

Interview with: Susanne Wilson
Interview by: Danelle Moon
Transcriber: Amanda Grundmann
[Interview #4]
[Wilson Interview 4.wav]

[82:44] at beginning {start at [00:00]}

Moon:

My name is Danelle Moon. I am the director of San Jose State University Special Collections and Archives and today I am interviewing Susie Wilson at her home in San Jose, California. Today's date is July 28, 2006 and this is our fourth interview.

Wilson:

And I - I don't have - what I don't have is on the pay equity [clears throat]. On [pay equity] I don't have, the date we started, and there's two ways we can find that out. One is that it's in the minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

Moon:

Okay.

Wilson:

And, so if you have this date to start with, and they might - they will have a copy of the proposal of what we passed...

Moon:

Mm-hm.

Wilson:

...and this was April the ninth, and so the meeting would have been April the eighth, nineteen-eighty...

Moon:

Nineteen-eighty-five?

Wilson:

Mm-hm, eighty-five.

Moon:

Okay.

Wilson:

And - and Sally Reed said that, uh, it...what she really said was don't give away your authority over the budget. I [favored?] equity, but the plan's extremely unwise.

Moon:

Okay, well let's just go backwards a little bit. First - so, we're starting off right today talking about the comparable worth and pay equity issues, and so, let's - let's - go back in your memory as to, you know, what, you know, brought that together and then who the people were that were involved that you recall and then we can talk a little bit more about Sally.

Wilson:

Of course, [comparable?] - in the eighties, comparable worth became an issue, I think, a - probably the unions had decided to make it even a national issue of comparable worth. And - and so they came to the board and asked for a committee to study the salaries at the county level. And, probably, over the objection - and I'm not [clear?] here, I'd have to really research, [founder league?] levels, you're right, [you - good idea?] but of course, the board did think so. And the board voted to have a study, and I chaired that study of the - and we had a consultant that came in to evaluate all the jobs to say which jobs were below the pay scale they should be making, and evaluated the men's jobs and women's jobs and we had a consultant that did that and presented a report to us. And, I know that we - we met monthly and [called?] for a few months [floor?], and there were men and women on the committee, but mostly women. And I cannot today tell you from all the different perspectives they were. I'd have to look at their names and they'd come back to me. And so I'll try to get that...

Moon:

Get the names of the people that...

Wilson:

Yeah.

Moon:

...were on the board?

Wilson:

Yes. Yes and that - that study, and the Board of Supervisors' minutes would have that. And I probably can call Phyllis Perez, who is now the clerk of the board.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

And see if she can get that - her secretary can get that; I think that's the easiest way for me to do that.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

And you write me a memo over there on that to tell me to do that, so I'll...

Moon:

[Laughs] Okay.

Wilson:

...remember it tomorrow, but - and we - we labored mightily and there was the staff from the county [deck?] was there to - not only to assist us, because she - she never would - Sally Reed was very fair - my [inaudible 00:03:28] was [voted?] something, she would work to get us all the information; she never tried to hide anything from us.

Moon:

And what was Sally Reed's position again?

Wilson:

She was the county executive.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

She was the first woman executive of a major county in the United States.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

And she was a fantas - is a fantastic woman. And you could probably - she [cross?]- she has a vivid memory of such things [as this?], and you could talk to her. She's retired now down in Monterrey and I...

Moon:

Oh, mm-hm.

Wilson:

...have her email - and...

Moon:

Oh, great!

Wilson:

...would be glad - I think she'd be glad to talk to you.

Moon:

Okay.

Wilson:

If...

Moon:

We could get her contact information.

Wilson:

Yes. I - I have both her e – she does a lot in email, so I [give you?] her email address and her phone numbers.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

Okay? So, they - so she didn't put roadblocks in information. What she was concerned about was that there were better ways of doing it than locking it into the proposal that was - was put in concrete. And frankly, after it was all said and done, it didn't make that much difference in terms of public opposition, or in accounting, you know, after the first furor of this.

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

It really didn't make any waves. I'm not sure whether it was effective. And that's something I think that could be examined today by some of those who [have] still active [with?] accounting. And did it make a real difference? I really don't know.

Moon:

So some sort of pay equity did take place after the study was conducted.

Wilson:

Yes. But it was – was taken gradually over the years because of the budget constraints. And - and that's the - whether it ever got to the point of being fully implemented, that's what I don't know. Because it was never - we never said, "do it all in one year," we knew that was not - we had [union?] contracts, we have constraints on - we had constraints on our budget, and - so it just wasn't feasible to try to do it all - it was unfair to all the workforce to try to do it in one year.

Moon:

So it was a long-term sort of...

Wilson:

Yes.

Moon:

...graduated...

Wilson:

Yes.

Moon:

...sort of program?

Wilson:

Mm-hm. And probably [taking?] different classes. And that's where I'm shaky on information to review it.

Moon:

Right. Now, was the - I know, like, in the earlier, you know, kind of the precursor to that was the city, you know, wage issue that was actually quite significant in the early - in the early eighties, and what - I was just talking to one of the librarians who's retiring from San Jose Public Library, and he was part of the strike in the - in the early eighties for the - on the - on the city scale, and he was saying that it was, you know, it was a significant - they didn't get all the, you know, they didn't get what they really wanted at - at the ultimate, sort of, goal, but they did, it - it raised their wages substantially, and - so, for the librarians it was a very significant, sort of, victory from the union perspective. And so, what...

Wilson:

Well, with - with our libraries, our libraries is a special district.

Moon:

Mm-hm.

Wilson:

So that the - that the money came from the state, and the librarians have always been - the libraries have [unclear00:07:06] always been a special district.

Moon:

Uh-huh.

Wilson:

So it didn't - it didn't fit into the pay equity the same way as the county employees.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

Because they're county employees, but they - they didn't have a pocket of money that's absolutely separate.

Moon:

(*at the same time as Wilson*) separate. Okay.

Wilson:

And, so, it probably did affect [theirs], in some way, and I don't - can't - can't vouch for that. But yes, that's true, and I think that it - in the early years of [this?] it began to affect people's salaries, but I can't say how long it lasted and what has happened, you know. Right now, of course, in - in the last two years, the county [unclear00:07:49] what's happening at the state. Now, there's - there's going to be layoffs. But still, I think that the county, for a long time after the eighties, we began to improve that.

Moon:

Now, what - where were the disparities in that, do you - do you remember? Or did you guys study that as part of that...

Wilson:

Yes...

Moon:

...process?

Wilson:

Yes.

Moon:

[Okay?]

Wilson:

The consultant brought back all their [classes?] of our - in the county. And, showing the job specifications and what they were expected to do, and comparing it with the -with - all of the jobs were compared against each other.

Moon:

Okay.

Wilson:

And that's the comparable worth [coming in?]. that really made a difference. And - and once you look at that, then you could see where the women were paid less than the men. And so that's why it really became a gender equity situation, because it was true that there were inequities in the jobs. And while Sally - Sally was very much for pay equity, she's very much for women's rights. She'd - she'd come up through the social work system and came to become a county executive, she's a marvelous executive, she really is. And - and really was. So that - she was never negative about it, but she really felt that was tying our hands, [What she said to?] that. And...

Moon:

Because of the financial budget issues?

Wilson:

Financial budget issues, and making sure it was completely fair...

Moon:

Uh-huh.

Wilson:

And tying the hands of managers who – so, there's probably - she probably said a lot more that's in the minutes, but it doesn't say it in the article of [inaudible]...

Moon:

[interrupts] Now were there a lot of, like, were employees striking at that time? And that was part of the reason why the county was making a decision to really focus on that?

Wilson:

No, they were - they were giving a lot of pressure. They were picketing to – to – particularly - and they brought the unions [unclear00:09:58] to us, and there'd be large groups of people in the audience to say "support this" - "Do the study, do the study," and of course they were SEIU [Service Employees International Union]. That was of course the one who was [pushing?] the 715, local 715. And that's Christy [Sherashine?(ph)]. And, so that...

