part of their lives. My sons stayed home when their babies were born and shared the work. They wanted to. This was something that was their privilege to do. It was a privilege in that they were able to do it as well. But they did and they were present at the births and they handled it like good feminists.

Interviewer: So, feminism to you is not gender-bound, it can be men and women?

D. Leventer: Absolutely, absolutely. I'm almost livid on that because I think that feminism is not based on genitals. That men can be just as avid feminists and I think they should be considered that way too. And I know many women who are not feminists.

Interviewer: What were your main achievements? What do you consider your main achievements in your activism, personal achievements as well as organizational achievements?

D. Leventer: Well, I'm very proud of what happened in the credit project. I'm very happy about that. There are a lot of other achievements that are not my own, but I'm also very proud of the statements we made concerning the older women and the attitudes that we came across at that time, which I think we had an influence on. And I was very proud of that. As far as anything else about the feminist movement they can almost do no wrong. It's very rare that they come up with anything that I find wrong. I have some reservations and I don't know where I stand with it pertaining to First Amendment, free speech, pornography, that kind of thing. Sometimes I have the instinct — I think pornography is terrible and it should be you know we should censor all that but on the other hand it is First Amendment and I can turn off the television, I can close a book. I don't have to as long as I'm not coerced let it be let it be. That's my final decision about it. But then I think about it and you become enraged at how women are portrayed in pornographic. The other thing about the homemaker is reproductive rights. Who addresses that? Only the feminists. The others take advantage of it but who's really addressing it and who does that affect but the homemaker.

Interviewer: So Diana, did you have fun?

D. Leventer: Pardon me?

Interviewer: Did you have fun?

D. Leventer: I'm still having fun. Oh yes, yes. I'm having fun because of the support. You know the fact is that so many people, now that feminism is out in the open — when I was working as a stenographer there was no word such as feminism. If there was I didn't know it. But I just knew these were my attitude, but when feminism - when I realized what the definition of feminism really is I've always been very excited about it and I like the name Ms., I like to be called Ms. and I can always identify someone who writes to me and they write Mrs. — well, she has to learn something. And I don't use the term Mrs. And I've noticed even on lists, on any kind of list if they have Mr. and Mrs. Joe Jones or something they're not there. Not until they say Mr. John and Ms. Mary Jones have they arrived.

Interviewer: **Reflecting back upon second wave feminism do you think that the press accurately reflected what you did the movements you participated in?**

D. Leventer: No, I do not. No, I do not.

Interviewer: **And did you try to address that? Did that make you angry at the time?**

D. Leventer: In the Michigan Media Project we tried to address various media such as television, radio and the print media. We didn't get too much into the print media, but I think that there are some who do but I don't think, I think it could be so much more. I think that the language has changed. I think that in that respect, I think that where you have his/her and you have Ms. and you have all people addressed by their last name. It used to be that you didn't. I remember that I think that language has changed. I like the idea that we now say Congresswoman, because then a woman knows she has access to Congress. Whereas when it was Congressman that does eliminate the idea that women can be a part of it. The same with chairperson rather than chairmen. I mean all women were chairman. It didn't sound absurd until chairperson. Humankind makes more sense than mankind there are a lot of words like that, that I'm glad have come into the vocabulary.

Interviewer: **Are these symbolic changes?**

D. Leventer: These are very symbolic and very important. I think they are important because then you know that you have access to these things. But the print media has come far in that respect. I appreciate that but I would like to see more. Maybe it's because I would like to see more. I would like to see more issues addressed. Even controversial issues, which are addressed but I would like to see more, such as abortion, reproductive rights, equality the equal pay, childcare, domestic violence, those are issues that the feminists started.

Interviewer: **Do you consider anything a failure a main failure that didn't a project that didn't happen for you during the feminist movement?**

D. Leventer: Yes indeed.

Interviewer: **What's that?**

D. Leventer: The Equal Right Amendment. Yes, that was a terrible blow and I still consider that a terrible injustice that that did not pass. Because a lot of military facts were clouded over, they weren't explained well, you know I have a lot of feelings about that, yeah.

