INTERVIEW: Jacqueline Steingold
INTERVIEWER: Sarah Arvey
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[TAPE 1]

Interviewer: **Your name is Jacquie Steingold. Jacquie where do you live right now?**

J. Steingold: I live in Detroit. I'm a life long Detroiter.

Interviewer: **You were born in Detroit?**

J. Steingold: Born in Detroit. Live in Detroit. Been in my own home twenty-six years.

Interviewer: **Twenty-six years.**

J. Steingold: Older than you probably.

Interviewer: **Oh gosh no. I'm thirty-three.**

J. Steingold: Okay. Close.

Interviewer: **Okay and I'm gonna fiddle with the microphones a little bit.**

J. Steingold: So, keep talking?

Interviewer: **Yeah keep talking. So do you have children?**

J. Steingold: I have a son twenty-six. He resides in L.A. He's an actor.

[Pause]

Interviewer: **So we're recording now. So, the first few questions are basic biographical ones to get some information. The first one: if you could tell us where and when you were born.**

J. Steingold: I was born in Detroit, Michigan in June of 1942. I have a birthday Monday.

Interviewer: **And could you describe your family upbringing and your economic circumstances throughout your youth?**

J. Steingold: I'm Jewish and I guess I bring this up at this point because my parents came to a totally non-Jewish area of Detroit because my father opened a store. As many Jewish people of that generation with very little education. My father finished

the seventh grade. My mother finished the sixth grade. Being in retail was what you found a lot of Jewish people and my parents didn't drive, so we had to live near where the store was. So, I grew up all of my life here until I went away to college. Away in this house in northwest Detroit where we were the only Jewish family. I was the only Jewish child in my grade school, K-8, and then I went on to high school and there was still very few Jews. It was the feeling of being a minority, but we weren't real observant. So it wasn't like I was an observant Jewish. In fact, I didn't know a lot about my faith and when kids would ask me I couldn't give a lot of answers.

Economic, it's interesting — we lived in a totally blue-collar neighborhood. My neighborhood were people that, not totally, but many worked at Ford Motor Company. My neighborhood were mostly southern whites who had come up from the south especially with the recent 100th anniversary, we'd been hearing a lot about how Henry Ford recruited a lot in the south and white people were steered towards a certain area and it just happened to be where I grew up. Whereas Blacks who came to work at Ford were steered towards the city of Inkster, which developed as a Black community, which many people worked at Ford. So in one sense I was probably among the not higher income. I sometimes wonder if we really had a higher income than blue-collar workers. But owning a business in the community where you live sort of made you think you were sort of more upper middle class. When I went on to high school I certainly found out that wasn't the case. It was more the case in my grade school.

Interviewer: **Was your high school more integrated as far as class?**

J. Steingold: There were no Blacks at my high school.

Interviewer: **Racially, not.**

J. Steingold: I attended high school from '56-'60, there were no African Americans. No Blacks. There was a bit of diversity but it was extremely minimal in terms of Asian and Hispanic.

Interviewer: **Did your family work at the store, your entire family? You said you lived by it and —**

J. Steingold: Well, my parents — I would describe as a mom and pop business. I had two brothers and one sister and we all did work at the store like high school and I was the only one that went to college. But none of my two brothers or my sister wanted to take over the business or be involved with the business, so they my brothers went into the service, my sister ended up leaving Michigan and then my brothers ended up leaving Michigan. So nobody really wanted to be that next generation to own a store that was open nine to nine, six days a week.

Interviewer: **And you stayed in Michigan but you went on to college, can you talk about your education a little bit?**

J. Steingold: Yeah, my parents always hoped everybody would go to college. And college was truly the key to — from them — to becoming more a part of a society and making a contribution and not having to work so hard. Even though the work ethic was installed I think in all of us and I see myself as carrying on the work ethic and I even believe my son has followed that. But I did go to Wayne State. My parents didn't present college like I could go anywhere I wanted, and because no one had gone to college, Wayne State, our city university, made sense for our economic situation and I lived at home for the first three years and then I made a leap into my own apartment on campus which lead to a very different life. But I got my B.A. from Wayne State in sociology and political science; now I would definitely say graduating in 1964 we were not thinking careers. I'm not saying nobody was, but I think a lot of women were not encouraged to think of a career. You got a degree and then it was like well what do I do next? I guess I go get a job with this degree.

In 1964, the Peace Corps — oh gosh you know I'm going to forget the year. I forget the year of the Peace Corps. But the Peace Corps was some time in the early sixties, then there had been talk by President Johnson of a domestic Peace Corps and at that time in '64 we were hearing a lot on campus about VISTA, Volunteers In Service To America and this was going to be the domestic Peace Corps, and I had had friends that went to the Peace Corps and had went to these exotic countries, and I was like not quite wanting to be that risky. It felt like risky. It felt like an adventure, but the domestic Peace Corps appealed to me. I was beginning to have, at least in college, a sense of caring about community, about wanting to help people. Those values were really beginning to emerge and so I was one of the first VISTA volunteers in the United States. I was selected and went to North Carolina for training and ended up serving a year in Hartford, Connecticut. That was my assignment for a year.

Interviewer: **Was this while you were attending college or was this after you got your degree?**

J. Steingold: After.

Interviewer: **I'm going to put you on hold for one second.**

[Pause]

Interviewer: **You were talking about your education but I have a question a little bit about your earlier parts of your life. Do you think there was some influence from your family or your upbringing that steered you towards feminism?**

J. Steingold: I do. I think it was indirect. My mother was traditional in the sense of being a homemaker, but she worked side by side in the business of the store. So even though my mother was traditional sense that everything was for her children, I always remember that she did not dress very well, but she wanted us to look good. I think there are seeds that are laid for how we turn out and those seeds aren't always direct. My son got immerse in feminism. Immerse. I was not, but there are seeds that were laid and I think those seeds have to do with respect for yourself, with caring about others, and the Jewish ethics of repairing the world. We often talk about that. I would just say there are seeds laid that influenced my choices.

Interviewer: You've been talking about your Jewish heritage, that you didn't have that much growing up with your family, was there some change where you embrace Judaism more and that was part of your activism and community orientation?

J. Steingold: Well, it changed, but a lot later. It changed when Joel was growing up.

Interviewer: Your son?

J. Steingold: My son. So, really Judaism was so in the background until I wanted him to have an education that I never had. So, the decision to have a Jewish education is around joining the synagogue usually. So, I joined a synagogue when he was five. My goal was just for him to have an education. I did not intend to get involved. Well, I began to see that didn't feel right; that I would just send him to religious school. So in fact I started becoming active and I became the most active in the social action committee. And I think my relationship with my synagogue is still not real close. It's not in Detroit. There's only one synagogue left in Detroit. They're all in the suburb. So, I selected one. When I said selected, I guess at this point I'll tell you my son is African American. He's my natural son, but he's bi-racial. So, I had to select a synagogue that I thought could just be fair to us and the first one I selected, after about two weeks I felt they were going to have a difficulty so we left. I was much more careful the second time around. I'm not going to say it's not without incident, but on the whole he had a wonderful experience and I'm so proud that he went all the way through religious school and graduated.

Interviewer: Let's see…So did you get married or have a partner that was part of your feminist activism?

J. Steingold: Should I go back and finished the schooling that I got a Master of Social Work?

Interviewer: Yeah. Go back to that. We're jumping all over.

J. Steingold: Well, just the education that after going to VISTA, I wanted to complete that. After finishing a year at VISTA I really knew I wanted to be a social worker.

That's where things really crystallizes as far as my professional direction. So, I return to Wayne State and I did get a Masters degree in social work. My parents were even surprised I was going on with my education, but as luck would have it my mother died weeks before I was actually going to get my degree. I actually didn't go through the ceremony. I was going to get it and that was a good thing. So I did get the MSW from Wayne State.

