

Interview with: Susie Wilson

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Interview: Wilson.Interview 2.1.DSS

[01:37:31] at beginning {start at [00:00]}

Moon:

My name is Danelle Moon, I am the director of San Jose State Special Collections, and today I am interviewing Susie Wilson at her home in San Jose, California. Today's date is June 22nd, 2006.

Alright. Well, this is our take two of your interview, and hopefully we'll be having more sessions like these in smaller quantities so that we can, you know talk, about themes and capture your whole—really your whole life history and looking at your influences on women's history and certainly in looking at political history and life in San Jose. So to start with, we have been looking at very specific things like the National Women's Political Caucus and your role in that, and you had gone through some of your scrap books to try and help you, you know, recall some of these events. So, what I'm going to do is first go through a couple of basic things and then ask you to kind of just focus on and tell us the story of your first entrance into the National Women's Political Caucus and then we'll move on from there.

One of the things we're really interested in documenting is, what was your pathway to office and who were the characters who influenced you and what was the climate like when you were there as a woman, in politics, what types of inequalities did you face, or what were some of the things that might have surprised you, that you thought

you might have faced but didn't. Were there different types of personality battles that you had to deal with as you were going along in your path or trajectory into your political experience? And, would you want to talk about what some of those experiences were and who the people were? And so, that's just kind of like a starting point and that sounds like a lot of things to address but you know, why don't you just start from there and we'll move on a little bit.

Wilson:

Well, we'll start at the beginning, with my thinking about my entering into the politics of San Jose.

Moon:

Oh, here don't move. I'll grab that. It does I know. Plus you're still on that antibiotic too, it probably makes you thirsty. This one?

Wilson:

That's it.

Moon:

Is it in the fridge, or just the tap?

Wilson:

Tap.

Moon:

Okay, great.

Wilson:

There's a coaster over there. What we can do is put it over here.

Moon:

Yeah, definitely use years and whatever names you can use. And also if you are using acronyms, let's say what they are so that we can, you know, in the transcription we can get that easily transcribed without somebody having to look that up. (Moon laughs)

Wilson:

In the '60s I became very involved in the recognition of the sexism and racism that exists in America. And in terms of the YWCA, Young Women's Christian Association—

Moon:

Young Women's Christian Association. Yeah, we got that one. (Moon Laughs)

Wilson:

You got that one, you know that one. So that I was really had begun to understand politics and how you create change, and I saw young women creating change. And I was so struck at the fact that I had not really risked much in my life, stepped out and declared something was wrong with our society and try to change it. I hadn't really done that. I did it in the YWCA, we did lots of things in the YWCA in the late '60s that would be revolutionary, really revolutionary in 1970 when we took the [inaudible 00:04:46] to eliminate racism by any means necessary where it existed.

And so, I had become to understand what politics was really all about. So that when I received a phone call from [Gerry Steinberg?] who was a friend, who had been—going to be on the Board of Supervisors, and asked me if I had ever considered running for office, and she said, "Don't answer immediately. Would you consider running?" I said, "Yes, I'll consider running." And I think, she was a little bit surprised because I hadn't expressed much interest in it. So then, I really didn't get another call, so I talked

with my family and they all said, If you're willing to do it, do it. So I had full support of my family: three daughters and a husband, the youngest was 16, the other was in college, two were in college and the youngest was in high school. I said, "Yes, I would consider it." and we moved on. At that point, on September the 29th, I received my first call, the day before my birthday.

There became a jostling for who was really going to run for seat five of the city council. And there was a real breakthrough after a luncheon meeting and council men [Walter Hayes?], who was not going to run, stood in a parking lot with me, and I looked up at this six foot three guy, and talked about what I really wanted to do. I want to change the system. I want to bust it open for minorities and women and we looked at it and we each go, She's been a conservationist, and he wanted to save the trees. So that didn't mesh, and I didn't think that it would mesh with him. At that point he looked at me and said, "I will support you." There had been people trying to get his endorsement and I really hadn't expected it at that point, it just threw me into a dizzy, that he would go ahead and, "Yes, I will endorse you. I will support you." And he began to open the doors of the business world.

So the business world became convinced that I might be a viable candidate. There were—Walter put together a luncheon out at the La Rinconada Golf Club, and about twelve business leaders. And I remember one of the men saying, "What makes you think that you, as a women, would be good on the city council?" First of all, I have a small voice and could say the most outrageous things and people don't know that they're outrageous, I think. I said to him without any hesitation, "Have you been to the council meetings?" And he said, "Yes." And I said, "What makes you think that its going to be

good for San Jose to continue six men and one woman?” And he said, “You have a point.” (Moon laughs) Because he didn’t particularly like anybody on the city council, so why not? At that point I began to be taken seriously by the men. One of the girls that told me later after he talked with me and I walked out of the room, and he said, “He was scared to death.” Because I didn’t know—I wasn’t particularly involved with the development world or had opinions about it. But that he thought I’d probably win, so he was going to support me. But my trial run was that was that the middle, metal industry, then I got some money from them. The real sort of people that can make money did it.

I had been working with women, I’ve been working with youth for the thirteen years I have lived in San Jose. I had taught children, young women, and I had been very involved with my church, encouraging of the Young Women’s Christian Society. And so that I had a [inaudible 00:08:59] of people who knew me very well. And for the first time, I think, in a long time, that our church got involved with a campaign. And a lot of my workers are from the church, as well of course, as the YWCA. A lot of my people, women, are from YWCA. And the AAUW got involved, and those people, I did not know, but as they got to know me, [Lynn Shendero?] said to me one time after she walked the priest in, “Well maybe your not known by many people in San Jose, but boy, a lot of the ones you know, sure do like you.”

Moon:

Who was Lynn Shendero?

Wilson:

She was a AAUW, a very strong AAUW, American Association University of Women. And she was, also, National Women’s Political Caucus. She was very strong

feminist. And so, I met her through Elaine from the office, and she became a faithful follower of mine all through the years. And she is still around. Just like all of us, a lot older today.

Moon:

Yeah.

Wilson:

My campaign was women, my campaign was walkers. I was willing to walk all the precincts I could, and I think I walked about fifty-six if I remember right. My interview and my ability to be very forthright, very forthright, with in my answers to questions at debate. And there was twenty people running, so you had a very short time to make an impact on those people sitting in the room with you. And if you had forty people in the room, you already knew that twenty of them were for him. Twenty of them had already pledged to the candidate up there who brought somebody with them.

Moon:

So there were twenty people that were running for the same seat?

Wilson:

Yes, seat five from [inaudible 00:10:57] to Oak Grove. So I knew that if I was going to be noticed, I had to really be noticed and say things that would make an impact. And one time we were having a meeting—debate—a forum at the San Jose State University, and I was sitting about the 7th person in at the time. And one of the questions was, How much money have you raised. And the first person says, “Well I’m not raising any money, I’m not going to go out and get any money, I’m going to fund this myself. And I’m not a politician.” So the next person says, “Well, I let my treasuries do that, and

I don't know how much he has in the treasury. I don't do that. I just go out and meet the people." And their answers were that way, like a million of those. And they came to me and I said, "I have \$2,374.50." (Moon laughs) And that took everybody back. And I said, "I always know who gave me money because it is so important to me to have money. And also because it's so important to say 'thank you' to those people who really support me." And then I told a story about one of the women who helped found the National Women's Political Caucus, called eventually, who would if there was any change left over at the end of the week, would put it in the jar on the ledge of the kitchen window. And she brought in her money. It was about \$7.50 and I treasured that money because it really meant that I was her horse and that she would go out and tell everybody about me because she wanted me to win. Because it was a race and I was her horse.

Moon:

What was the year again of that campaign?

Wilson:

The year was spring of 1973. It was a primary in March and then the run-off on June 8th, I don't have the date of the primary right now.