Moon:

That's where Christy would have some...

Wilson:

Yes, Christy, who was the organizer for this. She - she was the head of the union and she still is.

[A male voice says, "Hello" and Wilson and Moon reply.]

Moon:

Okay, and so, they were - the picketing was mostly just to get the board to support this - to conduct the study, and then to make some sort of decision on...

Wilson:

[Well], and then be on the committee itself, because we - it was - we had the [primary need?] to achieve the committee because of the different - who was on the committee was important in terms of how it came out...

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

...because - there were really some arguments there, I mean, we did - we didn't just rubber-stamp everything everybody said, and so we had to really have evaluations. We really depended on the consultant to - and then examined his report very carefully. So - before we could bring it before the board because we had to have a real consensus of what we wanted to do before going to the board.

Moon:

Right. Yeah, once you did bring it to the board, outside of Sally Reed's, you know, perspective, what - how did the board feel, about the...

Wilson:

Well, the...

Moon:

...the report?

Wilson:

There was a vote of four to one, and Tom Legan, who was against it [paper rustling obscures words here], because he said he was for comparable worth, but he thought there was a better way of doing it, so he stuck with Sally in voting no.

Moon:

What was his last name again?

Wilson:

Legan. [Spells] L-E-G-A-N. [pause] [unclear, sounds like: Did this broken, she lives very near??00:12:08]

Moon:

Yeah, [I'll get that from Aaron?]

Wilson:

The - you'll find that eventually, he was - became one of our less respectful elections. He was first appointed, and he had made some commitments when he was appointed. He was a Republican, and, that - he wanted to be a supervisor and that he would not be seeking any higher office. And there was a reason for people, these [(sounds like) really good?] Democrats, to believe he really wanted to be a senator at the state level. And asked him directly, you know, would he run against Daniel Carpendale[ph] who was getting ready to run for the Senate, and [inaudible00:12:55]. And of course he promised me he'd never do that.

Moon:

And so he was dishonest?

Wilson:

And so now it came time, and he began to - for that run. It's in here...

Moon:

Uh-huh.

Wilson:

He - I read his statement, and that I believed that he should not be - he used to be the chair of the board when he was elected here, and that gives a lot to do [with his ability?]. And so we said - we documented that he attended only half of the executive committee meetings, he was working for Kaiser Permanente, which was a...[c-net company?]. And, so that he spent time there, and that if he was going to be running as the rumor was having it, he would not have time to be chair. It was very demanding, and so I recommended that he not be appointed chair, which was - it was a rotating position. And, then, of course, what was embarrassing about it is the board decided that I should continue as the chair, and be the chair. So I essentially - it ended up, my maneuvering to become the chair again was - was just - at first, I was just being the one who had the courage [that?] they said, "you go do it."

Moon:

Oh.[talks over Wilson] So it was like it was for your own personal motivation?

Wilson:

Yeah, and, but they - everybody knew it really wasn't, so I never got accused of that, but I felt like I shouldn't be the chair, because it would look so personal. But I - and in the newspaper, it states, I said, you know, and he's not an honest man. [laughing] It's amazing the things I said in the newspaper then. People always talk about my being so diplomatic, but I'm blunt - they also talk about my bluntness, and when I read what I said...Now, I was, I just said he wasn't an honest man.

Moon:

Yeah.

Wilson:

[Laughs] So, he did not become chair, and so then the board voted me chair.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

And, so I served that extra year, reached - so this is at the end of this, this book, that you've given me...

Moon:

Yeah.

Wilson:

So, Tom Legan was - was - became discredited, and then after that his step-daughters accused him of molestation.

Moon:

Oh, gosh!

Wilson:

Yeah. And he eventually was off the board. He resigned from the board.

Moon:

Oh, my gosh! [laughs]

Wilson:

[Laughs] We had - we - there - there was scandal in the - it's just amazing that...

Moon:

[Laughs]

Wilson:

Yeah, when I was on the city council...

Moon:

[Laughing] Who said politics aren't interesting!

Wilson:

Yes - [unclear - read this, you, it was just?] and going back and re-reading it - I'm going to have to re-read all of it - it's very interesting. But then again, the other thing that is so interesting, is - is the way that the press treated people, treated politicians. You know, when they were saying that politicians today are [unclear, sounds like lowering then bells?], that's true - part of it is the way that the press has lost respect for the politician. And I - it's - it is a - solo - solo thing that happens, and all you read is the bad news, and not the...

Moon:

The good things they do?

Wilson:

...and not the individuals who [release their thoughts?] and do things. And as you can see, this is - there's - there's so much that is in here, and, in these books [that at least there's?], you know, the board was doing their jobs. Now, and - it's just - this was predominantly what Susie Wilson was doing, but, you know, Susie Wilson stopped logging in Murphy's Gulch [inaudible]. But not only just stopped it. I helped create a mechanism by which the - the citizens bought out the development rights, the water rights, so it couldn't be - the logging rights, so it couldn't be logged. And [Pete's part?] and then now it's just - they're just in [(sounds like) Spain] part, you know, twenty-five

years later? Eighty-six...Twenty years later. But, you know, we worked out solutions that, if people really didn't want logging in Murphy's Gulch, which was a bad situation, we found ways to make it that the logging company didn't lose, or the landowner who owned the land didn't lose, that he – he benefited from it. And it was some tough, tough things that we had to work through, to get – get done in – in a time that Prop 13 had practically wiped out all of our general fund money.

Moon:
Right.

Wilson:
So - so, comparable worth was just one of those ['nother?] issues that the board members really took the task very seriously. And they felt like, that this was an issue that needed to be looked at. And they went ahead and did it. And there wasn't any - [knew?] we were doing it. There wasn't a huge protest either, from the *Mercury*, they just didn't talk about it. Or from the chamber of commerces or from any of the groups, you know, we were about doing the business of what the county needed to do.

Moon:
Right.

Wilson:
And the county was our company. And it – the taxpayers' company.

Moon:
Right.

Wilson:
And the taxpayers had a right to be able to be open about it, and look at it, and they'd elected us to come to a decision. And that's kind of the way we worked then.

Moon:
Right.

Wilson:
[laughs] It's amazing.

Moon:
Yeah. Now, is - based on what you had done on the board at – in those years, do you think that the board's mechanisms have changed since that point? Or, have there been different - have they addressed the, you know, the – the community issues that are relevant for the county? In your – you know, in looking at what they're doing now, versus what you were doing back then?

Wilson:

I - I think that it's - it's hard to criticize the board that - that in the times that - I think you'd be better off asking other people that question.

Moon:

Mm-hm.

Wilson:

But, the years that we had in there, when I was on the board, and it wasn't because of me [that stuff?], the total makeup of the board, we ran the transit district then. It wasn't 'til after I was off the board that they gave that up, and - and changed the system. And the transit - because the transit district had become so large, and they want that - more of the small cities wanted to be a part of the transit district, so, after I left, the board gave it up, and they gave it to a - created a new board, and they're just a part of that board. The transit district has never run quite as well as that, because the times were tougher. So you can't compare the times.

Moon:

[talking over Wilson] Right.

Wilson:

And with the beginning of the system, with all the enthusiasm of what's happening, and its - its - its [betrayed in?] here, with what they're going through now. So that, when you look at the board responsibilities now, and then, what I see is that there - there wasn't the cohesiveness of working with each other and - for a common goal, and yet - or they lacked - they've been lacking vision to look at the future in a way, it's - with term limits, I think that's what has happened.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

You're always jockeying for where you're gonna go next.

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

Because you're gonna be turned out. I didn't live under term limits, and I quit when I wanted to quit. It was on the - I was the last supervisor that on my own terms, I quit. And, and so, it's not fair to say they didn't do well by the district. But some - something has happened in the [intervening?], and a lot of people have, [devised?] a political scientist, like Gary Christianson, who said the caliber wasn't the same. Because they were moving out from the city council 'cause they're [hunting?] for their next [perch?] of - they couldn't stay on the city council. And - and they were just a different caliber. And at the

same time I think that the press lost respect [to?] politicians. Because the – the Tom Legans were the [unclear00:21:34], you know, they [unclear] over, and it...