Now to return to my son. The feminist identification, I believe came about in the early seventies where I literally said I was a feminist and that was a pretty strong word at that point in our history of the women's movement and the history of the United States. I mean the early feminist of the first wave of feminist, that was not a common word to use: suffragist, suffragette, they were different terms. I was never was the one that was against marriage. I did not dislike men. In fact, I dated a lot. I had boyfriends. There's no doubt that being a feminist affected the success of those relationship and the more I look back on it, I think now I can see why some of those relationship failed unbeknownst to me. I was too strong of a woman and I didn't see myself that way. I was strong in feminism and here I thought I was this loving partner and girlfriend, but I think in retrospect it did played more of a role. So, as time went on I was dating, I was having fun, I was developing feminism and one incident that occurred in 1970s, shortly after I got my Masters degree, a woman that I went to school with had been in the Peace Corps and the Peace Corps were sending her to West Africa to develop a project. She started writing to me, "Why don't you come to West Africa. It would be so exciting." Well, that now sounded like something that I wanted to do. So, I worked in social work for about, actually not quite a year, but I don't know what it's like today to be a student, but in those days, right after college if you got a decent job and live in an inner city apartment you can save a lot of money, because apartments were so cheap. I lead a pretty minimum lifestyle, so I saved a bunch of money and I took all the money I saved and I quit an actually good job and I went to West Africa and I was gone from almost seven months. I lived with my friend for a while, who developed the Peace Corps project in Mali. I traveled all over with her, part of the time I was on my own, and I traveled through a total of nine West African countries. And

Interviewer: **In the 70's?**

J. Steingold: '70, '71. That was pretty, not risky but —

Interviewer: **Wow. That's interesting.**

J. Steingold: Well, I was in countries where — well I was in parts of countries where they didn't speak anything resembling anything I knew. I mean I took Spanish in high school and French in college. And of course, I was in — much of the official language was French, but I was in parts where the official language wasn't being spoken. So, it was a very exciting, incredible trip. It was, I guess,

some people would like to do, quit a job and go travel. And because of the way I traveled I never stayed in western hotels, my money was stretch unbelievably because I was staying in hostels. I was staying in missionaries. Missionaries really are great: for five dollars, they give you wonderful meals and you really have a cleaned room and a wonderful bed. And the YWCA. I stayed in the YWCA in Ghana. So, you find out all these tips from Peace Corps people and they befriend you because you're very rare; a white woman alone just touring was a little unusual.

When I came back, I truly had to reorient myself when returning, even though it was seven months, it was an intense seven months. So, I had a period where I had to think about work. I had no money and I was living with my dad for a while, but I was just saying I never was against marriage, but this trip ended a relationship. It seemed like I wanted a lot out of life. I wanted to do things. I wanted to accomplish things. It wasn't that doesn't include a husband, that just didn't happened. I didn't mean for it not to happen. Well, as I was entering my thirties you still talk about the biological clock, women talk about that now. And then I really seriously started thinking about…It looked like I really wasn't going to get married and I wanted to have a child. I wanted to share my life. It just felt like the kind of life I lead that I wanted somebody to be a part of that. I wanted to leave a little legacy.

I went to a couple of agencies and I had serious thoughts about adopting as a single woman. Well, at that time in the early/mid seventies even though women were adopting as a single women you needed to be a cross between Mother Theresa on one hand and I'm not sure who the other. They wanted you to be fully working, a stable history and the stability thing kept coming up. So, my trip to Africa was really an example of I'm not a stable woman, and they refused to let me adopt and I was very sad. I thought, "Here I am being punished again for the choices that I made." I have a Masters degree and I'm now was working a good job, but not long enough, because the African thing disrupted it. So, I had a boyfriend at that time and I discussed with him having a child. He didn't want to. He had two children from his first marriage — he's divorced. And in all honesty, I just decided to have a child. I thought in his mind he would say, "Oh well that's great now that you're pregnant…" Well he didn't; instead he said, "If you don't have an abortion then I'll leave you," and he did. I had to make a decision. What I really wanted was the child, not him, and that probably was a good decision. I mean, I think my son is twenty-six; I'm sure if you interview him he'll say some things that he wouldn't say to me. But, my son grew up with — I ensure that there be a circle of protective, caring, concern godparents in which there are always for. There were male role models and Joel was not the only person in his school or in his life that had a single parent. Maybe they did not go my route, but it's not like he's the only person with a single parent. So, I don't think there was a stigma that maybe there could be if you were the only child without two parents.

Interviewer: **Do you think that your decision to raise a child alone as part of your feminism?**

J. Steingold: No, I don't think I ever seen it that way. I suppose it looks that way now, but I don't think so. I think I don't think of it that way, but obviously so much of feminism was about giving women choices and now a woman having a child — well we wouldn't call it mainstream I suppose, but surrogate parenting, test tube babies, gay women carrying children impregnated by some man. There's all kinds of choices. In 1970s, the early '70s the choices were adopt or have a child by a man in more traditional way. I did have my degree. I did have a good job. My father was living and I had a good core of feminist friends that would support that decision. So, in that part yes I think it was, but I don't think I thought it out in quite that way.

Interviewer: **Just to kind of tie up the biographical information section, could you talk a little about your career outside the home?**

J. Steingold: Yes, as I said the decision to be a social worker really crystallized in that year with VISTA, around '65. My very first job, that job that I had before I went to West Africa was with the very first program in Detroit and was one of the first in the country for teen mothers. In 1969, if you were pregnant you have very few choices. Most girls were pretty much asked to leave school. I doubt if they were kicked out of school, but most teen girls were made to feel that they didn't look good for the others. So, you heard about girls going to those teen programs where they lived until they had their baby and made their decision or they send them away to live with grandparents or something. So, Continuing Education for Girls, that's what it's called, was the first program in — I know in Michigan — where girls could continue school in a program that wasn't in their regular school. They would have all the accoutrements of prenatal care and they would get a diploma from their high school. You would not know later on that they went to this program, because their diploma would be from their school because they would get all of the mandated subjects. So, I was the social worker with this program and then I went on I think the next job before the one I had was the longest was with a project with the schools that had to do with at-risk kids.

Then I heard about from many friends they were hiring at the courts and it would pay very well. Well, I had no more thought about being a probation officer then I guess I had being a electrician, but when talk goes around among your friends, they paid well, the benefits are good, I said, "Well, I'll do that for a few years." So, I became a probation officer in 1975 and I was a probation officer for ten years. And I did like it. I did like it very much. I liked working with kids. I felt very empowered. I began to feel empowered that I can turn these kids' life around. I know I was good at what I did. I wasn't afraid, that whole thing about if you're afraid of kids who are in trouble, if you're afraid of making home visits you should not be a probation officer. And unfortunately the first and only probation officer that was murdered by her probationer

occurred while I was there. And she was a friend and she was murdered on a home visit. That's very rare and it hasn't happened since. But actually I had already received a promotion when Mary was killed. I was already a court executive, which I was for four years. So, my career path ended up being at the court; like people would tell you to get a job, and before you know it life is going on. It was a good job with excellent benefits. I had Joel during that time. Of course we didn't have the laws that we have now around leaves. You didn't have a lot of protection. But because I was in a union I did. But the way it worked was if you didn't return to work within three months you'll only be guaranteed a job. You wouldn't be guaranteed your job. But it wasn't about that. It was about money. I mean I really needed the money. So, I did return to work when Joel was only three months old. That was about one of the few decisions that I regret. I wish I had stayed with him about six months, instead of three. At least six months. Obviously it's good to be with the child that first year. But my decision meant that I needed to return and continue with that income.