Moon:

Okay.

Wilson:

So it was going to be quite a struggle. There was an article that said, "Susie Who?" And I wasn't well known in certain circles, but there was circles that I was known in and even though there weren't people that I knew, such as my treasurer. I was told by Walter that I had to have a treasurer. And he said that, bankers are the ones usually for treasurers for

all our races. So he said, “Who do you know?” And I said, “I don’t know who I know.” “Who do you know is a banker?” And I says, “I know one, I recruited him to be top of the budget of the YWCA.” And he said, “Well, go to him.” So, I did. And I don’t know how arrogant it was to ask him to be my treasurer. For one thing, he was the vice-president of a bank, and he was a staunch republican who had always been the treasurer for a person who was republican in the assembly. We all thought we were Neanderthals, but I sit down and talked with him, and he only asked me three questions. He said to me, “How old are you?” And I said I was twenty-four. And he said, “What does your husband think about this?” And I said, “He’s fully supportive.” “And your kids?” I said, “I have three sons and they’re going to support me on this.” And his other question was, “What do you want me to do?”

Moon:

And what was his name again? Do you remember?

Wilson:

I don’t. Sorry about that. I will think of it later.

Moon:

Okay.

Wilson:

So he became my treasurer. I was a liberal democrat and he’d only been a treasurer of a very conservative republican. So that’s the way my race went: people were attracted to me, and supported me. I was delighted.

Moon:

We were talking a few minutes back about the whole canvassing and walking into the precinct, was that a common process that most candidates used or was that something that more of the women had to use as part of it. Because I've heard other women say the same thing, and I heard Cindy Chavez talk about that in the same kind of way and I was just curious if it was cross gender, or if it was considered sort of expected sort of thing to do as a potential candidate?

Wilson:

It was first started in this county by [inaudible 00:15:59]

Moon:

Well, we can come back to it if you want to.

Wilson:

No. McCorkindale.

Unidentified woman:

Yeah, Dan McCorkindale.

Moon:

Dan McCorkindale?

Wilson:

[Dan McCorkindale?] came to town from Chula Vista. He had been in politics in Chula Vista. And he started walking creases and he wore out one shoe and he had a hole in it, and he was giving a little shoe that looked like it had a hole in it, and he wears that silver shoe I think, today. And he wore that shoe, but he was frightened by most people because he was a very liberal man running for the board of supervisors and he was tackling the incumbent. And [inaudible 00:16:45] the majority. And he beat him. I think

it was [inaudible 00:16:52], I might be mistaken on that. But he walked precincts and nobody ever heard of doing that before his time. It had been a “good old boys network” in San Jose, you just kind of passed it around to all your business friends. And most of the people that made the city council were from widdled in. There were no minorities, period. And then Norm Mineta came along, and he was appointed. He had been the head of the Human Relations Committee for the city. Mineta remained there—a little troubles that he had come along the way. So he was appointed and then he was elected, but most—and [Drusser?] came along after Mineta, and he was first appointed. That’s the way you get into the city council. Still rushing from Willow Glen.

Moon:

Garza was from Willow Glen?

Wilson:

Garza was from the East Side. The rest of them, the people who are from Willow Glen, or what they call them, Rose Garden, all of them, that’s where they were from. So it had been a closed kind of deal. But when Dan walked, the newspaper of course had not endorsed him, because he was a liberal democrat. And the newspaper were really taken back, he walked, they knew he had walked. They knew that he had other people to walk for him. So that when I went to the Mercury News for my endorsement, I told them that I had 300 walkers, and I did have them, which was a large number they couldn’t believe it, and I think that was one of the reasons they thought I might win this race. Because no one else had 300 walkers. And I walked, and I told them I was walking everyday. And that really took them [inaudible00:18:52], here is this woman who is walking everyday and she has got 300 walkers and it looks like she might win, even though we don’t like

the one woman on the city council now. (Moon laughs) And they eventually endorsed—I forgot from that debate because that was one of the questions at that debate at San Jose City College. And the next person that came along was, Do you want the endorsement of the Mercury News. It had not come out yet. and one guy says, “I don’t like them I’m going to be independent.” And the 6 people before me denied that they wanted that endorsement, and it came to me and I said, “You bet I want that endorsement.” (Moon laughs) I said, “If I don’t get it, I can live without it, but yes, I want that endorsement because it means something. it might mean just a little bit, but at least it means they think that I am an electable candidate. So, yes, I want it. From then on, the rest of the candidates all said they wanted it. So the first six said, no they didn’t want it, and the rest of them by me said, yes they did. So that was the way that I could just—and people piggy-backed off of what I would say, because I was still the forthright.

Moon:

Now that actually is really interesting. I think the whole process of how you went out and tried to collect other people’s votes through just personal appearance like that is really interesting, and probably we could talk about just the whole—

Wilson:

yeah we could talk about—

Moon:

—just the whole lobbying aspects of becoming a candidate. I’m wandering—

Wilson:

I did have, every day, from that January to the election, April 2nd or something like that. I had as many as seven appearances and [inaudible 00:20:44] every day, that I could get

Moon:

How many appearances?

Wilson:

Seven.

Moon:

Seven? Wow.

Wilson:

Either meeting businessmen or having coffee, afternoon, evenings. And I was one that never worried if there were only three people there, because the hostess, I always reassured her, that she had written cards to maybe 50 people. When it came time to have the election, those fifty people probably can't remember one name that their friend said was a good person. So I had always assured the hostess that her efforts and writing to each of her friends was just as important as if they were in the room. And that made them feel good, and it was true.

Moon:

When you—in doing this kind of campaign, this precinct walking did you ever talk to Dan McCorkel—

Wilson:

McCorkindale

Moon:

McCorkindale, about his influence on your campaigning?

Wilson:

Well Dan endorsed me of course and he never really talked about.

Moon:

He never talked about the shoe campaign? (Moon laughs)

Wilson:

No, because everybody knew it.

Moon:

Okay. so once you actually got into politics and you went through the whole election process and actually succeeded, What were some of the inequalities that you faced perhaps in both the campaigning process as well as once you got in what were your experiences.

Moon:

My experiences, if I could put it this way, were really educating people on how they acted when they interface with me. How they sounded when they talked to a woman. And how they really didn't know what to do. And so, I'm not saying that I educated everyman I could, when he came into my office. For example, I never let a man get away with calling anybody a "girl". I would kind of gently hint, "Oh, is she 13 or 14?" "Oh, no, she's mature, yes. She is a woman. Yes, she is" "Oh, she's just not a girl. That's nice to know." Things like that, that I would make them see what they were saying and doing. Once when I was on a panel at a regional conference ABAG, which was Associates Bay Area Governments, at a regional meeting, I was on the panel. And the guy that got up and started talking told three very sexist jokes. He started out and he told the first one, and I'm sitting there facing the audience. And I didn't laugh. The audience laughed pretty heartily. He told the next one, and I just stood there. I didn't laugh, I didn't frown. And the audience didn't laugh as much. He told the third one, and there

was no laughter. He caught on, and he quickly went about his business

[inaudible00:23:48] But that was the way that I instinctively could combat the sexism that you found in everyplace you went. Because when you were the pun of all the jokes that came along (phone rings) Oh let me go grab that.

Moon:

Well, we were talking about the inequalities you faced, and how you dealt with that once you actually got into office. And you talked a little bit about the sexism, how you tried to counter the sexism by reeducating some of the men you were working with.

Wilson:

But in subtle ways.

Moon:

In subtle ways, right.