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

...[Al Garza's?] addendum became this animosity. And I think it probably happened after the press story changing with the ousting of Nixon. And they - newspaper reporters decided they needed to become investigative. Newspapers decided they needed to become more Pulitzer Prize dominated. And, uh, looking for the [explicitly?] a lot of reasons, well, that was changing – dynamics were changing.

Moon:

Oh, sure. I mean the environment, the cultural environment, had changed the [inaudible] too, so...

Wilson:

So...

Moon:

...there'd be a lot of reasons why...

Wilson:

Yeah, a lot of reasons why, and so that the - and the [old-timer?] you see - one of the things with the - without term limits, you could have a John [Dasconsales? (ph)] who became so strong in the – in the assembly - in the legislature. They could really assist, and they really could carve out niches and really work on them, just as I carved out a niche in the hospital. And then for south county I was always - and taking care of south county and listening to the cities down there, you know, and - so that, it was just part of the job to try to find out how you could better the community. And I think that in some way has been lost because [Dasconsales?] and Al Alquist, you know became institutions. You can't really become an institution [in the?] city government, or county government, or in the state government.

Moon:

With the term limits.

Wilson:

Uh-huh.

Moon:

Yeah.

Wilson:

And you see, I – I was - so that my term of office, and just because I wanted to stay involved in local politics, I was more, I – I took chances. I – I did what I felt, you know, like with comparable worth, [might have been?] unpopular, or - or Alice [(sounds like) doesn't day?] which I found, and I – I just - you know, if - I always had the attitude, where, if a voter knows what I'm doing, and doesn't like it, they should vote me out. Because this is who I am. And that's changed today.

Moon:

Yeah, it seems like people aren't as forthcoming in an honest way about what they really, you know, support because they're worried about, like you say, the re-election process or going from one, you know, branch of government to another because they do want to be a politician, and, you know, maybe that's their life goal to be [always?] you know, long-term politician, but it's really - this whole term limits issue is really a - no, and I think people – everyone was supporting it when they were first talking about this because nobody wanted to say that it – you know, it was unpopular to say – to suggest that it's a bad idea, but I think really looking at all of this from even, you know, the federal level, it's really - how do you actually develop as a politician, have you really learned the system? Because it takes you, you know, at least one term to figure out the system, if you've never been at that level.

Wilson:

And also, with this – with the assembly's two-year terms, [it's?] always been stupid. 'Cause you had – you work one year, the next year you're – you're raising money. You work one year when you get elected, the next year you're raising money. And it - they needed to be at least four years. Two six year terms - there – there's a better way of doing it, but people are afraid that they're giving the politician more power, but actually politicians have always had the power. You're not giving up anything, they're trying to make the whole system work better.

Moon:

Well, and the – if the object is for them to develop policies that respond to the citizenry, how can they do that if they only have a two-year term? You know that they can't really get anything accomplished, so...

Wilson:

And the way it was - well, when they first had the districting started [and of course I was left in] San Jose citywide, and - and I'm - I did it, but when they elected [(sounds like) him?] [clears throat] to get any kind of minority participation in comparable worth, you might say - comparable gender - you had to have districts. And – and then, so what [Bill Rice?] developed because of – with the term limits in the district, you got what they call the mini-mayors now.

Moon:

Right. So everyone's a "mini mayor."

Wilson:

In their district, and - and, so everybody defers to them, because you defer to your colleague because you want them to defer to you, which - that's the only way you get things done. But, in truth, if you didn't have the term limits, and you - you - you took care of your district and you argued for the things in your district, just like you argued for the things in the city, what you believed in, you would have a debate. There has been years since there's been a debate at the San Jose City Council. A real debate. It's - it's - everything is decided before the city council meets. So, here, you know, with pay equity, I'll try to get us back to it, there was a real debate about it. And you could have - and we really studied the issue before it came to - to the council, before the board. And I was the chair of it. Not because I was from district one and represented my district; I was the chair because I was representing the county workers. I mean, I was representing what we want to do as the trustees of the system that the taxpayers used to have these people working for the [(sounds like) eyes?] as - as their servants this is what I considered we were, but there was a real debate about it. And - and I couldn't just walk in and say, "Do it because I say so." I had to provide real evidence of real need and real positive change for the county in doing this. Otherwise I couldn't have gotten the votes.

Moon:

So the process was really to develop a study, or to study an issue first before actually bringing it before the council to make any kind of decision on it.

Wilson:

If it - if it were - particularly including something we knew that was going to - same system, I think I've mentioned it to you, was the domestic violence council. When - when Judge Edwards, you know, came to me, and he says, "Susie, I..." - he told me about what he wanted to do and I said, "That's wonderful. Of course I'll support you." He said, "but," says, "I can't get the votes for it." I said, "You can't?" He - "no!" and I said "of course you can" and he says, "no, just I've - I've already - you're the last person I've talked to, and I've only got two votes." And I said, "Ah - you're not doing it right!" I said, "what we need to do is you need to come to the board, and show where you want to have [as] your study, and that you want to form this council but you really - you need to have a study to see if it's necessary in this county. And you're - you - you - you suggest that the people that should be on it would be the police chief of San Jose, the D.A., the sheriff, and all those people in - and the social service system - and all those people involved in the social - in the system that would - would feed in to this domestic violence council. And, in the study we'll produce the recommendation that the council be formed, and then the board will vote for it, and you'll get an unanimous decision." He says, "How can you say that?" I said, "Because when you stand up there and say you want a domestic violence council to better the lives of men and women in this county, particularly women," I said, "there's no supervisor's gonna vote against that."

Moon:

[laughs] When was that, anyway? What - what...

Wilson:

That was about the last [year], about – and I was the chair, I guess it was 1990, my last year on the board. 1990. So he calls me the mother of the council, and I call him the father of the council. [Both laugh]. But - and you know, of course it has done tremendous things in this county. And nation-wide, he became the guru of the - the whole situation of domestic violence. And...

Moon:

He just recently retired, too.

Wilson:

He retired with – with national honors. And – but there was a process for him to get to - he couldn't just come in and get five votes. We had to prove his point. And I gave him, just, you know, to prove his point. And that's – that's what policy is all about.

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

You just don't...

Moon:

You don't just...come up with an idea and just...present it before the board and not have something to back it up with.

Wilson:

Yeah. And then you – you - you rely on the common sense and the vision of your fellow supervisors. And the knowledge of what they can not - pass out if they're talking about getting, you know, how [unclear00:30:35] go to the public.

Moon:

Right [laughs].

Wilson:

[unclear] not going to vote against that.

Moon:

Yeah.

Wilson:

And he hadn't - and he was a judge and knew nothing about politics.

Moon:

Right...

Wilson:

And so...

Moon:

Which is kind of funny given that...

Wilson:

It is.

Moon:

...his father was, you know, so important of a politician. [laughs]

Wilson:

But judges go a different way. That's one reason – I'm on the - on the library board, and I was all – and I'm still on it, even though I'm not - [unclear] appointed when I was on the board, because you're always supposed to have a board member on the county law library board, which are basically judges, that's all that was on it, [there might've been?] two people [that were?] citizens, and after I left, they changed the system so I could continue on because I was their political guru. [both laugh] They'd come in and say, "Susie, we've got to do this, how do we get it done?" I'd say, "Well, just – we'll get it done. We've also got to raise the fees, and so we can have - for the library, more money for the library to exist, which is a - library for the indigent [but poor?] - for anybody who has to go in and get [something]. So – so I probably – the only way I can tie this [to] comparable worth is that that's exactly the way we approached comparable worth. That we did a study not to justify, but did a study to prove that, indeed, this was something we could do, it wasn't gonna damage the county, the committee worked very hard to see that –how it – and [following] the consultant, and showing the actual problems that we faced with the women, and gender equity, in our county. And there would be a way to remedy it. And, uh, that's what we were voting for. We weren't voting to make a political statement as much as voting to – if this was a problem, then how do you solve it? And first we had to prove it was a problem.