Interviewer: **So hard a decision to make. So, you mentioned to me earlier that you also teach at Wayne State right now. So, after the courts you got into —**

J. Steingold: Well, my career journey would just take too much time. This is what happened to me. I had one job for fourteen years with the court, the Juvenile Court of Wayne County. Once I left I have never been in any job longer than two and half years and I certainly will tell you that was not — I didn't plan that. But once I left the court, I found that some of the decisions I made career-wise just wasn't a good fit. Now there are times when your career life and you just bite the bullet and you just stay at a job that you don't like. Many people do that and they're so unhappy. I'm not gonna be real unhappy, and there were times that and I remember one time because when you are a single parent you share a lot more with your children then probably that you should. You make them aware of what's going on then maybe you'll be so secretive that you have this husband.

At one point I left a job — I never lose any job — I remember Joel asking if we're going to be homeless. I guess he read about homelessness and it really was a very sobering experience that my son felt vulnerable and of course I convinced him we'll never be homeless. I will always get a job and of course he never saw me out of work for any long periods of time. I actually really did leave a job without a job, something that in our world we're told never to do and I wouldn't recommend it. I would never recommend that. I would always say to someone stay and look for a job while you're there, but I was more miserable then, I waited. You're not good for your children and you could read this in your literature when you're really unhappy and you're really under terrible stress you're not good for your children. That's what turns into child abuse.

So I had a plethora. I'll just name a few. I've been executive director of the Metropolitan Detroit YWCA. That probably was the highest income and highest prestige job. I've been an executive director total of three times, but the other projects; one was a small intergenerational project, which was very exciting. Intergenerational programs are now getting more common, but this was in the late eighties and this was the idea of bringing young children together with seniors. I've been an executive director of an AIDS project — that was interim and I chose not to apply for the job, but I was recruited to be an interim executive that was an experience where I learned a great deal about HIV/AIDS. I think one of the benefits of how I feel is by my changing jobs a lot. I have learned about more arenas: HIV, intergenerational seniors, than you ever do if you're on one job. I began teaching adjunct right around 1990 at Wayne State. So, I've been in adjunct for thirteen years, without a Ph.D. as you probably notice here. It's unlikely that I'll ever get a full time job teaching. It's possible at a community college, and what I actually didn't tell you was I was working at Wayne County Community College when I went to Africa. I was full time. I wasn't a full time instructor. I was in a different arena, but that's when I began teaching was actually 1969 at Wayne County Community College. I was one of the first instructors there, but that's the job I left and because we were so new there were no union, there were no sabbatical. I actually helped form the first union, but because of my choice to go to West Africa I wasn't covered by anything. I had to just quit the job instead of what one would do in academia is to take a sabbatical.

Interviewer: **Lets move on and try to join some of your life history with your activism and feminist activism. What do you think lead you into first the feminist movement?**

J. Steingold: My time at Wayne State and my growth of exposure even before leaving and going to VISTA was becoming aware of racism. Attending an all-white high school and being in an all-white neighborhood, you really aren't exposed — You really don't think a lot about it and I lead a relatively sheltered life with my parents not even driving. So, I got a car when I was sixteen.

That was the family car, but I was the only driver. I became aware of racism and discrimination and that lead to fairly significant involvement in the civil rights movement. I was so close to going to the south to help with voter registration. I didn't do that, but I did work on many projects and became involved in student groups around anti-racism. So, I believe that the civil rights movements, as it did for many women in the second wave of feminism lead to, and it was perhaps a natural progression, but the civil rights movement was male-dominated and women involved in it definitely played a second-class role. Now, I think when you're involved in something and it's a Black man heading up the movement you feel like that's the right thing to do. But, after a while you really began to feel minimize, that your contribution will be left to envelopes and typing and things like that. So, all I can really remember while I prepare for

my interview, I just can't remember how I went to that first meeting. I'm sure somebody had told me about this consciousness-raising group that was starting to meet. We became the Michigan Women Liberation Organization — that much of it lead to NOW. But we were meeting on a regular basis and much of the early NOW experiences really see our consciousness-raising, where a group of women talked about our experiences, anger and resentment and all the feelings. And then those meeting started to crystallize. I mean those meetings you really don't want to complain and bitch and be angry. It's like, "Well what are we going to do about it?" So all of my efforts — I mean I really in a sense left the civil rights movement to go into the women's movement. But I never saw them as so inextricably different; I saw them as inextricably entwine, even though the women's movement really more took my energies. I think I joined NOW in 1970s, early before I left for the trip or maybe when I got back in 1971 in the Detroit chapter of NOW.

Interviewer: **Was there ever a "click" moment, a moment where you need to dedicate x amount of time to the feminist movement?**

J. Steingold: Well, the only one I can think of right now, the initial "click," being in the civil rights movement and feeling so undervalued and then the women's movement it represented an opportunity to really be respected, so that click happened then. I think that a variety of clicks that have occurred in my life that move me within the movement, but in different directions. I think that was really the first.

Interviewer: **What organizational roles did you played and we're talking '65 to '85?**

J. Steingold: Well, I played every role in the Detroit Chapter as you probably very much heard. Every committee and then working my way up and then I was the president of the Detroit Chapter.

Interviewer: **Do you know how long and what year?**

J. Steingold: Oh that's terrible. It must have been the late seventies — no it could have been in the eighties. That's terrible I couldn't remember that, Sarah. I couldn't remember when I'm president and I have a plaque and it's one of my favorite too. I should of looked at it. I think as NOW became more sophisticated, more organized — of course we always have officers from the beginning — people recognized — partly it was from people recognizing my leadership. Certainly I'm not going to tell you that I ran against three people. You're not going to hear about that too often, although you will hear about that in some case. Yes, I ran a great race and I was elected, but within chapters there often are not people lining up for these hard-working positions where you spend so many hours in preparing and working on how we're going to prepare to move in those directions. Those were years when we were really doing a lot and really opening up doors and really making a difference and lots of legislation and lots of researching and lots of demonstrations.

Interviewer: **What issues most moved you, and what as an organizational — being on committees as well as being a president, how did you facilitate those issues taking precedence against others?**

J. Steingold: Well, as far as choice of controlling reproductive life, I had two illegal abortions and one was in Detroit and one I had to fly to another state. Years later the man who performed my abortion was profiled and I could never forger picking up a copy of *Life Magazine* at one of my jobs and reading this in-depth story about this man whose daughter died in trying to get an abortion and he devoted his life and the underground network. Sarah, I'm sure you couldn't even imagine the underground network to get an illegal abortion. It's really awesome. In this case all I did was send a note, "I would like an appointment," and what you would get back in the mail was a slip of paper with a time and a date. That's all you get, because you obviously know where you were going. This was a small town. A movie could have been made out of this experience because everyone in the town knew you were going to see this doctor, because there were only one motel and the town in a way protected this man. And he would tell you if you were stopped by the police exactly what to say. It's just amazing to me. The underground network, and it will be there again if we lose this will of choice. It will be there again. I mean we now know of course that there have been abortions from as early as we can figure out. There were so many women during slavery that ended the lives of their fetuses so they wouldn't be born into slaves. I mean there's so much evidence that we really don't talk about in regular school stuff. But that experience certainly lead to knowing that I needed a choice.

I had to, for the very first abortion, I had to lie to my mother, telling her I was flying out with a friend and it was excruciating. I so am angered when these against choice people say that we make these decisions cavalierly. I met with my rabbi. I talked to so many people. It was excruciating decision. It was not made cavalierly, but to know that I had to either have a child or I have to have an illegal abortion and put my life at risk, which I did do. You always put your life at risk because you really don't know your providers. They don't have licenses. Well the one out of town did have a license, he was a doctor. The one I had in Detroit was in the inner city. They made me leave as soon as I was done. I bled for two days. Who knows what could of happened to me, and I didn't even have any idea what their credentials were. So, to think that women only have those kinds of choices that was really important and of course working on choice, although we got choice in '73, it was still so new and fragile that we had to articulate it and get it available to women.