Wilson:

And one other thing I could tell you, that I remembered. I was introduced on a panel, a national panel, with the National League of Cities, and this man had all of our resumes. And I'd given him my resume, including my husband and children. And so, each person whose resume was really elegantly written and et cetera, and et cetera, as he introduced all of us. And then when he came to me, he said, "And now we have the lovely one on the panel. She's married and she has three sons." And so I got up and I talked to them. And I went straight back to my city hall, when I got home, and I said, "Take every personal reference out of my resume." Then they'd have to talk about who I was, in terms of my accomplishments on the city council, committees I chaired, and make it look as professional looking as can be, and leave everything out that is personal so they

couldn't use that anymore. So the next meeting, the guy introduce the others very professionally, and introduced me and said something about my looks again. So I got up and I said to the audience, "Don't you think he has a wonderful tie on? I'm so glad he wore that today." And they all roared, and he said, "I get the message." (Moon laughs) I was always quick witted not to accept it, but try to do it in a way that gave a little humor to it.

Moon:

Right. Now going back just a little bit, right after you—what was it—could you describe what it was like actually going through the campaign to the point where you actually get elected. What were your experiences like? What did you do as part of your celebrations for actually being elected? Can you describe some of that?

Wilson:

Yes, I can. Because once I was elected, there was many people who respected the fact that I had one out of seven votes, and they needed my vote. And so I became legitimized. I was on the council and they had to woo me, and tell me the facts of whatever the issue was. And everybody was a special interest that comes before me, so I could evaluate. But the first six months I was really pretty silent on the council. I had learned on the first day that I had my first meeting [Russ Nader?] who was going to be an older man on the council, and I came into towns meeting and I said, "Russ, I know how I am going to vote tonight." And he says, "For the [inaudible 00:27:27]" And I said, "Are you ready?" And he says, "I don't know yet how I'm going to vote. I haven't heard the other side." And that woke me up. And sure enough, when I listened, I didn't vote the way I thought I was going to vote, because I just read the material from one side. And he taught me just in

that first meeting a very valuable lesson. To listen and evaluate what is being said by both sides, so you can make a judgments and vote.

Moon:

Was there any type of introduction for like new council members—like on your first day, or in your first month, or three months of your kind of tenure?

Wilson:

Yes. The city manager arranged for all the department heads to meet with me, they gave me a packet , where all the different departments were. And all the department heads came and met with me. And that was another learning experience because the Public Works Director, [Tony Tuarichie?] who was doing what [Eugene?] did. He asked me when he finished telling the doctor of the department, he asked me if I had any questions. And I said, “Yes, how does one get a street tree removed from the yard?” And immediately said, “Tell me, which one you want removed.” And I said, “No, I just want to know how it’s done so I could tell everybody. “Well,” he says, “I would be glad to do that for you.” And right then, I understood the power that I had.

Moon:

(Moon laughs) Because you could get a tree removed from wherever you wanted.

Wilson:

This department head wanted to get in my favor. Do something for me so then I’m going to do it for him. So, I said, “I really want to know the process, because there was an old woman on the campaign trail over by Valley Faire, and she has a [liquid amber tree?] and she is getting very old, with a walker, and she is afraid she is going to fall. And she has a legitimate reason for getting that tree removed. I’m looking up for how you do it, so I

could tell other people. I don't want you to just go out and do it for me. And so he told me the process, that she had to give a legitimate reason, and then he said "That she would qualify." So I did get her stoop tree removed, but I also learned something about how you really can make it work for your citizens.

Moon:

So part of your process of learning as a new council member was learning kind of the ins and outs of the policies and procedures that were part of the different departments?

Wilson:

That's right. And who I needed to call on, because we were just doing policy, and the city manager, of course, [Terrinyata?] policy. And not to tell the department head how to do his business that was illegal that was not part of the charter, and still isn't part of the charter. And still just to establish a policy until the city manager can make the department heads do what we want, if fiscal votes for it.

Moon:

Okay. Interesting. Now, what about when the election campaign was going head strong and the final election polls were coming through and you were actually doing quite well, where were you in San Jose? Where were your headquarters at? What were you doing? You know as part of that pre-election victory.

Wilson:

Well, one of the advisory board that I had recruited for YWCA was a realtor named {Ken Challis?] and he had a very old family name and a realty downtown on the corner of Santa Clara and first street. [inaudible00:31:08] But, he offered me that space, and so then a sign painter painted a great big sign that was at least 25 ft long that had my name

and my headquarters right there on first street and Santa Clara, and it was free. And so I got to know some of the people of that office, it was a good place. Volunteers came along to work for me and there was a parking place for them to park. So the workers came downtown. There wasn't towards I knew, and he said yes, so I didn't even look for any other places like the suburbs or anything like that. So on my election night, we had our party over 70 west, downstairs. And it was—I'll never forget that either because I got a call in the middle of my party from a the [Maynor Rondrich or Oranndra?] it was Spanish. And that's why I remember it. And he called and he said, "Susie, I need you to get me out of jail." And I said, "What!" And he had come in and volunteered for me, And he got locked—he said, "I've been celebrating your victory, and so they put me in jail. And so, I want you to get me out." I said, "I'm sorry, I can't do that." And, I said, "Good Luck. Get sober." and hung up. I mean there was kind of crazy things that happened between you and politics, they expect you to do miracles at times. And it was very amusing for me, I couldn't get him out of jail so.

Moon:

There was a story that Janet Grey Hayes had told us in an earlier interview, that when there was one time in the mayor's office, somebody had come in and threatened her because the person was disgruntled about something or other, that the council didn't do, and so she had to talk, convince him, that he needed to just calm down and eventually leave. Were you ever in any circumstances like that?

Wilson:

She must be talking about the time that this man came to a council meeting and he was one who was most insane, and let's put it at that. He came up and he had a gun! And he

was bashing his gun around and at this point Janet Grey, who, I always just loved her sometimes, she did such great things. She said, “You put that gun down, you’re not going to be at this city council as long as I could see that gun!” So he put it away. And she says, “Now you come back without the gun!” (both laugh) And after that we had policemen in the chambers at all times.

Moon:

So you didn’t have gun-tottling people coming in and making threats. Okay. so it sounds like most of your victory celebration was with all the people that labored for you—

Wilson:

Yes, and one of the things was—[inaudible 00:34:33] [Carrey?] was my campaign manager. She had been a neighbor of [Walter Hayes?] And Walter lived the next street over from here, his brother lived over on the next street from here. So this was a neighborhood where I had a lot of friends, walkers, and workers here during the campaign. Because Walter became my campaign manager for a very low salary. And so the night that I won, he had talked about getting me a coat. She was so busy and she didn’t have enough money for a coat. He was an engineer but it just wasn’t in the budget. So I got an old army coat and I pinned \$1 dollar bills all over it and I gave it to her. (Moon laughs) Because I didn’t have enough money for a \$40-\$50 dollar coat [inaudible00:35:25] So that’s what I gave her and I have a picture of that on election night for helping me win. She was such a good, efficient office manager.

Moon:

Now, how much did it cost to run as a candidate, when you were running in ’73?

Wilson:

In '73 during the primary I raised about \$4,000 dollars and maybe I raised \$4,000 for the runoff, but about \$6,000 for both. One item which was not a monetary item, some things are not monetary. They didn't [inaudible00:36:04] day to day. [Mr. Denari?] he was district— was a scout master. So he knew slightly to do that. And when I had my [inaudible 00:36:28] Jane Grey took him to lunch, she knew him very well. And he looked at me, and told me, "I want to put you on billboards." And, I was aghast. And Janet Grey said, "You never did that for me." And he said, "You didn't need it" And, he said, "She does." And so he did. He put up seven billboards with my picture on it, and I still have the billboard picture in my closet rolled up.

Moon:

You do?

Wilson:

Yes, I use it when I'm at barbeques on the side of the barn. So that comes out later after I got elected. And, I said to the reporter, "Well, you know, I hope that they thought I was very smart and capable to do everything, but I do know that some people like my picture on the billboard, Some people liked my voice on KLIV and voted for me." So they voted for me for various reasons in my campaign—

Moon:

Right, well looking back at your early political sort of process, what would you say was your major milestone as you accomplished as part of your work on the city council?