Moon:

Yeah. [pause] Well, I think your earlier question of what – where is it, where is the equity now within the system, that would be an interesting...

Wilson:

I think so too.

Moon:

...interesting question, to - I wonder if they've done any post-study since the - you know, the time that you were...

Wilson:

Truly one of the things is that, it's difficult now to even contemplate doing something like this when the county hospital, in three years' time, will be one-point-two billion dollars loss. That the – the system is being destroyed by the state. A system of – of so much, and that's our system of healthcare. And you know what the healthcare is – the

healthcare is in crisis, and – and the federal government can't solve it. They really don't know how to solve it 'cause they don't know the [depth]. And [(sounds like broad?) is in new different] things and they're not willing now, to - probably now they – they go back and look at the Hillary Clinton plan for healthcare instead of fighting her because she was Hillary Clinton, if they'd looked at it, probably was the best thing that could have come along, but, could not be implemented because of politics.

Moon:
Right.

Wilson:
So, we're facing such different times now; all I'm saying is that I think that when the county's fighting for its life, gender equity...

Moon:
Falls off the...

Wilson:
[inaudible] comparable worth, you know, it's really the comparable worth of the county itself.

Moon:
Yeah.

Wilson:
What is the worth of this county to the state? What is the worth of – to have with human beings in this county [(sounds like) to state the feds]? We've got so many huge problems.

Moon:
Right.

Wilson:
[inaudible] need to be worked out.

Moon:
Oh, that's for sure, I mean, this is just - and I'm not sure that the pay equity issue is as significant as it was obviously in the eighties, but still, you know, it's...

Wilson:
The [unclear] I can remember, the, you know, [have] the tenure fights within the system at San Jose State. I worked on one that - in the Political Science department that fought to get her tenure because she's not published enough. And she deserved tenure. You know, it's those kind of things that are – are difficult, in – in any kind of a system.

Moon:

Yeah. Well, it's – and then, in that system it's kind of a closed deal, 'cause you don't really know what your other colleagues are making, you know, how they were brought in – they're all brought in at different levels, and there's no real, like, formula for how one person is brought in at one level over another, you know. So there's a lot of, you know, problems with that, with it – within the academic world especially, because you – you know it's all secretive, and...

Wilson:

Well it really shouldn't be because they're – they're state employees.

Moon:

Well, they have certain guidelines...

Wilson:

They have classes.

Moon:

...They have classes, but it's, you know, there's a lot of flexibility...

Wilson:

...and there's steps.

Moon:

where...

Wilson:

...[there's] steps.

Moon:

...you could be placed in the step when you're brought in, so, you know...

Wilson:

That's right.

Moon:

Yeah [laughs].

Wilson:

But - and the county is that way too, there's steps. [As you] – every class has five steps. And...

Moon:

Yeah, but you have – as an employer, you have a lot of discretion to determine what you – what step you hire them at. So, what's the rationale, and how do you prove, you know, inequity in that process? Because of, kind of, the way that the systems operate, right? So,

well, I think it's an interesting issue. I've been, you know, reviewing some stuff on this other article that I'm writing on the earlier period, and looking at the whole concept of equality and the – the larger issue is just discrimination, and it's not just about gender discrimination of course, it's, you know, you know, [this stuff?] affects both - both male and females in the – in the environment. So let's – that kind of turns us to that other topic that we were gonna talk about, which is the issue of affirmative action, and the lawsuit, so, I'm interested to hear about that.

Wilson:

Yeah. Let me - Let's go to the other book.

Moon:

Okay.

[sound of heavy book being placed on table]

Wilson:

Why don't you turn that off for a minute and I'll just...

Moon:

All right.

Wilson:

Put these [inaudible] where these other things are.

Moon:

All right.

Wilson:

No I can [inaudible] I'll try the [unclear00:36:55]

Moon:

Okay. [laughs] We'll just take notes.

Wilson:

Yeah, okay.

Moon:

All right. Okay, so then, we were talking - we're transitioning from talking about discrimination issues, and then you were gonna tell me about the, um, [course] – the [course that] – the case of Diane Joyce that went to the Supreme Court on the sex bias suit.

Wilson:

Yes. And they - in March of 1987 is when the high court ruled that giving women preference is legal. And, of course, Diane Joyce asked Steve Woodside, who was our

county counselor at the time, - spoke there. He was the one who [carried it to] the Supreme Court, and Zoe Lofgren and I both went, as the Board of Supervisors and these articles are telling the story of Diane Joyce and the trials and tribulations that she had to go through, and the [unclear] in the transit district, and the - on the roads crew, and our – head of our transit district, and the – actually of public works, part of it - made a decision to give the job to her. That all things being equal, another guy was higher in the choice, but he deliberately made the decision to give it to her. And of course that was because of the affirmative action plan.

Moon:

Okay.

Wilson:

And the question before the higher court was: was our affirmative action plan legal? Did it meet the constitution's needs, and - needs of the constitution, and the court said yes. And we had a very clear affirmative action plan, and that - it was upheld. Our plan was upheld because of the way that it was written.

Moon:

Now who - who initiated the original suit?

Wilson:

The original suit was the man who did not get the job.

Moon:

[Talking over Wilson] who did not get the job, okay.

Wilson:

Mm-hm. Yeah, he was denied promotion to lead dispatcher, and the court said employers need to – need [noting?] that past discrimination against women to adopt a preferential treatment. (reading) The promotion of more women is a legitimate effort to overcome a conspicuous imbalance in traditionally segregated job categories. Voluntary employee action can play a critical role in eliminating the effects of discrimination in the workplace. And... (sound of pencil scratching).

Moon:

Okay, so this was a – it's interesting, there's been a lot of – San Jose has been really, you know, a hotbed for issues related to pay equity, and, you know, women's rights, and, you know, trying to create a balance. Which - which makes sense if you think about the history of, you know, kind of the feminist capitol, and all the emerging women going into politics, so, this is...

Wilson:

And the enlightened men worked with us.

Moon:

Exactly. [talking over Wilson] Yeah, it's just not about women obviously.

Wilson:

No, it really wasn't because the - I guess you would say that the men who came to this valley were all [more adventurous?]. I mean they - as you'll find all the -today, you look at our electronic companies, our high-tech companies, and they were the first to accept the rules of affirmative action, and to accept - accept gays in positions, and with openness. And Apple, and you can name [any of them] - Hewlett-Packard, they went along with all these things that - affirmative action now that these - these [comp - (as in companies?)] - federals had passed. They were never opposed to it because they were forward-thinking men and women. And, so that it's no - it's not surprising. But it is, you know, surprising that you would have a head of a transit district, which has been dominated by men, and to - to really do it. That...

Moon:

And then the Reagan administration was in opposition to this whole process...

Wilson:

Yes. And of course, Antonio Scali - Scalia of course, dissented.

Moon:

Right. It looks like (reading) Brennan, Marshall, and Blackman, and [Hall?] and Stevens.

Wilson:

[counting] one, two, three, four...five, yeah.

Moon:

And Sandra Day O'Connor also was part of that.

Wilson:

... six. Yeah. [inaudible]...

Moon:

Affirmative, [sort of], vote.

Wilson:

.[you know] what it was. But then when you're in here - this was [in here] a very good *Time* article about it.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

It was - it was a national, of course...

Moon:

Made the national press.

Wilson:

Made the national [news] – press, and, of course Joyce was jubilant, and there's a picture of her, and, this is a whole analysis. And...

Moon:

So, what was it like when you actually – you said you had actually gone to the actual Supreme Court...