Interviewer: **Do you have any recollections of any outstanding figures you met or people that you especially learned from that were really important to you?**

D. Leventer: Well, people I don't know such as Gloria Steinem. I've been in her presence and this is a woman that I think is an icon. She's an icon for me. Locally, yes the friends that you mentioned that are on this list. These are women that I respect and know many of them and I have tremendous respect and admiration for them because they have stuck their necks out.

Interviewer: What do you see as the outstanding issues for the next generation of feminists?

D. Leventer: Well, one would be an Equal Right Amendment. I think we still have quite a way to go with the glass ceiling, I think that equal pay for equal work is not fully accomplished yet. I think I'm worried about Roe v. Wade. Very worried about that and I will work in that respect too in the next election to make sure we get somebody who will, wherever there are Supreme Court appointees, that we don't get a to throw that Supreme Court off balance. I'm worried about that, so we have to have a regime change here that would be pretty. That is a good start.

Interviewer: That's a good start.

D. Leventer: Yeah that's a good start.

Interviewer: What kind of advice would you give to them the next generation of feminism?

D. Leventer: The next generation? Well I have them in my family, of course, I don't have to advise my daughter because she's as feminist as they come and my sons and my daughters in-law. I mean we speak the same language, absolutely the same language and I have grandchildren who are speaking that language to. What I'd like to see for them is their ability to make choices. Such as the ability to choose to stay home, choose to have children, choose to be married. I want them to have those choices with a feminist — in a feminist background.

Interviewer: Are there any questions you think I might ask the other feminists that I interview?

D. Leventer: Well, you're doing a real good job. I think you've touched all bases because you want to know what we want for them in the future. One time I was at a meeting. It was a feminist meeting of some kind and a woman got up and asked a question that I thought was very pertinent and she said, "I'm an affluent woman. I live in the suburbs. I'm a privileged person. What does the feminist movement have for me?" And I thought that was a thought-provoking question. I think that many movements, the suffragist movement, the feminist movement, the peace movements all have as their leaders this kind of a person, somebody who is affluent somebody who is not necessarily has the time because many affluent have the time and they don't do these things, but they are often in the

forefront of these movements. And I would have answered this woman by saying that.

[Pause]

Interviewer: **Okay Diana, so we'll continue. You said that this affluent woman came up and asked you —**

D. Leventer: I was at a meeting and it was a meeting about feminism and a woman got up to ask a question of the feminist moderators of the meeting and she said, "I'm an affluent woman. I live in the suburbs. What does the feminist movement have to offer me?" and what I would have answered to that is. It is often affluent people who are leaders of progressive movements, very often. Not just because they have the time but because they have the inclination and they do have the where-with-all to do it. That's one thing. But also your concern for your children your daughters, your daughters-in-law, your sons, and other people who are close to you; your nieces and nephews are going to be affected by the feminist movement.

[Phone Ringing]

Interviewer: **One more disturbance, go ahead and —**

[Pause]

D. Leventer: This is what I mean. I am concerned about my children and that's why if I were — well I am the affluent woman in the suburbs and my concern is I want my children to have the benefits of feminism and that's why I would be active.

Interviewer: **That's great that's a wonderful answer. I'm going to take a few still shots of you.**

D. Leventer: Oh.

Interviewer: **And I can do that by just pushing this button so stay where you are.**

D. Leventer: Let me put my necklace. Should I put my necklace back on?

Interviewer: **Oh sure.**

D. Leventer: So that I don't look so...

Interviewer: **And you know we can always...**

D. Leventer: They did change.

Interviewer: I'm glad you read that letter. Okay just sit back and give me a smile. Okay, I think we got another one and that's great.

D. Leventer: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay wonderful. So patient with me.

D. Leventer: Oh well that's part of it.

[END]