Credit, believe it or not, women's credit was a big issue in those early days. You couldn't get credit in your own name. Some of these things, Sarah, you only read about, but you can't hardly believe that you couldn't apply for credit card. So, that was an issue. The issue of, you don't know this in your lifetime,

but there were want ads for male and want ads for female. So, this idea of just changing that and then beginning to talk about equal pay for equal work and then of course comparable work comes along much later. None of this is small.

When you went into toy stores a sign says "boys and girls," so it wasn't just that you heard that when you played doctors that the doctor's cases were all boys and the nurse cases were all girls. There were signs when you went into the toy stores. I mean you would have to be a feminist that you dare go to an aisle that says "boys" when you have a girl or vice versa. So, those were some of the things we were working on.

Electing women to office that was far back in those early days. That was not — I'm not saying that wasn't happening, and we were like great women elected to office, but we were working on more bread and butter issues. And when a lot of people called NOW middle class movement which I bristled now and I understand it was mostly middle class women that started it. I'm a social worker. Early social workers were middle class women. What would we have done without them, but they weren't working on middle class issues. They were working on issues for all of us and it's just been something that has always been such an emotional issue for me especially when it comes to why we didn't have more women of color in the women's movement, which I really studied that. I've read many books by Black woman. I wanted to understand it better and I do feel I understand it better. But we have always worked on bread and butter issues. Reproductive choice of course was one issue where many Black women did not want to come out and favor choice. That is not true today. Not true today. Most African American women's movements are pro-choice and are pretty openly pro-choice. But that wasn't true, that was one of our dividing issues actually in the earlier days.

Interviewer: **Were there African American feminist groups that you were working with, that NOW were connected to or any other sort of feminist groups?**

J. Steingold: Well, I of course wouldn't call them feminist groups. In Detroit what's very important were the African American sororities and they do more then social stuff. They do lots of good works in terms of the community. I wouldn't say that we worked real effectively, but we tried to do outreach. I'm trying to think of when the National Black Women's Health Project started by Billie Avery. It had to be close to the seventies. That's a project that NOW has worked with since day one. I would call it feminist. I'm not sure they would. You know that whole thing about how you identify yourself, but it was issues where you could find common grounds because it was about women's health. The Negro Business and Professional Women's Organization, I think that's the right title. That would be more middle class, but we certainly did some outreach to that group, locally and nationally. And there were especially around educational issues around women. Title IX stuff. I think what you see is that NOW has had common ground with different organization over issues and because NOW is an

organization that just encompasses every issue with our strength and our weakness, we're all over the board: childcare, education, pay equities. How does one organization do this? It's our strength and it's our weakness, but we tackle all issues that affect women. We have to have priority issues, but we always try to work in a variety of arenas that affect certain communities more than other communities, communities of color, poverty. I think when the issue around poverty led to the formation of the Welfare Rights Organization. They thought NOW was middle class. I would say about ten years ago, Patricia Ireland, our National president, really got the National Welfare Rights Organization at the table. And I was so proud, Mirian [Kramer] — just a second, her name just went out of my head. I know it would come back — The national president is from the Detroit area and she and I have been friends since the seventies when we worked on poverty issues together and it didn't have to do with NOW or NWRO. Except years later Mirian was able to see that all the connections that I was working on in the feminist world really did lead to work on poverty and NOW has worked on that arena, but we haven't been given the full credit. When you say NOW, it's reproductive rights and abortion. It's never — feminization of poverty has been one of our core issues for many years.

Interviewer: **Interesting. Did you want to talk about any particular incident of the issues that you worked on? You spoke about legislative changes, reproductive choices, do you have a story about success or a…?**

J. Steingold: Well, I want to say one story about participating in clinic defense, what we called defending clinics before the rules, when we have some of the laws preventing people from doing some of the terrible things that they did. Because there was another defining moment. I not only did clinic defense but a lot of monstrous — of course and it was very difficult to look at these graphic photos that a lot of these anti-choice people are known to do to, cause people to get emotional and all the most of the evidences are they're not fetuses, that they're full-term baby. It gets very confusing, but the images are very difficult to look at. But again these people think that we have no feelings about these images. There was a time when one of the tactics that people do is they pick someone and apparently they are pretty good at picking someone that they think may be weak. And I was sort of selected and this woman kept following me and she kept praying for me and she kept saying things like "You don't want to help kill these babies." And they repeated over and over "killing these babies." And they follow you and you're not supposed to talk to them. One of our rules were: don't talk to them.

Interviewer: **And this was at the defense? When both groups were pro-choice and —**

J. Steingold: Yeah, we were doing the [clinical] defense trying to let the woman in [to the clinic for their appointments].

Interviewer: **And you have one person on you like a basketball game.**

J. Steingold: Yeah exactly and finally I turned to her and said, "Will you just leave me alone?" And you shouldn't do that because then they know they are starting to get to you. Well, it just went on and I started crying and one of the women took me away. So, it was that one and one other was a friend of mine had her two young children at one of these demonstrations. I brought Joel to mine. I know he wasn't in this particular one and this woman came right up to my friend and in her face she said — no, I'm sorry — she looked at her children and she said "You know your mother might of wanted to kill you." And I would never forget how cruel, how absolutely cruel that was for that woman to say that. We all brought our children to these demonstrations, but that's the kind of tactic that they would use that we would never use. And I saw my friend's face. It was so crushing for to have this woman say that to her children. So, this just made my resolve more that these are evil people sometimes. They may talk about that they revere life, but I'm sorry that's a very warp view of revering life. That a person would do that to someone's children. So, I think that kept up my resolve. Now I forgot the other question that you had asked, too.

Interviewer: Well lets take a moment and I'm going to move this microphone over here.

[Pause]

J. Steingold: I forget why I went into that example.

Interviewer: We were talking about any significant events that helped…

J. Steingold: Well, that was an example.

Interviewer: Yes, that was a good example.

J. Steingold: But, I think significant events that are more recent are working on campaigns to get women into office. And you know when you're in feminism sometimes you have to make a choice — you don't always have to between issues in campaigns. There are many women in NOW that hate campaign works, but wants to work on issues, wanna march, wanna do anything they can to organize. I consider myself as someone who does both. I love to march. I love to organize. But I know I believe that we have to have women in office. So, I worked doggedly on campaigns to elect women into office and I think our first women governor of course was the most recent example of that. What the ground was laid for us to be sophisticated to know how to GOTV, Get Out the Vote, to know how to organize women, to get women into office. So, she's the most recent example, but for me in Detroit, I'm so proud that my friend Joanne Watson, who's been a friend of mine for thirty years, ran for a seat vacated by the death of a beloved woman, Brenda Scott,. Gil Hill, a bit of an icon, ran against her. In our town the mayor was behind Gil Hill. The newspapers were behind Gil Hill. The two major democratic organizations, on the surface of it

you'll think he couldn't lose, but he did. He lost and there were a lot of shocked people. Joanne ran a grassroots campaign. She ran a campaign where people really believe in her and got out of work and Gil Hill took for granted because he got more money and more endorsements, but he lost. And that has to be a lesson to us. We can't think that they're always going to win and I've heard many women say, even feminists, "Well Jacquie she just can't win." You can't let that guide you. If that guided us in '69, with the suffragists, who spent seventy long years. Well, I guess giving up is always an option, but it can't be an option for true feminists.