Wilson:

It was totally fascinating to be sitting in that Supreme Court and to listen to the questions and their every question that they asked Steve, you know, we were sitting and just hanging, you know, just hoping he could answer adequately, and that they'd listen to him. And, you couldn't tell what they were gonna do, they just absolutely – the questions they asked, they were hard questions, and they'd interrupt him and he'd been well prepared to adjudicate before them, to be part of that system, and so he practiced with Joe Uhlman, who was over at [unclear - sounds like "San Universe south fair"], he is the guru for Supreme Court and for all kinds of issues and civil rights issues. And I know that they did mock courts...

Moon:

In preparation?

Wilson:

...[root?] courts, or whatever they're called - in preparation, so, interrupting him, and keeping him, you know, that – like they do at the Supreme Court. So he'd practiced being interrupted, so he wasn't upset by it, you know, he'd pause a minute, and then take it. But it was over so fast. It was over so fast that when we left there we had no idea, no idea what was going to happen. And whether we had even a chance. And then, when the ruling came out, you know, much later, then, after they deliberated, and wrote all their opinions, there was just euphoria. We couldn't believe it had really happened. And to - and our - trying to think of our – name of our - okay, in here - the person [unclear00:44:39] to our – our executive director of our transit district, well he took a real [(sounds like) chin-up]. And I - of course, I think part of the reason that it was done is because Sally Reed was our county executive. We'd taken a risk when we – we hired her to be our county executive. And she so firmly believed in affirmative action. And, so that, we didn't take as much of a risk because of if – if there'd been a man head of our county, would it have progressed as much?

Moon:

Yeah. That's a good question.

Wilson:

Yeah. And I think part of it was because three women voted to appoint Sally Reed, a woman.

Moon:

Well there was you, Zoe and Dianne...

Wilson:

Dianne...

Moon:

...right?

Wilson:

Mm-hm. And that was - no. It wasn't. It was me, Zoe, and Becky Morgan.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

It was pre-Diane.

Moon:

Pre-Diane.

Wilson:

Becky Morgan. And I think I told you the story about the personal reporters [say, well] you're - you're going to be appointing the Hispanic - other person, there were two finalists. And I said, "Why do you say that?" And he said to me, "How would it look to have three women appoint a woman?" And I replied - replied to him, complete - quickly, I said, "That wouldn't look no different than for a hundred years, five men appointed a man."

Moon:

[laughs] That's a good point. That was a good comeback, actually.

Wilson:

Yeah. And - and so he didn't ask that - didn't put it that way again. He didn't make a to-do about it in the press. He just said, you know, who voted [then?], he named the ones who voted. And...

Moon:

In the earlier court trial, before it went to the higher court, did the county supervisors, or did the transportation department head, did they have to actually testify in the original trial?

Wilson:

I'm sure they did. And I – I don't remember that. You know, Zoe Lofgren, who has – who [(sounds like) loves vree], she might have even - I don't - she probably doesn't have her old – old files going back that far. But, I - we had to appeal it all the way to the Supreme Court because he won in the lower courts, I guess, that's why it [was?]. He appealed it. I – I don't know what happened in the lower courts, and maybe it's in some of this information.

Moon:

Oh, well I'm sure, you know, if somebody wanted to do research on that they could, you know certainly find it through the...

Wilson:

(talking over Moon)...they could find out.

Moon:

...court cases and everything.

Wilson:

And, there's another [inaudible] talking about this...

Moon:

Yeah. (reading?) [take] affirmative lessons from America? Northern Territory News...[I never got that?]

Wilson:

I have no idea...

Moon:

(laughs)

Wilson:

And then the next one from the affirmative action, which I think you'll be interested in, was here – this was the – this one, "The Price," this was her story. And she, she – (reading) "Diane Joyce fought for her job all the way to the Supreme Court. So why does it seem like she still has to fight for it every day?" And in it she tells what it's like to be with all these men, and how they felt about her, because she rocked the boat. And, the...

Moon:

Have you – did you see that movie that was out last year, called...

Wilson:

Yes.

Moon:

[What's] it called, "North..."? You know, the one with Charlize Theron about...

Wilson:

Yeah, and no diff—

Moon:

And it was...

Wilson:

It was no different...

Moon:

...it's the same time...

Wilson:

It's the same story. Yeah, see, here is [unclear] (reading): "Four men in sun visors elbowed toward the front, and leaned as far as they can over the counter. Their tattooed arms [(sounds like) leave suede prints] across the linoleum top. 'Well, well, well (drawn out)Die-anne! How in the hell ya?' 'Hey Diane, how the F are you?' 'Oh, don't ask her, she doesn't know that.' 'Yeah, Diane, she doesn't know nothin.' At this remark there's a general [(sounds like) guh – hoff] and a [laugh] – and a slapping of backs. Diane Joyce pretends not to hear. She continues to smile at the collective [PTs (?) this is in her job] when she was promoted [up to(?)]. In the last year, the taunting had become ritual, as daily as the punched time cards. Predictability has blunted the effect, and the words no longer carry the same force they once did, something both men and Diane knew. At the end of the work day, Diane Joyce turns to the foreman to ask for permission to leave, a diplomatic gesture. In the hierarchy of the roads, the dispatcher does not answer to the foreman. 'Can I go play, boss?' 'Isn't that what you do all day?' he said, looking over the newspaper he's been reading [in?] for the last half an hour. As it turns out, Diane stays late to finish up some work, and it's often the case she's the last one out the door. The foreman and the road crew are long day when the county's first female road dispatcher crosses the silent truckyard and locks the security gate behind her."

Moon:

That's a – that's a really great story, as far as, you know, telling, just - the hardships that women faced in the industries that were very, you know, were so male-dominated in that sense.

Wilson:

Yeah. (reading?) "When the clerks asked for a raise, the personnel director says, 'What do you girls need a raise for? All you do is spend the money on trips to Europe!' And Joyce said, 'Every clerk I knew was supporting a family through death or divorce. I never - I've – I've never seen Mexico, much less Europe.'" So, I think you would enjoy reading this...

Moon:

Oh, yeah, definitely, I will. And that will be a great, kind of, sideline I think...

Wilson:

(reading) "I paid the price for wanting to earn a living. You always pay a price." So I've [stay?] you – saved you some good stuff, although...

Moon:

Oh, good.

Wilson:

I don't remember much.

Moon:

(laughs) Well, that's okay. I think that this will be great. Now, I think the affirmative, you know, affirmative action obviously fits well into the whole issue of comparable worth, sort of issues in – in this area. But, let's, you know, talk a little bit about [WAMA?]. The - what was the - what was the- that acro – acronym's full name, it's, "The Women's Alliance [unclear]"?

Wilson:

Yeah, I never - It's – it's so strange. It was called Woman's Alliance...

Moon:

Woman's [on]...

Wilson:

Women on - let – let's – we're gonna [have to] go back to it.

Moon:

Yeah, maybe.

Wilson:

I'm sorry.

Moon:

That's okay.

Wilson:

That was eighty-four, I think it was in this one (sound of book placed on table?).

Moon:

Yeah, I think it was in this one, too.

Wilson:

Yeah. (opens book?)'Cause I...

Moon:

Trying to - just because I'm not as familiar with all these things, I'd like to just make sure we have that on the record.

Wilson:

And then I was gonna go back to the- the beginnings of that, 'seventy-four. Here it is.

Moon:

Okay, it just says "The Woman's Alliance." Okay.

Wilson:

(talking over Moon) The Woman's Alliance, yeah, but they - they just dropped it...

Moon:

At some point it must have been something else. [(inaudible, reading) anniversary...]. Okay, well, what was this organization about?