Wilson:

It'd probably relate to women's issues and children's issues. I was very instrumental in working with police officers to get women police officers—we called it assistant police women. And when this got started they were pulled into, chief [Murphey?] pulled me into his office put me down his desk, and said that they didn't do police work. And of course, they did. They did with the men. And so, they got them in cars by themselves. They wanted to pay the police officers, the assistant police officers way below the police officers pay. and they were trying to get the council to vote the women in as police officers. And they came to me because they trusted me as a woman, and we had a meeting and lunches, and they asked me if they could get four votes on the council. And I very honestly said no, chief Murphey would never make you into a police officer because he doesn't believe you are capable enough to do the job. And they told me the kind of words that he left on the desk, the stuff in the locker, the kind of harassment. Terrible, everyday something was happening to some assistant. So, they asked me, they were thinking of having a law suit against the city, a class action law suit, and they asked my opinion of what they should do. And I told them, I really couldn't decide for them what they should do, they had to make the decision, I could only make an observation. I said, "Right now, we're called bitches and everything worse than bitches, and you have an assistant police women, and you will continue to be called bad names. If you have a class action suit against the city, you will win, and they will call you bitches and all these other things that you would have to take as a police officer. So its up to you. Its not going to change their attitude. And we have in our second session after they won, Chief Murphey was realling and grilling, "Some of them are just not qualified: they're overweight, they don't have the psychology, they don't have the brains to be a police

officer.” And I said, “Chief Murphey, you have an opportunity to weed them out. If you had voted for them to be police officers, then you would have to go through all the process as a man does, but you refused to do that, so you get them all.” He did.

Moon:

Well one could have said that was also true for some of the male officers, I would think, too. (Moon laughs)

Wilson:

I’d always tell him that [inaudible 00:41:19] and point it out that they weren’t qualified, and so I just said, “You’re going to take them. There yours, because you wouldn’t do it the right way.

Moon:

Well, that was an important victory for the police women.

Wilson:

It was, it was. And of course we wanted versatile women who were elevated as a young black woman, so that we really integrated, sexually, and genderwise. And that was a new triumph for me, that I felt like I could make that kind of an impact, and any change that was permanent.

Moon:

Well, that goes back to your earlier statement about how you—one of the reasons why you got engaged in politics was because you were really influenced by the sexism and the racism of the 1960’s that you were living through. So I think that was a great example of putting your political views into action, as a politician.

Wilson:

And yet, most of these conflicts—I can't free—I can't write how I am going to help people, it's got to come from what I hear. And I listened to [inaudible 00:42:42] and what might be helpful to me.

Moon:

Right. Now, about what time—was that in your first term as a council member that you were working with the police women? Okay.

Wilson:

Then there is of course, also the issue of pay equity that was coming up. The unions were giving me statistics that were unfair to women. The labor force that were women would really write. There more women in the city government then men, but they ranked far lower than they did in the salaries. The jobs that they had were the lower paid jobs—

Moon:

They were mostly clericals, right?

Wilson:

Mostly clericals, janitors, and laborers, and all those. But the other side of it was, neither were they given the opportunities to rise. I coming marked the face, they never looked at as potential for moving up or feel that they were moving up. they never had the chance to be—

Moon:

There's no advancement in those things.

Wilson:

No advancement for them. The men were coached, were being encouraged, tried to go up the ladder. Women were not.

Moon:

What I think we'll have to do is on another day talk about the pay equity because I think we could just spend a long time just on that, because it actually takes place in the early '70s and continues on until, I think the '80s. And so I think it would be really interesting to maybe go through some of the scrapbooks that you have, and then you know really get it kind of fine tuned on some of the things, so it could help you remember some of the other topics.

3rd Woman:

Maybe, what we could do, Danelle, is skip a little bit ahead and talk a little bit about the National Women's Political Caucus and so we're jumping to 1973 to 1974, to 1977.

Wilson:

Well, actually we're their older kind, '73 is when the organizers come.

Moon:

Okay, let's just hold that thought for a second.

3rd Woman:

It's time for a water break

Moon:

Yeah, just one more point on the police women experience, after that happened, did you have conversations with police women who actually moved in to actually become full officers? After that, and did they thank you for kind of giving them advice or was it not like that?

Wilson:

Not in an organized way. I never worried about thank-yous. I thought that people in later years will remember it. This one person I know she did live on the [inaudible00:45:54] and she was the one who organized the groups coming to talk to me. And she was the wife of a former police chief not, not after [inaudible 00:46:10] who was the one who went down to San Diego?

3rd Woman:

Oh gosh—yeah, it's not coming up.

Wilson:

Before [Rob Davis?] but she's married to him, [inaudible 00:46:44] that I can't get the name—

Moon:

Oh, okay.

3rd Woman:

Let me make a note to get her name.

Wilson:

I did talk with her about moving along when I was trying to put those names in my head where they were. She gave me her phone number, or her husband gave me her phone number and then we moved on to something.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

So, but I could find that out.

Moon:

Okay. Alright, well, we'll put that on our list of other topics. So let's go to the Caucus. You said before we changed the tapes on the video that—oh actually it wasn't really 1977, but we're thinking 1977 because we're thinking that that's when the convention came here, and so that is an exciting moment in looking at it historically. So why don't you take us back to the beginning in 1973, and just describe—

Wilson:

In the beginning it was after the primary, it was in the spring, we met at De Anza College in the auditorium. [Lank Easton?] was involved with that.

Moon:

Um-hmm.

Wilson:

And I joined up as one of the founders of the caucus. Janet Grey was not there and was not a part of it. And so, we formed to inject women electing, to do all they can do to get women elected. And so they immediately converged on my campaign. That was going to be May the 8th and they, in those days, they had to cut out the precincts doing a paper doll work. We cut out the precinct, you cut your cardboard so that you can staple the list you get with the precinct on it. And copy the list down and staple it to the cardboard so I'd have something to hold, because we didn't have the computers of today.

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

And so that was what one of the jewelers were to create all the cardboard on the numbers to give to all the walkers of every precinct in the city. And this was a city-wide election.

And so any member that was walking, and we knew where we were going to walk, on the street, we'd have to finish getting all those precincts done then because—and of course we tried to walk in rows where there was the heaviest voters, the usual thing, Willow Glen and Almaden Valley. But also, I went over to the East Side, and I went all over the city, I went to the West Side, I went every place. I had talkings all over the city. When I was doing that.

Moon:

So just to clarify, the cardboard contained like the addresses and names of people that you were going to actually—

Wilson:

The cardboard was the thing to hold in your hand because it would stick, but the precinct information you would get from the county, just as you do today, but today you get it on the CD.

Moon:

Oh, okay. Right.

Wilson:

You get it all computerized. And also we had, we had by the precinct pictures of the precinct laid out. So this was then a cut-out to get the hobi map of the precinct of the labor—the boards, they cut them out. And then you glued that, pasted that to the cardboard and then you get the lists stapled to the cardboard, and that became your packet, and that was a part of the way that we endeavored to have that to walk.

Moon:

And that's the National Women's Caucus was the one that actually helped produce some of that material?

Wilson:

Yes.

3rd Woman:

If you don't say the organization that it's not on tape at all so we have to actually have a re-do, when we talk about the organization, you have to make sure we say it, otherwise we have no idea what you're talking about. Because your questions aren't on tape, I mean they are on tape but—So if you can do it again, from when you were at De Anza—

Wilson:

Okay, alright. There was an organizing committee of the National Women's Political Caucus for this county. It had become a national organization. We were creating our own caucus here in San Jose, Santa Clara County. We met at De Anza College.