Interviewer: **Thinking back in your activism, did you have any particularly personal or organizational allies and any opponents, people who —**

J. Steingold: Allies with the work that I was doing?

Interviewer: **Uh huh, with your feminist activism. People you worked closely with who were your mentors.**

J. Steingold: Well, I think for women — mentoring, obviously that's a current term we didn't call it mentoring back then — when you look at some of the male models and the female models if you will — men have had mentors for years, but they didn't call them that. They paved the way and they still are paving the way. I keep telling people that you don't see too many so and so and daughters. You see a lot of so and so and sons. You don't see dynasties like Ford Motor Company and they're going to bring the women up. But, supporting one another, being there for one another had been critical for women and I may not be able right now to name names, I just said Joann Watson. She was actually never active in NOW. I have a core of Black women friends who have never been active in NOW. And I have always formed bonds with them over issues.

One of my favorite stories my friend Akua Budu-Watkins. We were on the opposite sides of choice until she came around. We were on the opposite sides of when they had all-male academies in Detroit. Our friendship has endured. I'm not even sure how that happened, because these are pretty emotional arguments. These aren't just political. Cause she really did believe in all-male academies and that was not that long ago. That was only fifteen years ago, maybe ten. But, I have found a way to have good friendships with Black women who respect me and I respect them for their differences. So, I think they are my mentors as well as many white women in NOW. I think that we look up to people, who have been leaders, who paved the way for us, and then people who are just on the boards and friends of mine. Like when I decided to have my son. To think that was an okay decision, because I'm not going to tell you that other people didn't make comments or that comments haven't been made to me, especially with him being African American. I mean, what kind of choice would you make to be a single person, a white person and to bring an African American male. There was a lot of criticism around me in that regard. So, I

think I have been fortunate and I will tell you that people within NOW, people really do become your friends. There's always people that become your close friends, but the core of my women friends are my NOW friends. They are not all — my women friends are not all my NOW friends, but many. Over the years there certainly have been tense moments where you don't agree on — usually it's strategy. Some of the very radical feminist — I in no way ever believe in any kind of violence. I may sit down. I have sat that. I opposed the newspaper strike. A group of us women have been arrested on that. I have marched. I have done all kinds of non-violent activities, but I will not participate in any kind of violence. And I even believe in the hate speech and the rhetoric. So, there have been women that I think have gone too far. I certainly am not in the camp that hates men. I have lesbian friends in the early days, they were just so critical that I still dated men, that I dressed like a woman, or am feminine. So, I rejected all that. But I just think that there are just room for all kinds of approaches. The only one I really strongly feel is dangerous is violence.

Interviewer: **Did you have fun?**

J. Steingold: Oh, absolutely. I'm the one who believes that it has to have fun. Anyone will tell you. When we have NOW conferences we always have a dance. I'm known for my dancing. And I don't go dancing like the old days when I really went dancing every weekend and I'll go dance with men who I never knew their name. I just danced. So, I'm grateful that women can dance with women. I've always been so glad that feminism allowed me to dance with women before it was really popular and people stared at you and it didn't bother me. And I love the fact that in all NOW conferences we always have feminist comediennes. They're so funny and they'll never make it on the mainstream. Well, some the — Margaret Cho — now some are, but not the ones we were hearing in the seventies and early eighties. But they just captured women's issues and you can just howl at this. So, yeah I think I've been fortunate because I always felt that you should have some fun. When I go to NOW conferences I'm also known for shopping. Some people said that with a little critical like "How could you go to a feminist conference and shop?" and I look at them like "We're all about choice. I mean if I like shopping I might as well be able to do that and still attend all the meetings and conferences and work the hard work and strategize and still enjoy shopping." So, you know I really believe in choice here. No one should criticize me for shopping just like I won't criticize you for not shaving your legs.

Interviewer: **I'm going to stop it right here and get another tape.**

[TAPE 2]

J. Steingold: Almost a separate issue that I'm spent a lot of time on, but I saw it as related to feminism. So I wanted to be able to talk about it from how I saw it for an issue for women, but it was only a small part of NOW, it was something else.

Interviewer: Alright, well go ahead.

Just go ahead with that?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Now?

Interviewer: Right now.

J. Steingold: Okay, I wanted to mention another issue that was very important to me and I think it stemmed both from being a feminist and of course having a child as a single parent. No matter what, childcare is pretty much an issue if you are a parent. Now it can mean a lot of things. It can mean just what are you going to do when you go out at night, what kind of babysitter. You got a husband. You're a homemaker. You're home with your kids, but there are going to be times when you need childcare. I think as a feminist, as a social worker, and as a parent of a single person I really began to see in the very early seventies. No, I wasn't a parent then — that was the point I wanted to make earlier that before I had Joel in '76 when I was teaching at Wayne County Community College, students would bring their children to class. Well, at first I thought, "Well, I can't teach with women having to pay attention to their children and leaving the room," and they would try really hard to keep their children busy with the coloring and I said, well and I was teaching at night these were all night classes, "Gee whiz these women don't have options." So here it was 1970. I'm at the college full time and I'm starting to think about "Hmm, women can't go to college because they have children and if they can't go to college and they can't better themselves then they will always have low income. It is part of the cycle."

So, I was very excited about this one accomplishment. I started talking to some of the administrators "What if we had a small childcare center at night?" Well, first of all it was, "What kind of woman brings their children out at night?" Yeah they're supposed to be home. They are supposed to get baby sitters. They are supposed to have husbands. You make a lot of assumptions that even now sound to you almost strange in terms of the judgmental aspects. I said, "Well they are bringing out their children. They're bringing them to our classes because that's how much they want an education. They don't all have grandmothers to baby-sit, they don't all have husbands or aunts, but they want an education." So, I started convincing some people that maybe this could work and they said I had to do a survey. So, I did the survey. The survey was basically to prove that there was a need and people would use it. Then I went to the board of trustees and they approved it and I actually got a small grant, a really tiny grant to start the first evening childcare center, which actually I was profiled in the newspaper — it was first in the state. There was really no even

childcare center because again it was more of an attitude because that's not where children are supposed to be leaving their warm beds and going out at night. So it ran for a couple of years and the students would drop their children off while they were in class.

Well, then in time Wayne County developed a full childcare program for day. I don't even know if there is still the evening one. But it crystallized for me that it was a feminist issue, that it was a barrier for women to fully participate in this case education. So childcare remained one of my core issues for many, many years. I went on to become a founding member of the Child Care Coordinating Council of Detroit in Wayne County. Believe me we aren't saying it was a feminist organization but it was an important organization, just celebrated what anniversary, if it started in '71 because it's — yeah, the thirtieth, and I was founding member. I was so proud of that and I went on to become board chair and I was on the board a total of almost thirteen years. My commitment to affordable, accessible, quality childcare remains and I have worked on legislation and even demonstrations around that issue.

Interviewer: And that Detroit in Wayne County childcare coordinating commission was funded by county money?

J. Steingold: Well, when it started out it was so small. It was the initial money. I think the initial money was really was some county money, some grant money. It was very small when it started out. Like three staff and now it is like 62 staff and they have contracts from everything like UAW to city money, federal money, a lot of training money. I think in the early days it was minuscule money from some sources that were supportive at least of issues of early childhood development and good childcare and things like that not anywhere from the feminist side.

Interviewer: I'm interested in your thoughts on what you thought about this sort of working on the local level with county and state and city money as opposed to federal money, which must have been more of an issue with NOW as a national organization. Where did you think you could make the most impact and how did you — were they different?

J. Steingold: You know there is an expression I'm trying to think of it, "All politics is local" or something like that. I believe that in that kind of statement — I always worked in my community and I think it can't be an either/or. I think local support and the critical mass that you have to have this expression, the critical mass to get anything done. I think you have to prove it is a local issue just like my going to the board of trustees and getting this tiny program started but those steps were all community and then that level of the college and then the grant level and then it develops and people see the importance of it. I think as you develop your sophistication in terms of your levels of change that I recognize now and still believe you work on all levels; local, state, and federal

and of course even global.