Wilson:

Okay, well, Bea Robinson came to the city council. And she wanted to create a shelter for the battered women that women couldn't leave the homes of violence. And, particularly this was - she - Bea Robinson was Hispanic. And this really was - she was concerned about the Hispanic women in our community, and the violence that was occurring in the homes. And so, she came to the city council, because what she wanted to open was a - a safe place for these women who came to her. And she had wanted to lease - she decided she'd create this organization to get a shelter. And she came to the city council because - she asked for the money to get the shelter, and she wanted the grants, you need grants, and she wanted money to go find the shelter. And I was the chair of the CDBG block grant program. This was a federal program that started about the time I got on the city council. Seventy-four, I guess it started. And it was - we got federal funds to improve the poverty areas, offering social programs to improve the community. That's what it was: community block grants. And we got a - a lot of money from the feds. And we had a - a CDBG committee that I chaired.

Moon:

As part of the city council?

Wilson:

As part of the city council. The committee was - were citizens from different walks of life, and we had - we were staffed by the city. And the - they came to us. And I was supportive to get them funding, and we - we funded things like the Filipino community center. Funds to build that, funds to build - to build centers, we funded, in - in a poverty area we funded childcare, that - we eventually became [Gardiner. Gardiner Child Care], they eventually, you know, became a whole complex of services to the poor. And that was particularly in the Hispanic area. We - the community [got] block grant program built, paved streets. And they would give the residents small grants that would improve

their house, so that it looked better inside and out. Better living conditions. And one of the things that I discovered when I was chairing that, when there was this one street that kept voting not to participate in the block grant program, it was one of the streets that had been a gravel street over on the east side for years and years, and no, they didn't want it paved. They did not – but, it was a gravel street, but they didn't accept any of the loans for their houses, or a grant for their houses to improve it. So when I began to investigate, I came back to the block grant program, and then finally convinced the city council, I said, “the reason they don't want to improve their houses is because, why improve your houses, you have to drive in and take mud into your house every day in the wintertime?” Because they have no streets, they have no sidewalks. I said, “if you, if you, if you – we as a city improve their streets and their sidewalks, then they will want to improve their houses.” And that's exactly what happened. I just - I got the street paved, and I got – well, I didn't get it paved, but I got the votes for the city to pave it, and the sidewalks, and then they went and – and got their loans to improve their houses. And you have to – you have to understand what's happening, you know, in order for you to get people to buy into things. You can't just say well, you – why don't you give us this – why don't you take this grant, it would help you. It didn't really help, because there was no way to keep it decent when you have to bring mud into your house everyday.

Moon:

And so they did actually improve the properties after that point?

Wilson:

(talking over Moon) after - after we put the street in, and the sidewalks, they – then they took the – either took the loans out for their houses, or grants to improve it.

Moon:

Now, you actually drove over there to see what was going on, right?

Wilson:

Oh, yeah.

Moon:

Was that characteristic of the board members to do that?

Wilson:

This was city council.

Moon:

The city council, I'm sorry.

Wilson:

No, if you remember, I [founded?] the first really citizen person on the city council. Well, Norm Mineta was, too, but he was still part of the business community. And all the people on the council were from Willow Glen. They were all white until Norm came along and was appointed as a council member and then became the – the mayor. So that -

the east side was considered 'beside,' and not really given that much consideration, it was - in the police department it was given consideration, because it was supposed to be a problem. So I, you know, I walked all those districts when I was running for city council - I walked districts all over the city council - all over the city, which none of the business people ever did. They would never have thought about going out and knocking on the door. You know, they were people like the head of an insurance company, or the - this kind of a businessman, or that kind of businessman. So I was a citizen councilwoman, and so I guess I looked at things differently, and that's why they appointed me to be the CDBG person.

Moon:

Right, 'cause you had the...

Wilson:

['Cause] they weren't - they weren't that interested in that. Federal dollars, you know, some of the guys didn't believe it anyway, so...

Moon:

(laughs) Well...

Wilson:

They didn't believe it - it was our local dollars coming back home. So - so, WAMA came - Bea Robinson came, and started a - Bea Robinson was an activist, who was always there protesting what was happening to the Hispanic world. She was a very strong woman, and her brother was also a very strong individual. Jose...can't recall his name right now. But - and she came before the CDBGs - came before the council, she came before the CDBGs, started talking about the battered women. First one, she had found a house in Willow Glen, and, I think that house, the neighbors fought [it], that fell through, because there were men dominating the council, and the protest stopped that. It was gonna ruin the neighborhood to have a shelter for battered women in their neighborhood. But eventually, we got the money and she found - she found a place, and we - through the CDBG, she got the money to start the shelter in a safe place, and the police knew where it was, but I never knew where it was.

Moon:

Well, right, 'cause it was...

Wilson:

Nobody knew where it was. So that started the WAMA, and it's now - they changed its name to Next Door. Because, you know, they - like a lot of non-profits, Bea became very dictatorial. She was the founder, and she knew best, and I think eventually she wore out her welcome with some of the - 'cause you got to keep at the board, and, [you know] the board tried to be an advisor, and vote policy, and she wasn't - not to her liking. And eventually - so she retired, and they - then they started the Next Door, that's the - didn't start it, they just changed the name.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

To “Next Door.” And, for years, people would say, well, you know, what does it mean? Well now, [you?] people just accept it’s next door – what it means is, you never know what’s happening next door.

Moon:

Yeah. Well, that’s a good analogy.

Wilson:

Good analogy, that’s [the way?] if you really want to examine it. So – and it’s still thriving today. It’s – it does a great job, and, from that beginning, you know, then, La Isla started in south county. Which – it was a battered shelter down there, and, well now we have the alliance so the battered – of battered shelters, and - and it’s in all parts of the county. And so that - and the county, of course, as a social service agency, had a lot to do with it later on, too, [with] monies towards support [for] these shelters. And...

Moon:

Yeah. It seems like there were – you know, during that time period, especially in the - between the, I would say the eighties through, you know, maybe early 2000, there was a real, you know, kind of focus on domestic violence issues, but it seems like it’s kind of lost its - you know, like the media doesn’t seem to really focus on those issues very much anymore.

Wilson:

They do it once a year now, but - but, what happened is, [you see], this started in the seventies, and that was the federal program that started during the poverty program. The first was - that was there when I came in, which was a different program, and then the CDBG has, you know, brought the money for the poverty programs, and – in the seventies. And then in – you’re right, and then as they built, and began to explore and publicize the need, on into the eighties, but now – and in the nineties, but you see, also in the seventies, the rape crisis program at the YWCA started.

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

And, of course, I was very interested in [unclear] that starting. And, so today, you know, the Y has the “Walk a day in her shoes”?

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

Walk a – “Walk a Mile in her Shoes,” and, that there’s a whole week devoted to domestic violence.

Moon:

Right, well the Y has done a really great job with that...

Wilson:

And I mean, but the county - but then the county, with their domestic violence council, you know, and – and – the part [of what the translated is?] that it’s just become institutionalized, I’d say. So the battle is not there, so it doesn’t get as much publicity, unless you can create something that brings publicity [to it]. But the system – what’s more important than whether there’s any publicity or not – the system has changed, so that battered women know what to do. And, that that...

Moon:

(talking over Wilson) Well that maybe – that’s what the – maybe that’s the – the key, then...

Wilson:

And that’s the way it’s supposed to be. It’s supposed to be that, when you go to [bring ‘em?], you – you have support when you go to trial, you have support from the whole system. Whether it’s [the vital] issue, being with you if you’ve been raped, or whether it’s the domestic violence that people - shelters that will assist women how to gain independence, And - so that it doesn’t get publicity anymore but it happens.

Moon:

Oh, it still happens, it still...

Wilson:

But I’m – I mean that the system protects women now. And – and some men.

Moon:

Yeah. And children.

Wilson:

And children. Yeah, you know, the - and [average] every day, that people are aware of when they’re reading the paper that a – a seven-year-old has been raped, pulled off the bus [going?] and raped. A child is seen over at Valley Medical Center - a baby is seen at Valley Medical Center, six months old. And it gets – it gets published, those things get publicized. So it – it affects the system, and the way that they treat women.