[Inaudible 00:50:51] was one of the conveners and I think [Leona and Asia?] was involved with that. And I went up and joined as one of the founders. So that, moving toward the June election, the members of that founding group became the ones that worked in my campaigns and helped create these packets that we used for precinct walking. They had to get the precinct map, a huge map, and from that map cut out each precinct to glue onto the cardboard. So we'd have a picture of how the streets went, because all it was, was a street map—

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

—in the shape of the precinct.

Moon:

Okay.

Wilson:

And then you also have the list of the voting ballots the—

Moon:

The registration?

Wilson:

The county registration office. They had to make them every time we went walking, they'd have to get busy. Work all, maybe one evening binging together the packets for Sunday, or Saturday. [inaudible 00:52:02] was one who was very skilled at this kind of a thing. And of course the [inaudible 00:52:08] organized the women coming in and doing it. She organized all the mailing of all the envelopes. And we had so many worker bees in my campaign and there was one member of my church who would always, always write thank you notes whenever somebody would do something for her. And in this campaign, I wanted to have personal notes of [inaudible 00:52:33] and I knew I'm lousy at that, and I'm too busy to do that. And so I asked her if she would write the thank you notes saying, "Susie begged me to write to tell you how much she appreciates your contribution." Hand written completely. She had beautiful hand writing, I think she was a school teacher. (Moon laughs) And she did that through my whole campaign, and that's the kind of support I got. I mean, how many people today would sit down and write notes for all the amount of money we put into campaigns today? You know, you

get a lot of those things computerized. This was a very personal campaign that people joined in a real personal time to have joined.

Moon:

It sounds like it was organized, if not entirely around your election campaign, but that it certainly, the election campaign was impetus for the organization of the San Jose branch?

Wilson:

No, they had the women that had been working, of course—Sacramento had one, and so some of the people that were involved with women politics were very anxious and so I was lucky.

Moon:

Yeah, but you just kind of fell in to because of the—

Wilson:

And one of the newspaper articles said that it was just a group of disgruntled losers, in the article. When I read the article, I marched down to Jane Grey's office and I said, Janet Grey, you are joining the National Women's Political Caucus, because there is going to be at least two winners in that caucus, and they're not going to be able to call us 'losers', or 'sacrificial lamb', and things like that. That's when a woman ran, when she was a sacrificial lamb, when they're not going to win but they needed a candidate against a very strong republican. And so, we refused to be sacrificial lambs and losers, and Janet Grey and I both became members in the Summer after our elections, I had already won. And even after I won, they were still calling us losers. And I said—(Moon laughs) And then [jerry janigan] was one who evolved in the caucus. [Jane Decker?] of the county, in 1977, played [inaudible 00:55:00] here. And that was when [Jerry Janigan?] who worked

for me, she was working in her office, and she came to me, and she didn't know anything about the YWCA, and she said, "I want to be involved in the YWCA." She came to me and asked me if I could pay her in advance. And I said, "Yes, I could do that." And so, I loaned her the money, and I didn't go to the bank, I gave it under the table. Signed a note I loaned her the money and [inaudible 00:55:52] registration but we had to put the down payment on the hotel.

Moon:

What was the cost of the down payment? Do you remember?

Wilson:

At lest \$2,000.

Moon:

Uh-huh. That's a lot of money.

Wilson:

It was a lot of money, yeah. That's why, I think, it probably wasn't long I had to sign. And so then the caucus, of course, and the newspaper article said there was 1500 women at that caucus. So for a bunch of disgruntled losers in '77, there was 1500 women who had come, they were outstanding women, the National Women's Political Caucus.

Moon:

Right. Now before 1973, between 1973 and, let's say 1977, were you actively working with the NWPC, that whole time? And what other types of things were you doing after your campaigning process had ended?

Wilson:

Probably doing whatever they asked me to do. If they needed me to speak some place I would go and speak. I didn't do the grunt work because I was busy doing my job, so they always excused me and that was fine. I came to meetings and I did these speakings at events when they—and the same thing with NOW. I sort of did things for NOW—

Moon:

For the National Organization of Women?

Wilson:

For them, and they were at that time more radical than the Caucus, and I still think they probably are, you know more radical, but they endorsed me.

Moon:

Were you a member of NOW?

Wilson:

No, I wasn't.

Moon:

Oh, okay.

Wilson:

I think, my mindset was, I always say, "There's one organization, you know, during the years I was with they "Y" I knew—I'd scatter my interests and efforts if I tried to be two or three different organizations, and so I would concentrate on one. And so I'd concentrate on the YWCA and the National Women's Political Caucus.

Moon:

Okay. During that time period, were you involved at all with the Equal Right's Amendment campaign? And what sort of things were you doing?

Wilson:

Well, that was one of the topics that was discussed at the Caucus.

Moon:

Was that one of the key topics?

Wilson:

I think that was one of the key topics at that time. I did—and one of the things that we did during that time when the ERA—the Equal Rights Amendment was that, we had a councilor who refused to go to some meeting that was already [inaudible 00:58:32] the ERA—

Moon:

That was in the San Jose City Council?

Wilson:

Right. It was not a unanimous vote. (Moon laughs) But, we did it. So we did the kind of political things that we hoped would make the newspapers and that would be the same as significant—I stood up for the ERA as much as I could. Did speeches, where I could speak about it, and was a cheerleader.

Moon:

Okay. Could you describe what the program was for the 1977 convention? Or who some of the main speakers were?

Wilson:

I would have to say that—they were very well organized. We had [inaudible 00:59:20], we had [Mary Crisp?] who was a republican, we had [Leona Egellin?] Janet Grey Hayes, and myself all spoke. I have a list of the women. I would have to look at—

Moon:

So there was a long list of women that were all speaking?

Wilson:

Yes, and in fact, they recorded our speeches, about twelve of us.

Moon:

Yeah, I noticed the one—the tapes you showed earlier. Those are great, they would be great to get copies of. Now what did you speak on at the convention?

Wilson:

I don't know. (all laugh)

Moon:

You don't remember. Yeah we'll have to listen to it. Yeah, because I think those tapes would be really interesting for this project with the film documentary project that Jennifer is trying to put together.

Wilson:

Now, I can remember my memories [inaudible 01:00:23] and I was so impressed by all the people that I was—all the other speakers, not of myself, I do not think I did a good job.

Moon:

Were you nervous at first, when you first went in to public life?

Wilson:

No

Moon:

Because you seem to have such an ease with talking to people I was just curious if you get nervous when you talk and when you give speeches.

Wilson:

Well for a speech like that, that to me was so very important, much more than the ordinary type of thing.

Moon:

Yeah, just felt sort of natural for you.

Wilson:

Instinctually.

Moon:

Uh-huh.

Wilson:

I could, campaign trail I—it was all instinctual. Because I was grounded in my beliefs, I was grounded in what I wanted to say, so I could just do it, and not even think about the consequences. I always felt that if somebody was [inaudible 01:01:29] information.

They will choose the person that they believe in what they hear. And so, I felt like there were more good people that believe like I did (both laugh) and would support me.

Moon:

Yeah. Now in the National Women's Political Caucus—I'm just learning a lot about this organization myself, so part of this is just for my own edification, you know, trying to get the facts straight on this. Besides working the realm of trying to get women elected as politicians, were they involved in trying to promote different types of public policy?

Wilson:

Yes, the TRA was in the Women's Political Caucus, electing more women into the Caucus was an effective policy. They were a solid policy administration. And they had these bottom line issues, were women's issues—

Moon:

But they were bipartisan, right? It was a bipartisan organization?