Interviewer: You mentioned that you also worked in other feminist organizations other than NOW would you talk about those a little bit?

J. Steingold: Yeah, I wanted to say I really think NOW is the only feminist organization in all, in my heart I believe that strongly that the National Organization for Women is really the only real feminist organization, but because of my concern in different arenas I have gone into other organizations and never ever leaving NOW in my commitment. Most recently the National Women's Political Caucus. I'm on the board the last three years. Now there's a very focused mission and that is electing pro-choice women to office. That's a pretty narrow goal and it means you coalesce the money and efforts, whereas NOW's money is all over the place. This is good. Now it's bipartisan, so it's Republican, and I'm sure there are other parties but we say — you know the term now is multi-partisan — but it's mostly Republican and Democrat, but the core thing is being pro-choice and being a women and I like that, because it is so focused 'cause it allows you to put money and effort into that one particular arena, and of course NOW and WPC are mostly in line. However we differ sometimes because NOW remembers a true feminist organization and we wouldn't support a woman unless she was good on more than just choice. She has to be good on gay and lesbian issues, she has to be good on poverty issues, and so we have our core issues and NWPC is only pro-choice and you can see where we would pretty much coalesce, but then we have some differences.

Interviewer: You are using this phrase "true feminist." Can you talk about that and define it for me?

J. Steingold: Yeah, you know sometimes these things come out and you don't mean them in a way. It's not like I didn't mean it. Well it's probably something that I've articulated. One of the things electing women into office and being political and being sophisticated, and NOW has a PAC. I don't remember when we started our political action committee, but it started at some point and of course that's only money for electing women and it can't be — it has to be very separate from the National Organization for Women as an organization. We talked about women being good on all our issues. It is not easy to find, I mean there are good women who runs for office and it may not be perfect on all our issues and because NOW is a feminist organization we have really struggled with, "Wow what if she's good on two but not so good on this one?" and there came a time many years ago when we supported a man over a woman and let me tell you we're criticized to this day and people say "How can you do that?" Well this woman was openly anti-gay. People don't understand "Oh well she was so good on pro-choice" and in no way and maybe that's how I mean about being a true feminist you have core values and you're not going to compromise. We compromised. I think we compromised

more than maybe we would have twenty years ago. You have to do some compromise. But we're not going to compromise on certain core issues. So when I say true feminist, I think that's what I mean. We compromised, but not on basic issues that a man or a woman. This idea that we would support a man who we think is better for women than a woman has only happened a few times and we really have taken a few hits. It's done with extreme caution.

Interviewer: Does this reflect maybe a newer trend in being able to consider men feminists?

J. Steingold: Absolutely. But you know we're the National Organization for Women not "of women" and we always have to explain that. Men have been members. I don't think there was a man — no there wasn't a man in the forming of NOW, but there has been male members. I know many men active in NOW, supportive of NOW, but I think it's the legislative arena, Sarah. I think men tend to be in the background. I think they don't mind that, those that come into NOW and are active. But when you get into legislative arena, electing someone is electing someone to vote, to enact legislation, to affect the lives of many and we honestly believe that some men have women's issues at the core of what they believe in and would work for. So therefore we could support a man or women. That's rare — supporting men who run against men which is mostly what we are so often faced with, not so much now, but it was more my point of telling you why we'd support a man because we've been supporting good men for offices for long time.

Interviewer: Did you want to talk about other organizations that you have been involved with as a feminist?

J. Steingold: No, I think those are the main ones,

Interviewer: Great.

J. Steingold: Thank you

Interviewer: Sure. Let's move on the next part of the interview that talks about your reflections upon second wave feminism. You gave me a definition of feminism. When you think about your past activism, do you think the press actively reflected the movements in which you participated?

J. Steingold: No, a resounding no to that.

Interviewer: Why? Tell me about it.

J. Steingold: Well, I think when you talk about the press —the press of course is a male-dominated field who owns the newspapers, who owns the airwaves more or less. They are supposed to be free, but who owns the TV stations the radio

stations. So, that has set the stage in the ways that usually do when males control things. The fear of women I think is part of how we are portrayed. Uppity women, bitchy women, aggressive women, all these pejorative ways of portraying us. So I think the media has latched onto the fringe elements, often sometimes the ones that you know like the stories you even say now "if it bleeds it reads." They say something like that "bleeds it reads" meaning people love to read about violence and death. Well, that doesn't exactly compare, but the sensationalism. So the bra burning — you probably think of that as so ancient, a young woman like yourself and it was. The real story is there probably is someone that burned a bra but this idea that feminists were running around burning bras is so ludicrous. It's just totally ludicrous and it's a way of minimizing. It's a way of marginalizing. We weren't being taken seriously. The kind of coverage was it isolated us in the bra burning, abortions, just picking up on key words and key moments in our movement. So, that I felt we were not taken seriously. We were lumped together. We the pejorative terms so if you were a feminist that equals you hated men. Well that's still around, I think. The word feminist means you must hate men. You're all lesbians. The portrayal was very lopsided, very unfair, didn't represent any way what we were really working on. It hurt us a lot. I think mainstream women reading about us would never join our movement and that is just very sad to me. That the press kept women away from us because we looked so out of synch and we were never out of synch really, but the women reading the press and looking at TV, how would she want to be a part of that?

Interviewer: Thinking broadly, what do you consider the main achievements of second wave feminism and what do you think were the main failures?

J. Steingold: Well, I'd like to think we overall achieved a place for women to be recognized as equal partners to men. I think second wave feminism has established — we know we don't have an equal playing field, so I don't want you to think that — but we established women in many ways as at the table and equal partners. When I think of the Violence Against Women Act, major achievement of the women's movement would not be here today. It might have as more and more men have recognized things. We have their support but it was women, NOW women, and women elected to office that began to really look at the need for shelters, the need for laws, the need for marital rape laws, so that whole arena is a big success of second wave. Paid equity and comparable worth as concepts around economic freedom and economic equity grew out of the women's movement. Getting women elected to office comes a lot out of the strength of women's groups that have really organized money and time, efforts of electing women to office. The childcare legislation, I think when I think of my early days, when we think of childcare in the work place that was something even in my own union when I was a probation officer and I brought up at a meeting my union we should have childcare union meetings. I remember a male standing up saying, "My wife is home with our children and that's where children should be," and this guy is supposed to be my union

brother. So childcare in the workplace, which now is in the mainstream if you will; childcare at hospitals, childcare in the factories, universities. We don't think of this as radical, but it was radical. We caused things not to be seen as so radical. The Medical Leave Act the one that allows men to take leaves, I don't mean medical leave.

Interviewer: Maternity leave.

J. Steingold: Maternity and something else leave, because it also was written in to take leaves to stay with your elderly parents and that's why I'm trying to think of the wording, but again this grows out of the women's movement; to allow men and women to have protections around being with not only around with their children but then the more people are living longer and especially women taking responsibility that we got written in to it. Leaves for helping out when an elderly parent is really going into dementia and needs to go into a nursing home and you need to be off of work to take of that. That isn't just a day here and a day there event. So I think that those acts were very important. I honestly think in a more frivolous vein, our attacking the beauty, the beauty queen movement. Oh we were seen as so funny and silly, but when we think of anorexia, when we think of how women's depression and girls and suicide because they don't look perfect. Oh yeah we were seen as attacking the Miss America pageant when that isn't what we were doing, but of course that's what the media loved to portray it as. We were trying to say, "Let's talk about the image of women." What about disabled women? It's so much the women's movement that really also even though the disability movement not only helped that movement in terms of empowerment. In NOW we've talked about disabled women. We've had a disabled women's task force way before the strength of the disability movement and we've talked about body image and we've talked about young women being exposed to these constant image of perfection. So we raised the consciousness on that, even though again we were just so criticized on attacking these beauty pageants and most people today mostly not laugh but don't take them as seriously as they did.