Moon:

Yeah. No, I think - I mean there’s been such a radical, you know, change in how women in those circumstances have been treated, and certainly, [though], you know, [though], going backwards even further than the seventies, there was a lot of concern. It was

actually the - actually, it – the Y women from the early part of the century, you know, were involved in all of the – in, you know, changing all the statutory rape laws, and the Christian Women's Temperance Union was involved in that. And so I think it's a really interesting, you know, way to look at the improvements that have really taken place, and that there really is...

Wilson:

And the change – and of course, that was why I got in politics in the first place, and I believe that you have to change the system in order to make real change. And the change has been made in terms of - of how women are treated, particularly in San Jose, and the - and the county system. But I can tell you that I just - last week, I was dealing with a woman who is trying to go through the Morgan Hill police. And she's not getting the attention she really needed, but, but [unclear] she didn't know what to do, and I got her to -to the Y because basically, when she was confronted at the motel - she had left her husband, she was confronted at the motel. And her husband grabbed her purse and left, and she was left standing there with her two children in the motel, and without any way to get to her car – her car was there. So he'd essentially stolen the keys to her car, and, she called the police. She didn't get the satisfaction of even getting him arrested, because she was still married to him. Now, I don't think that would have happened in San Jose Police Department. I think that they would have been able to, uh, at least rescue her purse for her. 'Cause...

Moon:

Well, I would have thought – you would think they would be able to do that in Morgan Hill, too! Right?

Wilson:

Yeah, I know. So I'm gonna be – I'm going to be talking to Rob Davis, who's the police chief here about what's wrong with Morgan Hill, and what – because – and what they said was, "Well, you're still married to him, so..." But then, [through?] domestic violence, she was – she had had a restraining order against him, previously.

Moon:

Oh, that doesn't seem right.

Wilson:

It doesn't seem right. So what I did, was I sent her to the YWCA, and, I – I [got caught?], this doesn't need to be on the tape, but I called the Y, and I called on Carrie, of course, who's the executive. And she told me later, after she had got – you know, got her started in the system and they assessed her that day, and got her [involved], and she said, "You know, I have - I hate to tell you this, but I was really excited – so excited." [And, I said,] ... "about this. That's not, maybe, the right way to look at it, but I was so thrilled to do something for you."

Moon:

Oh!

Wilson:

She said, "In all the years, [I said?], this is the first thing you've ever asked me to do for you." (laughs)

Moon:

Oh, that's nice.

Wilson:

I thought, "Oh, what..."

Moon:

Yeah, I – yeah, well I think that the – the Y has done some, you know, such exceptional really public service, social, sort of, work stuff, and – and we're gonna talk about – I wanna talk about the Y in just, like, one, you know, sitting because there's so much to cover, and I do wanna return to the topic of the rape crisis - crisis center, because I think that is a – that carries over into all of these other, you know...

Wilson:

It carries over...

Moon:

...things.

Wilson:

...and it carries over into, also, the - the counseling programs, and the program – parenting programs [which is?] what the Y does today. And they started out because as they began to - you know, it's not just treating the rape the first time, then they began to get the calls from the women who've been raped thirty years before. And, so that they - and – or incest, which was...

Moon:

Oh, I mean...

Wilson:

...[rape], yeah, and all those - and so then they needed – they needed it - so we take care of them, from the day - the minute that they are raped, but – or the minute that we discovered, they called in – whenever they called in, and [they're] entered [in] the counseling, and that's all graduated [you know], very cheap for all those who have low income. And 'til they – 'til they no longer feel they're victims, but they're survivors. And, they – and it's - so that leads into – ends in divorce, and single mothers, and single fathers, we've had a single father that went through the county parenting classes, because he was left with his children, and knew nothing about what to do, and the Y taught him.

Moon:

Yeah. Well, see that's just a – that's just a whole 'nother story that we need to – that – so maybe next time we meet we could talk about the Y.

Wilson:

Okay.

Moon:

Looking at where we are today, though, let's see, it's almost [three?] – it's almost an hour and, I gotta get over to campus, but I just wanted to...

Wilson:

I've [inaudible]...

Moon:

(interrupts) Oh, oh, oh, there was one thing I wanted to ask you. I was – I had interviewed Susan Hammer a couple weeks ago, and, she's really an interesting person, she – and she's - she doesn't think of herself as a very good storyteller, that's what she says anyway, but she was telling me that - I asked her what – why she didn't go into politics – you know, go – higher office 'cause she was actually invited to, you know fill Mi – the seat that Mike Honda has, and there was some sort of, you know, kind of women's network in Congress, with Zoe, and the Clinton – all the work she'd done with the Clinton administration, and - but then we were - we're processing her papers right now, and, Kay, my archives assistant, she's working on that project, and she said – she had mentioned that there was this big scandal in – in this – I forget the name of the guy who was working on this one project with her, but it was that he was getting carte blanche to do all of these, you know, to – you know, spend, spend, spend on these various projects and, can't – God, I can't think of his name off the top of my head – and, but the council was getting really angry about how the process was working, because it wasn't going before the council, and I think it was Gonzales who actually eliminated this whole sort of, kind of, like...

Wilson:

Well this was the Filipino commun – cultural center.

Moon:

Yeah.

Wilson:

Yeah, that –[well] he – he [the one] who put his parents in the - in the - the home? Was that...?

Moon:

Something like that. But I don't know if you remem – if you, you know, in looking at...

Wilson:

[I don't] – I don't remember that.

Moon:

...that particular issue. There was also the, you know, the big controversy during her mayoral period over the – the – bringing the Giants...

Wilson:

Oh yes. That – she lost that election. And, [that] she tried, and in fact, I was – see I was on her council. Her kitchen cabinet. And before she was - she was going to be running again - for mayor again. And so we met, and I – and I'm sure I the only person who said it, so - she asked me whether should she bring it up again, and, you know, put it on the ballot again cause they were urging her to do that. And I said, "Well, Susan, do you want to be a one-term mayor or a two-term mayor?" And I said, "You can either put it on the ballot again, you'll be a one-term mayor, because it's too soon."

Moon:

What was the – why were people opposed to the - doing – having the Giants come?

Wilson:

Well, it – because of the subsidy the city was gonna have to [put?], and, the – also, you see, after the convention center, which was McHenry's deal, the citizens put in a ballot measure that [it] – before you spend any money on, I guess a sports facility, you have to ask the voters. You have to show the voters -you have to ask them, "do you want it." And they didn't want the – the – they did – didn't want this plan. And the plan for the way that they were gonna finance the Giants, the voters turned down.

Moon:

Oh. Because it would've cost a lost of extra taxpayer money to do it.

Wilson:

Yeah, this wasn't a - way it was gonna be done, it was too big a subsidy for the city. The voters didn't want it. They didn't want the Giants that badly. So, there was a lot of pressure, that – and that was early in her – her term, which was fine, because you can - you can do things like that [when you're first fresh?]. And then, when it came – they were pressuring again, to do it again, and - and she was gonna be running again, you know, that year, and so she knew that it was not the time to do it. To be running for mayor, and having that big furor again about the Giants again. So she didn't do it.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

Because [that was?] the Giants, whether she [wants] that election or the Giants. And - but I – I don't know whether the - the Filipinos' community center was what - I don't – I don't know what...

Moon:

I'll have to go back, and look at that again, and then I'll ask you about that later, but, the other thing that she said that I thought was really interesting is, she said that she would've loved to have been the mayor indefinitely. She said she just loved being the mayor of San Jose.

Wilson:

She did. She – and she brought such class to it, and she brought – of course, I always claimed that what Susan did was, she brought true diversity into – into government of - of the city, into the commissions of the city, into the - of every, every ethnic group, she treated with respect, and she made them a part of the community, you know, a [Sikh?] being on the planning commission, and, you could just name it, but then she had – and when she was running, she embraced the diversity of this community.

Moon:

Yeah, I think her – just her philosophical background, you know, she – when she first met – well, not when she first met, but when her and Phil moved – when he was finishing law school, they moved to Washington D.C., and they worked with the Kennedy administration, and then were part of, kind of, the, you know, the whole, you know...