Wilson:

Bipartisan. Anybody who had those policies, we kind of—caused us to write the questionnaire. So we were always to elect women. And the controversies of it went like, when [Becky Morgan?] was running, on the board of supervisors. And a very favorite of the Caucus was [Jim Jackson] who was a council [inaudible 01:03:10]. Which in Cupertino, and he was running for a supervisor, and the Caucus—Becky was a Republican, and Jim was a Democrat. And the Caucus was heading toward Jim, who was their favorite [inaudible 01:03:32]. And I came to that meeting, and I was on the Board of Supervisors at the time, and I chastised them until I absolutely felt that it was not our purpose to let men, our purpose was electing good women who met our bottom line issues and Becky Morgan did. She was a pro-choice Republican, she was smart, and she deserved our work and endorsement.

Moon:

Okay, so more conservative women, who wouldn't have supported the ERA or abortion, or right to life—or right to choose.

Wilson:

Right to choose.

Moon:

Right to choose, or pro-choice.

Wilson:

Or pro-life.

Moon:

Or pro-life. So, the Caucus was a bi-partisan organization but they were kind of partisan in some of the issues that they chose to support.

Wilson:

If you consider the pro-choice is only a democratic issue, it isn't.

Moon:

Oh, no, I don't think it is. But if you look at the divisions between the two parties, you often times look at the Republicans as being anti-choice, right?

Wilson:

We sent out our questionnaires to all the candidates in each race. So we didn't differentiate in who we would endorse. And any Republican that came along that was pro-choice we would endorse. But in this case Jim Jackson, who was one of those favorite Democrats, who had been around constantly, and was everybody's friend, and everybody go for him. And that was wrong. So, it so happened that Becky Morgan won, and the Caucus for the next two years, if they had an issue at the state level they would come to me. And, I'd say to go to Becky and to talk, because Becky wasn't particularly talking to them. And so they knew that, but they had an ally in me, and I would take their water for them to Becky.

Moon:

Oh, okay. So there was a lot of interaction between Republican and Democratic women in the Caucus, would you say?

Wilson:

Probably always more Democrat than Republican. But there were those Republicans who were members of the Caucus. And Becky, I—must have been a member, I can't remember that. But she had all the [inaudible 01:05:59] when she answered the questionnaire the correct way. All her bottom line issues were ours.

Moon:

Do you have a copy of the questionnaire that was handed out? Do you have those?

3rd Woman:

Yeah, it's all a famous story. The "Becky Morgan Story" is super famous in the Caucus, because she became so celebrated, and—yeah.

Moon:

Okay. Well, I think this organization is a really interesting story for trying to understand women's political activism, certainly in the second wave of feminism and the political work of women—

Wilson:

And you would see in the women who were in that Caucus, like [Jane Decker?] was an aide to [Jerry Smith?], who became a Senator. And she worked for him in Sacramento, and she came back to the city, back to the county, and became part of the county government. And now she is up there at the second or third in command of the county. She's in the executive branch of the county. So we had women that were really making a mark.

Moon:

Did you have any funny stories or situations when you were working directly with the Caucus during that time period, that you think would be fun to share?

Wilson:

Well, there's one that I remember because [Bella Absent?] was here, and she was going to be running for an office, I don't know if she was running for Congress—New York—

Moon:

She was in New York, and then she ran for Congress. It could've been about the same time that she went into Congress.

Wilson:

That was the same time—but I'd have to—but she was running for something so that we organized some fundraising for her. [inaudible 01:07:58] So we passed the hat in various ways, Bella's hat. (Moon laughs)

Moon:

Yeah, she always wore those crazy hats.

Wilson:

We passed the hat, and I was somehow involved, I was always involved in asking for money. And so I was involved, and after all this cash was there, Bella said, "Oh, my God. I can't just take all this money, the banks are all closed, and I take it to my hotel room, and count the money and I have all this money here. What can we do? And, I knew one person that had a safe, a jeweler. And he came downtown and put all that money in his safe downtown. [Juat?] J-U-A-T, Jewelry. (both laugh) So she didn't have to worry about the money disappearing.

Moon:

What was she like to meet in person? Was she as crazy as people described her as?

Wilson:

No, she was very, very smart. And she wasn't crazy.

Moon:

Yeah, she just seemed like a character, seemed to have such character when she was on the Senate floor, after she got into office.

Wilson:

Well I think that you describe her as an [inaudible 01:09:11] anymore than a person—in those days she knew how to advertise herself to get [numb?] Put it that way. She didn't shine the spotlight, and you have to have that, to just let people understand that you are important, that you can do things. In reading my scrapbooks, very early when I was first elected city council, reports had been—comments from The Mercury—when they were asking what I want to do, and I said, “You know, I'm very happy where I am, but you know, I might run for governor.” I never wanted to let them think that I was just going to sit there on the Council. If I wanted to, I might, but I'm happy here. So I'm not doing anything now, but I threw out the option that I might run for governor. (both laugh)

And I guess that was kind of an instinct that women were here to stay.

Moon:

Um-hmm. Well, a lot of women seem to try and capture that same sort of view I think in the process. Now, in the Caucus in 1977, was [Gloria Steiner?] part of that also? And did she give a keynote address, or what was her role in that?

Wilson:

She was one of the speakers—

3rd Woman:

She was a founding member of the Caucus too. So she was a speaker. We'll have definitely get everything copied and digitized and make copies of them too.

Moon:

Okay, and did you have any personal interaction with her at the Caucus that you remember?

Wilson:

Not anything really personal at that time, that I remember. You see, Gloria came to town about four times—

Moon:

Right, she was at San Jose State a couple years ago, and then she came for the YWCA.

Wilson:

YWCA. But one time she came, I think to a Caucus meeting, because we were in the hotel and I drove back from San Francisco that day to be here for a reception. And so I've had my pictures taken with Gloria three times, so I know she was there three or four times. (Moon laughs) Both the YW, and the San Jose State with [Terry Christenson?] that was a very big conversation that came from Don Edwards symposium and lectures. And two years later she came back from the Y. And what was so astonishing was that women thirty-five, didn't know who she was. Thirty-five and under—

Moon:

Right, yeah.

Wilson:

But there sure was a lot of women who came to see her.

Moon:

That's right. I wish I could've gone to see her, I wasn't here then, but I would've liked to go to the Y when she was their keynote address. That would've been great to see.

Interestingly, I was talking to this historian up at Stanford, and we were talking about feminism and kind of the negative press and the negative attitude that's been applied to the word feminism, and how the media has tended to gravitate to the pictures of women after they're much older than they were than when they were when they were actually really involved with some of this activism, so they kind of show this old woman sort of imagery of feminist, and that she said that changed when Gloria Steiner became the poster for feminism in the '70s. Because you know, she was a very attractive, younger woman, and I thought, that really was an interesting commentary because even when you see pictures of Bella, she didn't—

Wilson:

She was matronly.

Moon:

Matronly in the '70s, and you know, she might have been matronly anyway, who knows, because it might have just been her physical appearance. But if you look at some of the old pictures of some of the suffragists and look at some of the women who were involved in the ERA movement it's the same thing. Many of them were very matronly. And so it's interesting to see kind of younger women coming in, and when you were coming into politics in '70s you were—well, you certainly were not like a twenty-year-old, but you were very attractive. You know, you were a very attractive person. (Wilson laughs)

And, so I think it brings—it's kind of the changing face of feminism, I guess, but I was thinking about, in context to what my other scholar was talking about. But it made me think about that when you were mentioning that.

Wilson:

And you know also, women who I have interviewed, I had interviewed [Steve Blueburg?] who was a Mercury reporter at City Hall. In my first year of office he was doing a story about the bra-burners, and feminism, and feminist. And I always said that I was a feminist and so when he started talking to me I said, "Steve, please don't write this article about bra-burners. I wasn't a bra-burner but I am very strongly a feminist. Now let's talk about what a feminist is. If you want to label me it will go down the wrong way." And you know he listened to me.

Moon:

Uh-huh.