Interviewer: What about failures. Do you consider any of your work —

J. Steingold: You know I don't. I suppose somewhere along the way you're going to hear that we didn't get the ERA. I'm sure that has to be brought up that we failed in the Equal Rights Amendment, but in no way do I see it as a failure, in no way. We mobilized — when I think of the demonstration and my son of course went to every ERA march. What we were able to mobilize was awesome. The number of women across this country that took off from their jobs and took off, left their families — and I'm not promoting that and I didn't do that to work on this issue was — no although the women's suffrage movement was 72 years we haven't been 72 years, not that I want to say it will take 72 years to get the ERA. In no way do I say that saw that as a failure. It helped build our movement. So, I think that has to be still — I mean obviously someone

could say "Well you failed." I don't see it that way. Wow, I guess for me it's important to look at all our efforts as having some successes even though we didn't get the long-range goal or maybe even we didn't get the short-range goal we got something out of it. We raised the consciousness of a legislature that before that didn't quite see things our way. I honestly see almost everything as helping build the movement and that if we failed a piece of legislation we learned in the process. I really don't, I honestly don't look at it that way.

Interviewer: **That's a great attitude. It really is. You talked a little bit about second wave feminism as being characterized as overwhelmingly middle class as a bunch of bored housewives, as being not paying attention to other issues such as racism. Do you have anything else to say about that?**

J. Steingold: Now, I didn't use the expression "bored housewives." I only want you to know that because I wouldn't say that. I just want to say that because I think part of the choices and a lot of my work is I honestly believe women have the right to choose homemaking and I truly respect — I can't imagine doing that full time. I think that's a very hard job. I just want to make that point. I'm sorry Sarah, the actual question?

Interviewer: **I just wondered if you had anything else to say about that. You did talk about —**

J. Steingold: Okay I did characterize when movements because —

Interviewer: **Not necessarily you but it has been characterized —**

J. Steingold: That's fair. When I said earlier being a social worker and there is so much that dovetails you know with the being of social work and the early suffrage movement and Jane Addams, and I mean my professional life and I didn't see it that way until years later, how being a feminist and being a social worker are all intertwined. But middle class women did have the privilege, the time, and the money to at least think about doing something better and I honestly think it's not fair to be so pejorative to these women because they didn't even ask for the privilege. In my anti racism work we talk a lot about white privilege and one shouldn't be defensive and that's part of learning the training about being white and yes you have privilege but you didn't ask for it. But it was bestowed upon you and then what do you do with it? So here these were women who were taken their privilege and trying to make a difference and that's why I think we need to try to get away from being so pejorative.

The roots that have caused a lot of women of color, as the readings I have mentioned to you earlier that I had to come to very sad grips that even Susan B Anthony, a hero, wasn't so great when she more or less said to Black women, "We need those white Southern men right now and so we can't have

you as equal partners." I can't imagine, Sarah, I can't imagine what it was like for white women to know they had to curry favor with these white men in the south. And so they turned their backs in some ways on Black women until it was safer. I don't want to apologize for them, but those laid the seeds for Black women distrusting us and we have not overcome that. So I think it's always that historical piece, we are seeing it now in the Middle East wherever these ancient rivalries and ancient hatreds, you can't bury them. I mean gosh I wish we could do that. I don't know I want to do that, and it frustrates me to no end that we just can't bury them once and for all, but we can't. So many African American women don't trust the movement, and there is a racial divide. In truth, we have way more in common and if women really got together things would be more different, but we find many, many more ways of commonalities and I think that's what's most important. A lot of people say, "Well you don't do enough on membership." I used more on all these African American women wanting to join NOW and I'm a little more okay with the coalitions and the collaborative I still wish we were way more diverse and I'm a little more comfortable with — we have built a lot of bridges and a lot of coalition building that has helped benefit women in general.

Interviewer: **I'm going to stop just for a second and ask you to turn back a little bit this way.**

J. Steingold: I've been moving?

Interviewer: **You've been moving. I've tried to follow you but I'm going to give up.**

J. Steingold: Is that better?

Interviewer: **That's great. Okay. The next question is who are some of the outstanding figures that you met and that you learned from. This is your time to name famous people.**

J. Steingold: Yeah, yeah I'm not the best at that but I'm going to mention Gloria Steinem. I'm not going to say that I've had extensive conversations with her but I've had a few, but she has certainly been a great role model. Her not wearing makeup and she just happens to be beautiful, but just being herself, just the hair and the makeup. She's a beautiful woman and she certainly dresses very lovely, but the magazine *Ms.,* I wouldn't put it down in the heyday — I mean it's different now. But it was part of it, part of the movement; being able to read our stories and read all those ads and I don't know if you know this but every *Ms. Magazine* had ads in the back and they were always putting women in a poor light and people would send them in from everything. And we aren't talking *Glamour* we're talking about little hometown newspapers or something you laughed at them but you realized how mainstream it was to objectify women and to put down women and to use women's body parts. I mean literally torsos of bodies. So her founding that magazine was so critical.

You needed a media piece.

I also was, well I was lucky to be at her sixtieth birthday party, which was way accidental that I happened to be in D.C. and I always remember her saying "This is what sixty looks like" and that was so important. I'm aging and then I was younger, but it was like wow that's what sixty is like and everyone says, "Well you don't look sixty." That's what so common and I want people to say to me "I love it you don't look sixty," but when she said, "This is what sixty looks like," that's an empowering statement.

I think Patricia Ireland — I guess somehow I didn't mention it — I did serve four years on the national NOW board. I was elected to represent our region, which is called the Great Lakes Region, and Patricia was president while I was on the board. So even though I heard of her within the organization. You even said something earlier I didn't answer about facilitating the meanings and you were asking me about facilitating. I remember that word, I learned so much from Patricia Ireland about how to run a meeting. I mean we're talking of about 40 feminists from all over the country from very diverse points of view and that is chairing a very interesting board. She was incredible. I think her book that she wrote is a fabulous book it is truly a book about Patricia but at the same time as you guess it's about the women's movement.

Locally there's a woman named Erma Henderson. The first Black women to be elected and be president of the Detroit City Council and actually when you asked me if there were other organizations, Erma started an organization called Women's Conference of Concerns was mostly African American women. I was active in that for years; I'm not even sure Erma would call herself a feminist. She's out of a church very much of a church background, but she paved the way. She was a leader and a mentor to many African American women to this day we're friends. My son, I'm so proud of him, she's blind and he whenever he's in Detroit he takes her out for a day. She was there when he was born and a woman who was always supportive of me and she's made a big difference in lives of Detroiters and certainly women. Did you want me to go on with more women?

Interviewer: That sounds fine it's up to you.

J. Steingold: Okay. Maybe if someone pops into my head.

Interviewer: Okay, go ahead feel free.

J. Steingold: But, I think what's important truly, Sarah, is that I have been influenced by many women. Some in quite high places. I think the women's movement in general is really not about high places. I really think it's about the day-to-day struggles and the woman I mentioned to you who had to watch someone tell her children that awful statement, I was so proud of her for she didn't go off

on this woman either. So I think it's everyday women who have really toiled in the women's movement and that have as much influenced me and keep me going as much as Gloria Steinem and Patricia Ireland.

Interviewer: That's nice. Do you have any advice to the next generation of feminists?

J. Steingold: Advice? That's an interesting word. Advice always has a sound to it on what you think people like to get advice. They like to get information and they like to get other things but anyway I just was at the National Women's Political Caucus conference just last weekend in D.C. and I attended a workshop that was aimed at Generation X and Y and I'm not a member of those from what I know and I thought "Gosh should I go? Will I feel funny?" and there were a number of older women but the panel were all young women and I'm going to be at an inter-generational in July at the NOW national conference. We have so much to learn from each other. One thing I really learned just last weekend and I'm glad this one woman put it the way she did, she said it makes her angry when women of my generation keep putting them down about choice, and it was true.