Wilson:

But she also married into a family who - who house [Angela] Davis, and Joanie – Joanie Hammer, who – and her husband Henry, you know, and of course – and Mrs. Hammer was on my board. And so the Hammer family, were always just [(sounds like) thoksh] and [way?] liberal.

Moon:

Right, right.

Wilson:

And extremely liberal.

Moon:

Yeah. And – well, she said that she – when she was in Washington, she was working for the - the Corps, she was working for the...

Wilson:

Peace Corps?

Moon:

...Peace Corps. And...

Wilson:

[Good?] you just had a memory block too.

Moon:

Yeah, I was...

Wilson:

[a real turn-around?]

Moon:

...trying to – yeah, thank you!

Wilson:

(laughs)

Moon:

(laughs) You know, there's certain age points where you start thinking, "Hm, well where is this memory going?" (laughs) But she was on – she worked for the Corps, and then Phil was working for the civil rights council, and was doing all kinds of legal work for that, and going into the South and doing [all so] – really interesting things, so I think that that makes sense, you know, kind of, following their - their track from, you know, their early...

Wilson:

They were always Democrats, and they were attracted to each other because they were both [Democrats] in the first place.

Moon:

Yeah, yeah.

Wilson:

And - and she [really] – she's truly – is the best elected mayor, and the best mayor San Jose has had. And, you see, there was always the - people didn't really understand her, that she was going to be that, because she was she was not the – the fluid Irish [glibness] of Tom McHenry, and he believed he is the king of San Jose.

Moon:

[laughs]

Wilson:

But he isn't, in terms of what he's done, and, of course, he disliked Susan because she was mayor and wouldn't follow his advice, and [she] – he's disliked everybody who's ever followed him, because they're not him. And he – he hasn't spoken to me since Zoe Lofgren became a congresswoman because I endorsed her and worked very hard for her, and, so he hasn't spoken to me since. That's the kind of grudges he keeps. And that's why he's a very, you know – anybody who can – can still hang on to what – what he wants for San Jose [is the best in the world] is - in the head.

Moon:

[laughs] Oh.

Wilson:

So - and Susan – and then of course Dave [Pandori?] was - drove Susan mad. Just drove [‘im] mad ’cause she – he was such a contrarian.

Moon:

Oh. Well, I think Susan’s certainly really done some interesting things for the city. And all of the - the social programs that she was involved with, in cleaning up the downtown, and, you know, working with the gang prevention, and...

Wilson:

And, you see, when I was on the council, the standard answer for anybody who came before the city council in 1973 was, “The county does that, go over and ask the county for the money.” They had no social programs. [WAMA] probably was one of the first social program that we funded, and because of the block grant [thing?], you know, and the – and Joe [(sounds like) Cola] who wanted the Filipino Center, and then tried to get it and get it, and - and never been able to get it voted in because they just didn’t go to the county, [go to] the county. And so when the block grant money came – and he always voted against all federal dollars, and so by that time I’d made friends with Joe, and he came to me, and said, you know, Susie, I’ve been trying to get the community center for the Filipinos - and the Filipinos, I loved, they were so supportive of my campaign. And so, I said, Okay. Let’s – let’s talk about it. And, so I put it in the community block grant program, to fund the center, and he voted for it.

Moon:

Oh!

Wilson:

His first and only vote for federal dollars.

(both laugh)

Wilson:

And that was when [Canterbury?] said, “Joe! You voted for that!” And he says, “Yeah,” said, “It’s a great project, and Susie talked to me about it.” – Something like that (laughs) [inaudible] He had a – but Susan really did, and so that – so the – the - with the block grant program, they began to fund some of those social programs, and they had somebody who really believed [in] like Susan, and start them from scratch.

Moon:

Yeah, one of the interesting...

Wilson:

That’s so different from where the city was in nineteen-seventy...

Moon:

Yeah, when you were there?

Wilson:

...in seventy-three.

Moon:

Yeah. Well, it's great to see the – to see some progress, you know, in that way. Because it really has cleaned up the whole downtown area, from what I understand – I mean, I'm a newcomer, so I haven't seen what it was before.

Wilson:

Well, and then graffiti, graffiti. And Janet Grey - I will say this, if I'm remembering Janet Grey, one thing I remember was she talked to me about getting rid of the prostitutes downtown?

Moon:

I don't remember if she did, I'll have to go back and listen to the tape.

Wilson:

(talking over Moon) She – she [inaudible] go back and - because, you know, she really was very concerned about the prostitutes that were walking the streets in downtown San Jose, over on Second Street, down by [Emile's] Restaurant, down in that area. They were just parading around all the time, and getting them out of the downtown – Janet Grey took – took that issue on.

Moon:

Yeah. One of the things that Susan did say, was that, you know, one of the most important people, as - women in her life, as a mentor, was Janet Grey.

Wilson:

Of course, because she worked for Janet Grey. She gave her her start in politics [inaudible]...

Moon:

And then they were neighbors, too...

Wilson:

...they were neighbors, yeah.

Moon:

...so they, had a lot of, you know, connectiveness that way. But, interesting – she has a beautiful house, too [laughs]...

Wilson:

Yes, she does.

Moon:

...[that] house is just incredible. But anyway, I just - I wanted to just talk to you a little bit about that, 'cause I thought she - you know, she's such an interesting person, and, the reason why she didn't want to run for the - the senate seat was because she just didn't want to be separated from her family, and I - and almost all the women I've spoken to have, that, you know, outside that - well, I haven't had a chance to talk to Zoe yet, but - all of the women have said basically the same thing, they wanted to, you know, they felt that they would rather be in local politics then go on to a higher office, and - oh, this is one of the things I was reading in the - the last scrapbook, was that you had, at one point, you were on some - you had said something - somebody had asked you if you were running for higher office, and this was during your...

Wilson:

Oh, yeah, first years.

Moon:

...early years, and you said that you were - well, someday you might run for governor, and I know when we have talked in the past that you said that you weren't really looking at - those sort of level of offices, so was that kind of a tongue-in-cheek sort of thing?

Wilson:

No, that was to open their eyes [and think] that women can - can aspire to be governor.

Moon:

Mm-hm. Well, that was, you know, that's what I thought...

Wilson:

Yes, tongue-in-cheek - but it wasn't tongue-in-cheek, I just, you know - [that] I had those columnists convinced that someday that's what I was gonna do.

Moon:

Yeah.

[both laugh]

Wilson:

But, I - I - but, as I matured in politics, I realized that you have to follow the party line in order to be in the legislature. And I saw what it did to Becky Morgan, but I'd - I'd long decided [they weren't go?] because I - I could not do what the party line would do if I didn't believe in it.

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

I just was too damned independent, and so it wasn't gonna work 'cause I – I couldn't ever do it. I had to come to my own decision, and - and the people that worked for me allowed me to do that, so they always presented both sides of every argument and never worried about what I was gonna do, because I'd do what I thought was best. And that was a real tribute, frankly, that my staff wasn't one that said "you've gotta go do this. You've got to do this." They just knew that they just give me the – the tools, I'd make a decision.

Moon:

Yeah. Well, so, you were a very different sort of politician, in that way, when you were in, you know, and [it] – and your thinking about politics was, like you, going back to the whole concept of the citizen politician, you know, because, you were really more - it's too bad we don't have more citizen politicians out there, but I think there are people out there that do follow their conscience on those...

Wilson:

Yes. There are.

Moon:

... things, it's just...

Wilson:

I think that...

Moon:

...that we don't...

Wilson:

...I think that, you know, frankly, Cindy Chavez probably won't be in there because she follows her – what she believes in.

Moon:

Mm-hm. Well, maybe she will though...

Wilson:

Oh, God, I hope so!

Moon:

[laughs]

Wilson:

I hope so.

Moon:

Okay, well we'll – we'll conclude for now. (transmission ends 1:22:44)