Wilson:

And he liked me, and so he didn't. So we talked about being a feminist. I always declared, "I'm a feminist." And people knew it and it didn't make any difference at all.

Moon:

Was [Betty Friedan?] part of the National Women's Political Caucus also?

Wilson:

(Whispers) Not too much, no.

Moon:

No, okay. I wasn't sure if she had been part of that.

3rd Woman:

Mostly NOW.

Moon:

Yeah, well, I'm sure she had her hands full trying to work with NOW at that time. Okay, well, let's see. I was looking at NAACP, what would you say at that time period, what were the major milestones that that organization accomplished in your retrospection and your experience and also being a member?

Wilson:

They were a young women's association. These were all very young women who were [in their jobs?] but they were very strong women, very quiet, but strong. And so, when they created the Caucus they were totally committed to it, and they had the time to do it, because the pressures weren't the same as later on. One reason why the Caucus kind of just faded in this county, was because all those people that were trying to find recognition as women had recognition now. I could take a look at all those people that were there and they all had good jobs. They all had done well and as they grew older they couldn't carry the Caucus anymore. [inaudible 01:16:35] wasn't coming in because new blood was doing all the jobs—the feminist jobs that were there. And that's when we had the equal rights and we pushed all those issues companies began to set aside at least because they did not want to have a [inaudible 01:16:54]. They didn't want to be seen as a sexist organization. So women began to rise and the Caucus in this county began to fall.

Moon:

Okay, so as women gained more success and had more equality economically, and perhaps socially and legally, then the need for the Caucus had less of an—

Wilson:

Yes.

Moon:

Now do you think—I know the Caucus is still pretty vibrant as a national organization, but a lot of the national organizations like the League of Women Voters and NOW, and some of the national abortion rights groups, and some of these other big organizations that have been around for a long time have a similar problem in that—the League, for example, doesn't have the same emphasis for the reasons that it originally began which was to actually educate women as voters and provide civic education. So a lot of that faded out and many of the organizations, and I can't speak to National Women's Political Caucus, but some of these other ones, the membership is quite elderly. And there doesn't seem to be an emphasis in those organizations to get new blood and new members, but perhaps some of the other organizations are taking over this, but it seems that there is some lack of social and political activism among younger women. So do you have any, I don't know, advice or ideas on how we can regenerate? Because, I think, that though we have had a lot of success, particularly in the bay area for women and politics that it's a slippery slope, and if women don't continue to be actively engaged in the political process, or they don't think they have to be, then we can be in the same situation in another thirty years, when women are no longer active in politics and then they—kind of between the first wave of suffrage and the second wave, there was kind of an ebb where there was a great movement in the '20s through the '40s for women to be elected as politicians all over at variant levels. But then the Cold War hit and you don't really see a resurgence of women in politics until the late 1960s, so there are women who are

represented across the U.S. and various components. I guess I'm just wondering how we reinvigorate younger women to be politically active. Do you have any ideas about that?

Wilson:

In everything in politics and life, really, when crisis comes women rise again. That they are complacent because they have everything. And I don't mind that they don't wonder why they don't have it, but if they lose it then they will know what they lost. Then they'll fight. So that we don't just have these same kind of struggles with the women who are now rising with the [Karl Lee Arena?] and even when she gets ousted, she'll end up on the top of the heap as far as their monetary and as far as what she has been able to do, and the name she has made for herself. So, it's only if we begin to lose, really lose, because there are a lot of women who care not one bit for Bush and things he stands for. So if we lose, and the Supreme Court begins to favor the far right you will see women when their choices are narrowed will rise again. We always rise when the crisis comes.

Moon:

Right. I was asking this historian that I interviewed yesterday, [Karren Offen?], she is a feminist historian, and I was asking her whether or not she thought the ERA was viable? There is a resurgence of trying to put the ERA back through Congress. She felt that it wasn't really necessary, that there were all the other laws that had really changed to address kind of the inequality, so I was just curious where you felt on that whole issue of reinvigorating the ERA and having it go back through Congress.

Wilson:

I don't think it's necessary. I mean, I don't think it's going to happen because there are other forces that are certainly more dangerous to them. That if our rights are denied only

then will somebody see an ERA will do, what it would do, and if it is necessary at that point go through Congress. But we don't have a burning issue with the amendment now. I can't—you can't point to a gross injustice.

Moon:

Yeah, right

Wilson:

You can count the potential which would be the pro-life and the justices of the Supreme Court. And it's like for years the democrats have been saying if you get a court that is going to overturn Roe vs. Wade that would be to say if you're going to overturn it, it's not going to create a time where you can't get abortion, it's just going to change some what. So, only when it happens will we decide for the ERA or we have got to fight for the changes in the court and begin to elect Democrats. While the judges are going to have to, when they have cases to decide, they are going to have to take a look. Okay, well, that's a good answer. I was thinking if anything, it would just be a symbolic sort of measures, and I don't think generally we pass constitutional amendments for symbolic measure. But with that, we can continue talking about—going on a bit and talking a little about CEWAR. I know that you were really involved with that organization, but it's about five till five now, so maybe we—if you wanted to—

4th Woman:

I did want to talk—just a pause for a second. A couple of notes here. This is good, but the problem is that if we're shooting for a documentary vs. for shooting for oral history, you know and that kind of thing, so I'd actually like to start the interviews just with you and yourself, and myself, because I'm very familiar with the topic. And, I'm not going to

be talking very much, I just wanted to get the stories. And also, if you don't tell them right, I want to tell them again, because I want to get on record—because sometimes you don't tell them the first time—and you will tell them, “it came back to me” —

Wilson:

Yeah.

4th Woman:

Because I'm not worried about getting like the interviews, which was really good, really good information. What I want to capture are very definitive stories and we have to do this super structured where we say here is the material to review, now we can do these interviews and we match it. Because I just presented at a conference two weeks ago, talking about young feminists and stuff. And I consider myself in that role, I'm thirty-three, I don't know, maybe I'm—

Wilson:

Well, you're young.

4th Woman:

Well, I don't know.

Wilson:

From my perspective, you're very young.

4th Woman:

There was a ton of women there, who were doing video blogging, and this has become our new medium, this is the new feminism. And so I gave a presentation on oral history and that people should be out there interviewing and documenting women, and I realized that that is what we need to do, because if we document the stories those could be shared

and then that could be shared on the wider audience; especially on the web, that's where the big distribution is. So all I want to do is kind of figure out—because there are great stories here but we also have to take this one narrow perspective, because to tell a good story it almost has to be slow and methodical so that it could be used for digital stories over material. Because as you're talking, this is really helpful, because I've seen—this is a great angle for you, you're so beautiful, and I've seen as you're talking about stuff if we had the materials ahead of time to know we were going to match, so you can talk about something and I can see the camera there going over that material so that we're there with you. I think the best thing that we can do for feminism is tell the stories because there is nowhere to get these right now unless we sit down and talk to you, and that's about it.

This is really good, but from a media standpoint I want to figure out how to really maximize this because there is so much. I think you're probably the most involved public policy person ever in Santa Clara County. It's amazing. So I want to figure out—I mean, we need to sit down and talk but like even from today's interview I realized there is just so much reference stuff and so there has to be kind of a plan to look at later reference stuff and then talk about it, because then you really have it fresh in your memory too.