We say these young women today just don't understand what's at stake and they didn't have to go through that and she said "You don't realize what we're going through and what we might understand about that" and I was really glad that she said that because I had been a part and I thought "Oh my goodness. I am now stereotyping these younger women." So, we have to all not put those stereotypes aside, and it was good to hear her say that and she was quite passionate about how strongly she feels and that we keep sort of saying they don't understand, they don't understand. So, part of what I want impart is to continue these inter-generational things so that what we learned out of these struggles can help women redefine what is now, because I'm not quite learn on how I see the next wave so to speak.

I am truly afraid for the first time really truly afraid for the first time that we could lose the right to choose. We've lost so much of it that it's been chipped away at poor women having to really go some to find a way to get an abortion. So there lots and lots, but we still have it. So, I'm for the first time afraid. So, I would just wanna keep encouraging young women to see the right to choose as not cemented in stone and in fact I guess part of what I would say is that no rights are there forever that they just aren't. They can all be turned back. So, it's a certain vigilance. It's a certain teaching that must go on to understand the teaching and the history and why it's possible to lose something there because it's been there. I can't imagine us losing the right to vote, okay, but we must use it. We must vote and work on campaigns. So, I'm sure no one would ever take seriously. Well, Sarah, do you realize we might lose the right to vote? You would just totally not believe that's anywhere near possible but even though that's not possible. We lost ground — women lost ground for the first time in state legislatures. Less women were elected and

that ought to be a concern, we should believe. Lose ground? We should only gain ground cause we are nowhere near parity cause in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House, nowhere. So women just have to realize that we've come a long way. We have a lot of wonderful legislation that has been passed, but we are not equal players. There's not one arena where we're equal not one: political, medical, educational. There's not an area. So, no matter how many strides that have been made we have to continue to go forward. I know I can't define it for young women, so I don't know how to do that. So, I just want to say that learn from the history and really recognize at how well we are doing is in no way representative of how well we should be doing.

Interviewer: **You talked about reproductive rights being one of the issues that you think younger feminists should pay attention to, are there other outstanding issues that you think they might have to address that you think maybe you didn't?**

J. Steingold: Well, definitely the pay equity and comparable worth arena. In the university where you are I don't have to tell you there's so much inequities that have to do with tenure and have to do with how you are ever going to catch up. And that's what this affirmative action decision is all about. How are you going to catch up? It will take years and years and years and years and that's just not my way of thinking it's fair. So we have to — I think young women really have to expose pay inequities that haven't been exposed. Universities are really one of the most guilty and believe me I know U of M has a lot to do with this project and I'm not putting down U of M, but the institution of higher education because women have entered that so much later and the tenure and the way we reward and award people within that academic arena. Women have to catch up and we're not caught up and I've taught students that when I talk about pay equity had many students say, "I started this job and I found out that the men are being paid more" and I'll say "That's illegal," and they're surprised and then I say, "Let me tell you where to go address that," I don't think there a lot of young women are going to do that. Either there is the fear of "I'll lose my job if I complain" and that can be realistic, and to say to a boss "You know it's against the law for you to pay him more than me." The next thing she knows is she's getting more scrutiny and she's let go. So what's the likelihood that she wants to risk that? And that's a little scary because young women need jobs as much as I do and so if they find out about the inequities how much are they willing to risk their job to pursue exposing that equity? Even in a job interview if someone asks you your marital status as a young woman are you going to say, "You can't ask me that" and risk this "Oh that kind of woman — will I give her the job?" So, there's still all these risks that young women don't even realize that they might have to take just by saying, "You can't ask me that, you shouldn't be asking that." Well I'm not saying there isn't a nice way you can frame it but the assumption that the person could make is that this is the kind of person that will be a problem when all she's doing is trying to say is, "We've won these certain rights and

one of them is my marital status has nothing to do with how I perform the job."

Interviewer: Is there anything else you want to add or questions I haven't asked but I should ask other women?

J. Steingold: I think one of the comments around what I'd say to young women and this is where I've matured because I always wanted everyone to be a member and I even as I told you with African American women I would like younger women to decide if they don't want to join NOW, if they don't even want to join, to influence where they're at, to be an influence on their job in their community. So I'm more calm with there's truly a variety of ways you can make a difference but make a difference. At least you can be in a meeting and if a man says a derogatory thing that shouldn't be let go. Somehow, hopefully the woman will say something about that instead of "Oh that's just the way men are." They still say those expressions. They shouldn't say certain expressions. And that's a small way she can make a difference. So, if I can't get her to join NOW — which would be my favorite — I would say, "would you take some knowledge and information in your awareness and make sure that people in your environment understand certain things?" You could be the teacher role or at least expose people in a nice way that a certain language isn't being used.

Well, I think a lot about language, Sarah, and you know we fought hard to have gender-neutral language and chairperson and the government recognizes that when I want to tell people that it isn't just a women's issue I always remind them that the federal government makes all documents gender neutral so it's not radical to talk about language. But, we in the women's movement know the power of language and again the media again joking about, "oh you have to be called chairperson." Minimizing that language shapes our attitudes and beliefs that's never been portrayed that way, and you know that as an educated women and most people do know — well I don't know about most people but we know that words affect our attitudes and beliefs and when you use chairperson and when you use certain gender neutral terms it has an effect on these young women when everything they hear isn't man. So, I think that there are still arenas.

I'm a volunteer at a museum. I'll name it: the Detroit Institute of Arts. I love it much. I volunteer there as a gallery service, and there's elected offices and there's committees and I wanted to be considered for a committee. All terms are chairmen they use the term chairmen and all women are chairmen. There are some men, but they are mostly women and when I said that I just couldn't run and be called a chairman, well first of all they were very surprised that I would say that, and it's still chairmen. It's a hold-over from a former era when were all used chairmen, and these are mostly upper middle class white women and so I'm not going to take an office and be called a chairman at the DIA, so

I think that's just an example. If I had the critical mass, I'm not going to make my volunteering at the DIA political. So, I'm telling you that right now, but if there was a critical mass they'll change it some day. I believe it will be changed some day. I believe there will be some woman who'll say "Maybe we ought to change this to chairperson," but it's 2003, it's still chairmen and there are lots of other places. I don't honestly know because I'm not at that strata, if they still use, I guess they do, Mr. and Mrs. John Smith. I mean that's what was always correct, not Mr. and Mrs. Jane and John Smith because you're first name of no use, of no relevance.

So I think those are the ways that some young women can really make some changes and just symbolic, but symbolic I don't mean to say symbolic is important. Symbols in all societies have great impact; you see swastika. What in the world does that evoke in most people? What does a cross evoke? We have symbols that are enduring that have meaning the women's symbol is a major symbol to me. It's an important symbol. I love to buy jewelry. I love to look for the women's symbol. Well it is doesn't mean feminist but we know it really does mean feminist cause what is it because it's Greek. I think doctors use it and nurses use it when they make some notes, but language is just critical. But what I think I would want to impart to young women there are all kinds of ways you can be influential even if you don't want to join the women's movement. You're part of it anyway.

Interviewer: **That's great Jacquie we're going to end here. But if you'll sit still maybe turn back a little bit this way I'm going to capture some still photos of you. Okay let's do another one. That one wasn't great either. I keep catching you blinking. Okay move around a little bit alright oh this one caught.**

J. Steingold: How about if I look somewhere?

Interviewer: **That was good. Then look at me.**

J. Steingold: Yeah maybe I'd rather not have a…how about that profile?

Interviewer: **That's beautiful.**

J. Steingold: And then the winking one.

[END]