Wilson:

And there is some things, of course, that we haven't covered at all. Like the gay pride and justified issues that I faced when I came—800 people were ready to—

4th Women:

What I want to know, is if you guys are both interested and it totally comes down to you, all I want to do is be here as a facilitator—I want to almost admit I'm just here to prompt

your memory, but my goal is to get the story on camera. And then we have to figure out as a consequence, is paying for transcription because there is no budget—I just want to do this. So basically as long as there is a transcript and then from there Danelle and her interest in everything and the collections and coming back, and kind of this partnership, all I want to do is have a series of very well done slow methodical interviews that we can really spend time and then we can have the transcript and natural materials and then that's when the collections can really come in, and say now this big collection and now knowing what we can find. Because I feel, for you guys to really slow down this story, this is going to take many, many, many, many, interviews. And I would really love to do this mostly because I love the stories, but also because I am very convinced that this is the way we get people interested in feminism again. And you're perfect. You're the perfect spokesperson because you know what? You represent most people, you know. Gloria Steinman is great but she is kind of a celebrity. I love her, but it's like, you're someone I could go to lunch with.

Moon:

Well, you're a regional leader and, you know, politics really happen at the regional level. I mean, though it does obviously happen at higher levels too, but really the whole concept of politics is really a regional sort of thing. And it's the regional who tells the assemblymen, or the women, and the senators what they want to happen at the national level, and so I think that is a really important story to tell.

Wilson:

And I always wanted to be connected with the people, that's why I was not interested in going to the state level, because I was moved to go to Congress, and Norm left, I was

moved to go to the State, and in fact, I wouldn't tell you this but a lot of people thought they were being [ruined?] by Al. Al really wanted me to succeed and that was, of course, before he married and all that but he always [inaudible 01:28:52] himself, he had the indoor [inaudible 01:28:59]

3rd Woman:

But sometimes you don't have to win these higher positions to have influence, and in fact, that's what I came to talk about the best mayor San Jose never had, and it's like, in terms of public policy, the fact that you love community, you love detail based on people's actual motivations, not based on power or money. This is a whole way of thinking about public policy that I don't think has been done in quite a while. For me, it's—I very much relate to you, but I come from a film side. Like, I want to do film and production, because you want to tell good stories, you want things to happen so people can relate to it. And you're very epic.

Wilson:

So, that they could do it too.

3rd Woman:

So they could do it too because it's not about you just doing it, it's about—so what I want to figure out—because I know now it's summer, my birthday just happen, and I was thinking yesterday, “What do I really want to accomplish this summer?” And one of the big things I really want to accomplish is just to spend—I went like one day a week. Once a week we're going to come and spend—and I will walk out a good six hours, not that you have to have all six hours with me, but I want to catalogue some stuff and work with Danelle on a whole system so that when you're here visiting stuff—because she is doing

incredible work, and I want to be able to do the catch-all stuff, and very much document and then have all this material, and then all of this is going to be part of San Jose State, in terms of what we're recording, and from there all the stuff will be duplicated and stuff. I just want to facilitate the recording side of it and make that my big contribution, if that's okay.

Wilson:

Today, the things we talked about, what was really—I got [inaudible 01:30:37] the book in '77, when I was vice mayor, so I was fresh in some of the things that we talked about, she asked good questions.

4th Woman:

Oh, very much so. They are really, really, good. I mean, this is wonderful. This is actually wonderful, but one of the things that, in order to do the documentary side of this, it's having a bit of a process so that we really get—it's just that—in oral history, yes. You have to be spontaneous, as if we're just meeting you for the first time.

Wilson:

Yeah, yeah, it's got to have some—

4th Woman:

I want it to be something where you're like, "Yes, you really did capture me." And that also, that we do an incredible amount of recording, and from that also, it's going to be really narrowed down, and so I was just thinking today, what would be ideal. Because, again, KQED, I talked to the executive producer of California Story, and there is all this opportunity that Danelle would share her vision for everything too, but what I want to get is good source material to start with. And the first deadline for that project is September

1st, so I have to have enough footage and stuff to kind of work with to send and say, “This might be a project.” And then 1977, 2007, we’re looking at this nice milestone, so what can we get accomplished so that we have some stories to share. And I just know it’s going to take a lot of effort. So I just want to have that one focus, and I think that your story—like if we just do your story as a starting point and really capture it well it covers so many area.

3rd Woman:

Because feminism is public policy, it’s like one-stop-shopping. So I’m just sharing this now because I made a list of all the things I would like to accomplish and so—

Wilson:

As long as you got lists and then that’s how you—

3rd Woman:

Yeah, and also too, this is a huge dedication. This is huge. It’s not like this is—it is not motivated by money by any stretch of the imagination it’s like, if we don’t do this it won’t happen, I know that. And also too, if we do it well, than we do it, then it’s done and we have a good body of, but today, I noticed as you were talking I noticed really good stuff. I really want to get into some of the detail stuff because there are other women, and they’ll share the other pieces of the stories and we can put together these wonderful, really hilarious—I want to do a comedy about feminism, (women laugh) I was thinking what a great time it was and how wonderful these women were, you know.

Moon:

Well, what did you have in mind, as far as scheduling goes then?

3rd Woman:

I just wanted to do—and we can change and be flexible, but if I could have a day a week, and we can schedule it down with—I got other stuff down here, but something like—I know you got lunch meetings and different things you do, but if we would be able to do something starting like mid-morning or so, giver or take—we could always do like one o'clock as well, but something where we would have a good six hour block—and you can do other things too, but I wanted to just be able to make sure we go through some materials, I want to get some shots of things. I want to time to do a couple of hours of interviews, and then some follow up stuff, have time to log everything, and then send over to you what we did.

Moon:

Um-hmm.

3rd Woman:

And then kind of just do—to start with the first ten sessions of this. And I want to really slow it down so we get some really good detail in there, because there are these scrapbooks that are so detailed, so—this is something where I would like for your narrative to match, you know, I don't think anybody is going to have this type of story telling depth in terms of—

Wilson:

Personally—the campaign itself we just skimmed through that but some of the—

3rd Woman:

Oh, I know, I know. The thing is there is so many organizations too that—we know that it's you and [Ivonne Brachili Birth?] with the whole writing on the back of the napkin

thing with CEWAR, and you're in the bathroom, and I think—wasn't that the bathroom story? Someone told me that it started in the bathroom, CEWAR.

Wilson:

No, the backroom.

3rd Woman:

The backroom, okay.

Wilson:

In a smoking room in Puerto Rico.

3rd Woman:

Okay, that's it. Because somebody told me it was like off to the side and was like, "We should start this organization.

Wilson:

We pulled people from California, actually—she was the president of the Los Angeles—I'd have to go back and look at the names. Today it is not coming back to me.

3rd Woman:

And I have the history book of NWPC that [Laurel Nap?] put together. She was a historian and so it was all the original—California. So it's all this great—basically bound of all the minutes, I don't know how you think I've done. I swear to god, reading these minutes how people—I mean, on the state wide level there was rotating chairs, nobody can be in charge because nobody wanted to be in power, and so—

Wilson:

That was one of the things that I argued with women every time I would give a speech about women and power. And we had a gal who was on the school board in L.A.. And she didn't want to accept the fact that what she wanted was power.

3rd Woman:

Right.

Wilson:

Women are not supposed to want power.

Moon:

Right.

Wilson:

And I would say, "I want power. I want power to do something. I don't just have a seat someplace, like that. I know how to get things done, and so that the power can change, and I'm not the least bit afraid of power."

3rd Woman:

Right.

Wilson:

And I think that's what made me a natural. I didn't think of consequences if I did this, would I lose my power, I always thought I gained power. So that's very—that's a concept I really had to work on when I did workshops with CEWAR. I did all kind of workshops to get women elected and educate women so that they were ready to be elected. If they were elected, they already knew what they wanted to do. I want to say, even today when I argue with [Kenneth] I say, "If you say that the community has been so good to you that you want to give back to the community, that stinks." (Moon laughs)

“Why should the community [inaudible 01:37:05] back, what do you want to do? Do you have something in mind that you want to accomplish? You need to talk about that, so then they could really know who you are.”

3rd Woman:

Right. If somebody's going to have power it might as well be the right people. I bring this up only because I know that time is going to go by pretty fast—

[End of interview 01:37:31]